

The Silmarillion



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF J. R. R. TOLKIEN

J. R. R. Tolkien was an acclaimed academic, author, and linguist. He was born in South Africa and moved to the Birmingham countryside at the age of three. By the age of four, he could read and write fluently, and he developed an interest in learning and inventing languages as he grew. In 1908, after the death of his mother, Tolkien met Edith Bratt, an older Protestant girl, whom Tolkien's Catholic guardian later forbade him from contacting. The two reconnected when Tolkien turned 21, six months before the start of World War I, and were married in 1916 just before Tolkien left for France. While recovering from trench fever in 1917, Tolkien began writing stories that would later be adapted into *The Book of Lost Tales* and *The Silmarillion*. After the war, Tolkien found employment with the *New English Dictionary*, Leeds University, and finally Oxford University, where he taught for 34 years. In addition to [The Hobbit](#) and *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien published influential scholarly writings during his academic career, including his lecture "Beowulf, the Monsters and the Critics" and his treatise "On Fairy-Stories." After his death in 1973, his son Christopher, known as the first scholar of Middle-earth, organized and published his father's unfinished works and other stories.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

At Oxford, Tolkien was a scholar of Old and Middle English and studied Medieval epics, particularly [Beowulf](#). Much of Tolkien's fiction contains elements suggestive of Medieval Europe and its literature, including courtly romances such as the tale of Beren and Lúthien. Tolkien also fought in World War I and lived through World War II, and it is believed that his experiences in the wars contributed to his fictional battle scenes. Tolkien was greatly troubled by the boom of industrialization in 20th century England that marred the countryside and natural landscape. This mistrust of industrialization is present in his fiction in the decline of the world approaching the Age of Men, who seek to exploit it rather than appreciate its beauty.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

With *The Silmarillion*, Tolkien intended to create a specifically English mythology, and, in doing so, was influenced by other mythology. He admitted to drawing inspiration from his academic study of [Beowulf](#) (which likely contributes its sense of fate, doom, and decline to *The Silmarillion*) and his Christian faith. Much of *The Silmarillion's* theology aligns with Christian

theology—Tolkien wrote in a 1954 letter that Ilúvatar is not a fictional deity but a fictional name for the Christian God. Consequently, the creation stories of *The Silmarillion* share many themes with the stories of the Christian Bible. The later stories of *The Silmarillion* were likely inspired by Germanic, Greek, Finnish, and Celtic myth. The story of Beren and Lúthien has been compared both to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice and the Middle English lay *Sir Orfeo*. Túrin's tragic fate contains echoes of the story of Kullervo in the Finnish *Kalevala*. *The Silmarillion* is structured as a collection of myth (such as the *Poetic Edda* and the *Mabinogion*) rather than a novel. Because of this, there are few similar recent books, besides collections like Neil Gaiman's *Norse Mythology*. A comparable work of fiction is Ursula K. Le Guin's sci-fi anthropological record *Always Coming Home*. For more tales of Arda, there are Tolkien's most famous novels (*The Lord of the Rings* and [The Hobbit](#)) and his posthumous books, such as *Beren and Lúthien* and *The Children of Húrin*, which expand upon stories of *The Silmarillion*, among others.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Silmarillion*
- **When Written:** c. 1917 to 1973
- **Where Written:** primarily Oxford, England
- **When Published:** 1977 by Tolkien's son Christopher Tolkien
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Epic, High Fantasy
- **Setting:** The world of Arda
- **Antagonist:** Melkor
- **Point of View:** Third person through an unnamed narrator

EXTRA CREDIT

Mythic Romance. The character Lúthien was based on Tolkien's wife, Edith. In 1917, Edith danced and sang for Tolkien in a glen in Yorkshire, inspiring the first meeting of Beren and Lúthien. The couple's shared gravestone in Oxford includes the characters' names after their own as a testament to their love story.

