

# THE BIRTH OF THE SILMARILLION

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Professor Corey Olsen  
Mythgard Institute

# The Birth of the Silmarillion

## 1. Ulmo Contra Mundum

‘Then’ said Ilfiniol son of Bronweg ‘know that Ulmo Lord of Waters forgot never the sorrows of the Elfin kindreds beneath the power of Melko, but he might do little because of the anger of the other Gods who shut their hearts against the race of the Gnomes, and dwelt behind the veiled hills of Valinor heedless of the Outer World, so deep was their ruth and regret for the death of the Two Trees. Nor did any save Ulmo only dread the power of Melko that wrought ruin and sorrow over all the Earth; but Ulmo desired that Valinor should gather all its might to quench his evil ere it be too late, and him seemed that both purposes might perchance be achieved if messengers from the Gnomes should win to Valinor and plead for pardon and for pity upon the Earth; for the love of Palúrien and Oromë her son for those wide realms did but slumber still. Yet hard and evil was the road from the Outer Earth to Valinor, and the Gods themselves had meshed the ways with magic and veiled the encircling hills. Thus did Ulmo seek unceasingly to stir the Gnomes to send messengers unto Valinor, but Melko was cunning and very deep in wisdom, and unsleeping was his wariness in all things that touched the Elfin kindreds, and their messengers overcame not the perils and temptations of that longest and most evil of all roads, and many that dared to set forth were lost forever. (3-4)

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## 2. Fëanor's Diplomacy

Now it happened on a while that Fëanor got him beyond to the hills that girt Dor Lómin in those parts [northward of >] beyond Artanor where there were open empty lands and treeless hills, and he had no small company and three of his sons were with him. Thus came they on a day nigh evening to a hilltop, and afar off descried a red light leaping in a vale open on that side that looked towards [?them]. Then Fëanor wondered what this fire might be, and he and his folk marched in the still night swiftly thereto, so that ere dawn they looked down into that vale. There saw they an armed company no less than their own, and they sat around a mighty fire of wood. The most were asleep, but some few stirred, and Fëanor stood then up and called in his clear voice so that the dark vale rang: 'Who be ye; men of the Gnomes or other what—say swiftly for 'tis best for [you to] know the children of Fëanor compass you around.' (7)



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## 3. The Two Trees

Ifan Belaurin plants the Two Trees in the middle of the plain of Valinor outside the gates of the city of Valmar. They grow under her songs, and one has dark green leaves with shining silver beneath, and white blossoms like the cherry from which a dew of silver light falls; the other has golden-edged leaves of young green like the beech and yellow blossom like the hanging blossoms of laburnum which give out heat and blazing light. Each tree waxes for seven hours to full glory and then wanes for seven; twice a day therefore comes a time of softer light when each tree is faint and their light is mingled. (12)

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## 4. The Duty of the Valar

At the making of the stars the children of Earth awake – the Eldar (or Elves). They are found by Oromë dwelling by the star-lit pool (Cuiviénen, water of awakening) in the East. He rides home to Valinor filled with their beauty and tells the Valar, who are reminded of their duty to the Earth, since they came thither knowing that their office was to govern it for the two races of Earth who should after come each in appointed time. There follows an expedition to the fortress of the North (Angband, Iron-hell), but this is now too strong for them to destroy. Morgoth is nonetheless taken captive, and consigned to the halls of Mandos who dwelt in the North of Valinor.

The Eldalië (people of the Elves) are invited to Valinor for fear of the evil things of Morgoth that still wandered in the dark. A great march is made by the Eldar from the East led by Oromë on his white horse. (12-13)

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## 5. Morgoth's Motives

The Gods were now beguiled by Morgoth, who having passed seven ages in the prisons of Mandos in gradually lightened pain came before the conclave of the Gods in due course. He looks with greed and malice upon the Eldar, who also sit there about the knees of the Gods, and lusts especially after the jewels. He dissembles his hatred and desire for revenge. He is allowed a humble dwelling in Valinor, and after a while goes freely about Valinor, only Ylmir foreboding ill, while Tulcas the strong who first captured him watches him. Morgoth helps the Eldar in many deeds, but slowly poisons their peace with lies.

He suggests that the Gods brought them to Valinor out of jealousy, for fear their marvellous skill, and magic, and beauty, should grow too strong for them outside in the world. The Qendi and Teleri are little moved, but the Noldoli, the wisest of the Elves, become affected. They begin at whiles to murmur against the Gods and their kindred; they are filled with vanity of their skill. (15)



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## 6. Men in Mandos

They went to the halls of Mandos, but not the same as the halls of awaiting where the Elves were sent. There they too waited, but it was said that only Mandos knew whither they went after the time in his halls – they were never reborn on Earth, and none ever came back from Mandos, save only Beren son of Barahir, who thereafter spoke not to mortal Men. Their fate after death was perchance not in the hands of the Valar. (22)

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## 7. The Eagles Are Coming!