Picky Publishers. In 1937, Tolkien submitted a version of *The Silmarillion* to his publisher, who rejected it and instead requested a sequel to [The Hobbit](#). After completing this sequel, entitled *The Lord of the Rings*, he again attempted to publish *The Silmarillion* and was again denied. It was only after Tolkien's death, in the face of great demand for more of his work, that George Allen & Unwin published the book as edited by

Christopher Tolkien.



PLOT SUMMARY

The Silmarillion begins when Ilúvatar, an omniscient and omnipotent being, creates a group of spirits called the Ainur before the beginning of time. He teaches the Ainur to sing Great Music that conceives the world he subsequently brings into being. One Ainu, Melkor, creates discord and changes his part of the music to empower himself, but he's unable to affect Ilúvatar's ultimate plan. Once Ilúvatar creates the foundations of the world, the Valar, a group of 14 Ainur with dominion over different aspects of the world, descend to begin preparing it for the arrival of elves and men. Melkor repeatedly destroys the Valar's work and convinces some of the Maiar, lesser spirits, to follow him. When the world is finished, the Valar settle in the land of Valinor, across the sea from Middle-earth where Melkor resides. Around that time, the elves awaken in Middle-earth and the Valar imprison Melkor. The Valar invite the elves to join them in Valinor, leading to the sundering of the elves into many different groups across the world.

In Valinor, the elf Fëanor creates three beautiful jewels called the **Silmarils** which contain the **light** of the sacred Trees of Valinor. Meanwhile, Melkor is released from his long imprisonment by Manwë, the king of the Valar, and begins secretly working to estrange the elves from the Valar. Fëanor is influenced by Melkor's lies and considers rebellion against the Valar. After his treachery is revealed, Melkor destroys the Trees of Valinor, steals the Silmarils, and kills Fëanor's father, prompting Fëanor to lead his people, the Noldor, away from the Valar's rule and into Middle-earth. As the Noldor leave, they kill many of the Teleri elves and steal their ships, then Fëanor and his sons swear an oath to reclaim the Silmarils at any cost. The Vala Mandos declares the Doom of the Noldor, which warns that their lives will be miserable if they don't repent of their rebellion and murder. Though some turn back to Valinor, most of the Noldor refuse to repent.

Though the Two Trees which gave Valinor light are dead, the Valar salvage a fruit from one and a flower from the other and use them to create the sun and moon. Meanwhile, in the west of Middle-earth, Melian, a Maia, and her husband Thingol, an elf, rule the Sindar elves and defend their lands against Melkor, who fled Valinor to his old fortress Angband. The Noldor join the elves of Beleriand to defeat Melkor's armies, though Fëanor is killed by one of Melkor's Balrogs.

A period of peace follows as the Noldor establish kingdoms in Beleriand and Turgon, Fingolfin's son, secretly builds the city of Gondolin in a hidden valley. Turgon's sister Aredhel leaves Gondolin and marries the controlling elf Eöl. When their son Maeglin is grown, she takes him to Gondolin and dies there, defending him from Eöl. The elf Finrod discovers that men have

awoken in Middle-earth. The elves guide them and help them establish the Three Houses of men, though Melkor's spies infiltrate them and try to turn them against the elves. When Melkor attacks again, a man named Barahir rescues Finrod, who swears an oath of friendship with him. Melkor kills Fingolfin and invades Beleriand.

Beren, a man and the son of Barahir, lives as an outlaw after Melkor's most recent invasion. He wanders into Doriath, the protected forest kingdom of Thingol and Melian, and falls in love with their daughter, the elf Lúthien. When Thingol discovers their relationship, he gives Beren the task of retrieving one of the Silmarils from Melkor's crown to win Lúthien's hand. Because of his oath to Barahir, Finrod accompanies Beren to steal the Silmaril, but they're caught by Sauron and Finrod is killed. Lúthien rescues Beren with the help of Huan the hound, and the two steal a Silmaril from Melkor after Lúthien sings him to sleep. Thingol allows Beren and Lúthien's marriage, but Beren is killed soon after. When Lúthien begs the Vala Mandos, he permits her and Beren to return to Middle-earth to live and die as mortals.

After Beren and Lúthien successfully break into Angband, the Noldor unite again to attack Melkor's fortress and are badly defeated. Melkor captures a man named Húrin and curses his family to misfortune. Though Húrin's son Túrin becomes an impressive soldier, Melkor's curse leads him to accidentally murder his friend Beleg and marry his sister Nienor, whose memory is stolen by the dragon Glaurung. Túrin defeats Glaurung, who reveals Nienor's identity as he's dying, and both she and Túrin take their own lives.

In an altercation over the Silmaril, dwarves murder Thingol and later invade Doriath. Beren recovers the Silmaril, and his son Dior becomes king of Doriath. Dior, too, is quickly killed by the sons of Fëanor who invade trying to reclaim the Silmaril, but Dior's daughter Elwing takes it with her as she flees.

Húrin's nephew Tuor is led to Gondolin by the Vala Ulmo and marries Turgon's daughter Idril. When Maeglin is captured by Melkor and betrays the location of Gondolin, Tuor and Idril lead the survivors of the siege to the Havens of Sirion where their son Eärendil marries Elwing.

While Eärendil is away at sea, the sons of Fëanor attack the Havens to take Elwing's Silmaril. Ulmo helps her escape, and she and Eärendil sail to Valinor (which the Valar have shielded against ships from Middle-earth) and the power of the Silmaril allows them to reach the shore. Eärendil begs the Valar to save the elves and men of Middle-earth from Melkor, and they agree, imprisoning Melkor in the Void beyond the world. Eärendil and Elwing are granted immortality because of their elvish blood and Eärendil sails through the sky wearing the Silmaril, which becomes known on Middle-earth as a star. The other two Silmarils are lost when the remaining sons of Fëanor steal them from Manwë's herald and throw them away, since the Silmarils—which burn anything evil—scorch them.

Most of the elves on Middle-earth return to Valinor, and the Valar raise a new island between Valinor and Middle-earth called Númenor. Though the men that inhabit it are initially righteous, they grow prouder and more skeptical of the Valar as the generations pass. A group of men, the Elf-friends, remain loyal to the Valar. In Melkor's absence, Sauron begins to take power in Middle-earth, corrupting men and elves and eventually convincing the king of Númenor, Ar-Pharazôn, to invade Valinor. Ilúvatar intervenes to stop the attack, removing Valinor from the physical world, drowning Númenor, and making the world round rather than flat.

The Elf-friends, led by Elendil and his sons Isildur and Anárion, survive the drowning of Númenor and found the kingdoms of Arnor and Gondor in Middle-earth. Meanwhile, Sauron instigates the creation of the Rings of Power, which he gives to elves, men, and dwarves, and creates the One Ring to control them. When the elves realize the trap, they unite with Arnor and Gondor to lay siege to Sauron's tower. Anárion and Elendil are killed, but Isildur cuts the One Ring from Sauron's hand, defeating him. The One Ring is lost when Isildur is killed in an orc raid shortly after.

Generations pass, and Sauron emerges again, opposed by the wizard Gandalf and Isildur's heir Aragorn. The Halfling Frodo travels to Mordor and destroys the One Ring in Mount Doom, permanently defeating Sauron. Aragorn is crowned king of Arnor and Gondor, and the remaining elves sail away from Middle-earth along the Straight Road to Valinor.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Ilúvatar – Ilúvatar is the benevolent creator of the universe. Both omniscient and omnipotent, Ilúvatar uses an aspect of his power called the **Flame Imperishable** to create life and bestow free will. He creates spirits called the Ainur from parts of his mind and teaches them to sing a Great Music that conceptualizes the world. Though each Ainu understands the part of Ilúvatar's mind they are created from, only Ilúvatar knows the entirety of his divine plan for the world. After bringing the world, Arda, into being, Ilúvatar rarely interferes with it directly, instead acting through his representatives the Valar, a group of 14 Ainur. He intervenes directly to ensure the fulfillment of his plan by giving life to the dwarves created by the Vala Aulë and awakening his own creations, elves and men. Though Ilúvatar is tolerant and compassionate, smiling on his creations and providing them with the gifts of the world, he can be "terrible to behold" when provoked. When the Ainu Melkor rebels against him and creates discord during the Great Music, Ilúvatar gives him two opportunities to return to the proper harmony before growing stern and frightening and ending the Music altogether. Ilúvatar directly intervenes in the world again