Manwë, to whom birds bring news upon Timbrenting of all things which his farsighted eyes do not see upon earth, fashions the race of eagles, and sends them under their king Thorndor to dwell in the crags of the North and watch Morgoth. The eagles dwell out of reach of Orc and Balrog, and are great foes of Morgoth and his people. Finweg meets Thorndor who bears him to Maidros. There is no releasing the enchanted bond upon his wrist. In his agony he begs to be slain, but Finweg cuts off his hand, and they are both borne away by Thorndor, and come to Mithrim. The feud is healed by the deed of Finweg (except for the oath of the Silmarils). (23)



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## 8. Beren the Elf

In §9 as first written Barahir already appears as the father of Beren, replacing Egnor; and they are here Ilkorin Elves, not Men, though this was changed when the passage was revised. In the first version of the *Lay of the Children of Húrin* Beren was still an Elf, while in the second version my father shifted back and forth between Man and Elf (III.124-5); in the opening cantos of the A-text of the *Lay of Leithian* (in being by the autumn of 1925) Egnor and his son were Men (III.171); now here in S (early 1926) they are again Elves, though Egnor has become Barahir. Perplexingly, in §10 as first written, while Barahir is ‘a famous chieftain of the Ilkorindi’, on the same page of the manuscript and quite certainly written at the same time Beren ‘alone of *mortals* came back from Mandos’. It may well be that the statements in S that Barahir and Beren were Ilkorins were an inadvertent return to the former idea, after the decision that they were Men (seen in the A-text of the *Lay of Leithian*) had been made. (Later in the original text of S, §14, Beren is a mortal.) (54)

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## 9. Húrin the Hero

The mortal armies, whose leaders had mostly been corrupted or bribed by Morgoth, desert or flee away: all except Húrin's kin. From that day Men and Elves have been estranged, save the descendants of Húrin. Finweg falls, his blue and silver banner is destroyed. The Gnomes attempt to fall back towards the hills and Taur-na-Fuin (forest of night). Húrin holds the rearguard, and all his men are slain, so that not a single man escapes to bring news to Hithlum. By Morgoth's orders Húrin, whose axe had slain a thousand Orcs, is taken alive. By Húrin alone was Turgon (Finweg's brother) son of Fingolfin enabled to cut his way back into the hills with a part of his people. The remainder of the Gnomes and Ilkorins would have been all slain or taken, but for the arrival of Maidros, Curufin and Celegorm – too late for the main battle. (26-27)

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## 10. Dwarves and the Elvenking

They slay Mîm the Dwarf who had taken possession and enchanted all the gold. Húrin casts the gold at Thingol's feet with reproaches. Thingol will not have it, and bears with Húrin, until goaded too far he bids him begone. Húrin wanders away and seeks Morwen, and many for ages after related that they met them together in the woods lamenting their children.

The enchanted gold lays its spell on Thingol. He summons the Dwarves of Nogrod and Belegost to come and fashion it into beautiful things, and to make a necklace of great wonder whereon the Silmaril shall hang. The Dwarves plot treachery, and Thingol bitter with the curse of the gold denies them their reward. After their smithying they are driven away without payment. The Dwarves come back; aided by treachery of some Gnomes who also were bitten by the lust of the gold, they surprise Thingol on a hunt, slay him, and surprise the Thousand Caves and plunder them. (32-33)



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## 11. Ancient History

So to the cave they dragged Thorin – not too gently, for they did not love dwarves, and thought he was an enemy. In ancient days they had had wars with some of the dwarves, whom they accused of stealing their treasure. It is only fair to say that the dwarves gave a different account, and said that they only took what was their due, for the elf-king had bargained with them to shape his raw gold and silver, and had afterwards refused to give them their pay. (*Hobbit* 155)

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## 12. The Fading of the Elves

When Mandos let Beren return with Lúthien, it was only at the price that Lúthien should become as shortlived as Beren the mortal. Lúthien now fades, even as the Elves in later days faded as Men grew strong and took the goodness of earth (for the Elves needed the light of the Trees). At last she vanished, and Beren was lost, looking in vain for her, and his son Dior ruled after him. (33)

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## 13. Ulmo's Message to Turgon

Tuor lingers long in the sweet land Nan Tathrin 'Valley of Willows'; but there Ylmir himself comes up the river to visit him, and tells him of his mission. He is to bid Turgon prepare for battle against Morgoth; for Ylmir will turn the hearts of the Valar to forgive the Gnomes and send them succour. If Turgon will do this, the battle will be terrible, but the race of Orcs will perish and will not in after ages trouble Elves and Men. If not, the people of Gondolin are to prepare for flight to Sirion's mouth, where Ylmir will aid them to build a fleet and guide them back to Valinor. If Turgon does Ylmir's will Tuor is to abide a while in Gondolin and then go back to Hithlum with a force of Gnomes and draw Men once more into alliance with the Elves, for 'without Men the Elves shall not prevail against the Orcs and Balrogs'. This Ylmir does because he knows that ere seven full years are passed the doom of Gondolin will come through Meglin. (35-36)



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## 14. Eärendel's Adventures

Tuor growing old cannot forbear the call of the sea, and builds Eäramë and sails West with Idril and is heard of no more. Eärendel weds Elwing. The call of the sea is born also in him. He builds Wingelot and wishes to sail in search of his father. Ylmir bids him to sail to Valinor. Here follow the marvellous adventures of Wingelot in the seas and isles, and of how Eärendel slew Ungoliant in the South. He returned home and found the Waters of Sirion desolate. The sons of Fëanor learning of the dwelling of Elwing and the Nauglafring had come down on the people of Gondolin. In a battle all the sons of Fëanor save Maidros were slain, but the last folk of Gondolin destroyed or forced to go away and join the people of Maidros. Elwing cast the Nauglafring into the sea and leapt after it, but was changed into a white sea-bird by Ylmir, and flew to seek Eärendel, seeking about all the shores of the world. (37-38)

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## 15. Elrond the Half-Elfin

Their son (Elrond) who is half-mortal and half-elfin, a child, was saved however by Maidros. When later the Elves return to the West, bound by his mortal half he elects to stay on earth. Through him the blood of Húrin (his great-uncle) and of the Elves is yet among Men, and is seen yet in valour and in beauty and in poetry. (38)

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## 16. The Wandering Star

He comes to the magic isles, and to the Lonely Isle, and at last to the Bay of Fäerie. He climbs the hill of Côr, and walks in the deserted ways of Tûn, and his raiment becomes encrusted with the dust of diamonds and of jewels. He dares not go further into Valinor. He builds a tower on an isle in the northern seas, to which all seabirds of the world repair. He sails by the aid of their wings even over the airs in search of Elwing, but is scorched by the Sun, and hunted from the sky by the Moon, and for a long while he wanders the sky as a fugitive star. (38)



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## 17. The Last Battle

Morgoth is thrust through the Door of Night into the outer dark beyond the Walls of the World, and a guard set for ever on that Door. The lies that he sowed in the hearts of Men and Elves do not die and cannot all be slain by the Gods, but live on and bring much evil even to this day. Some say also that secretly Morgoth or his black shadow and spirit in spite of the Valar creeps back over the Walls of the World in the North and East and visits the world, others that this is Thû his great chief who escaped the Last Battle and dwells still in dark places, and perverts men to his dreadful worship. When the world is much older, and the Gods weary, Morgoth will come back through the Door, and the last battle of all will be fought. Fionwë will fight Morgoth on the plain of Valinor, and the spirit of Túrin shall be beside him; it shall be Túrin who with his black sword will slay Morgoth, and thus the children of Húrin shall be avenged. (40)

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## 18. Eärendel's Star

In those days the Silmarils shall be recovered from sea and earth and air, and Maidros shall break them and Belaurin with their fire rekindle the Two Trees, and the great light shall come forth again, and the Mountains of Valinor shall be levelled so that it goes out over the world, and Gods and Elves and Men shall grow young again, and all their dead awake.

And thus it was that the last Silmaril came into the air. The Gods adjudged the last Silmaril to Eärendel — 'until many things shall come to pass' — because of the deeds of the sons of Fëanor. Maidros is sent to Eärendel and with the aid of the Silmaril Elwing is found and restored. Eärendel's boat is drawn over Valinor to the Outer Seas, and Eärendel launches it into the outer darkness high above Sun and Moon. There he sails with the Silmaril upon his brow and Elwing at his side, the brightest of all stars, keeping watch upon Morgoth. So he shall sail until he sees the last battle gathering upon the plains of Valinor. Then he will descend.

(40-41)

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## 19. The Frame Story Retained

And this is the last end of the tales of the days before the days, in the Northern regions of the Western World. These tales are some of those remembered and sung by the fading Elves, and most by the vanished Elves of the Lonely Isle. They have been told by Elves to Men of the race of Eärendel, and most to Eriol who alone of mortals of later days sailed to the Lonely Isle, and yet came back to Lúthien, and remembered things he had heard in Cortirion, the town of the Elves in Tol Eressëa. (41)