when the Númenoreans begin to worship Melkor and attempt to invade Valinor, the land of the Valar. In his wrath, Ilúvatar drowns Númenor with a massive wave and removes Valinor from the physical world, completely altering the shape of Arda. Still, Ilúvatar is ultimately merciful, both in small matters (like allowing the lovers Beren and Lúthien to return to Middle-earth and live as mortals) and in his divine plan, in which the world will eventually be remade without the evil of Melkor's influence.

Melkor/Morgoth – Melkor, later called Morgoth by the elves, is the greatest of the Ainur created by Ilúvatar and the central antagonist of *The Silmarillion*. His own pride leads him to rebel during the Music of the Ainur and empower his own part of the song that plans the world, altering it and creating the idea of evil. Ilúvatar reveals that, no matter what Melkor changes or destroys in the world, it still contributes to the divine plan and only makes it more beautiful in the end. Driven by jealousy and an inflated sense of self-worth, Melkor corrupts and destroys what he can't take for himself. He ruins the natural landscapes the Valar create, throws the world into **darkness** by repeatedly destroying sources of **light**, and seduces some of the lesser spirits into joining him in his endeavor to rule the world. When the elves and men awaken, he torments them, teaching them fear, jealousy, hate, and suspicion. Melkor himself fears and hates the Valar, elves, and men and is the only Valar to experience fear. After his first imprisonment by the Valar, he feigns kindness while sowing the seeds of discontent among the elves of Valinor, leading to the departure of the Noldor. Melkor establishes himself as a king in Middle-earth and wages war with the people of Beleriand until his own arrogance creates an opportunity for his downfall. He underestimates both Fingolfin, who injures him with wounds that never heal, and Lúthien, who enchants him and steals one of the **Silmarils** from his crown. Later, after winning a decisive victory and suppressing the elven kingdoms, Melkor believes that there is no one powerful or daring enough to oppose him. Consequently, he is unprepared for an attack from the Valar and bound in chains in the Void. Though he begs for mercy, the Valar refuse, recognizing that Melkor is no longer capable of love or repentance. His evil lives on in the world after his imprisonment in the form of Sauron, his lieutenant, and the lies and fear he created among men and elves.

Fëanor – Fëanor is the eldest son of the elf king Finwë and the creator of the **Silmarils**. While extremely clever and a skilled craftsman, Fëanor is also arrogant, selfish, and volatile. Influenced by Melkor, he grows suspicious of others (particularly the Valar and his two half-brothers) and possessive of the Silmarils. After Melkor attacks, killing Finwë and stealing the Silmarils, Fëanor incites the Noldor elves to take revenge on Melkor and be free of the Valar's rule. Driven by his excessive pride, he and his followers kill many of the Teleri elves and steal their ships to sail to Middle-earth. Fëanor

allows his possessiveness of the Silmarils to become an obsession that spreads unchecked to others: first his sons, then the Noldor and people of Beleriand. As they depart, he and his sons swear an oath to attack anyone who possesses a Silmaril, and the Vala Mandos delivers the Doom of the Noldor, predicting their betrayal and failure. Mandos's curse is self-fulfilling; lacking all moderation and restraint, Fëanor almost immediately betrays half of his own people when he realizes there aren't enough ships to carry all the Noldor to Middle-earth. Fëanor departs with the people loyal to him, then burns the ships, cruelly abandoning his brother Fingolfin and his followers. Angry and rash, Fëanor runs ahead to attack Melkor's fortress during a battle but is mortally wounded by Gothmog before he can reach it. While dying, he warns his sons to keep their oath, and his fiery spirit turns his body to ash as it departs. The effects of Fëanor's failings persist beyond his death, causing centuries of conflict in Middle-earth over the Silmarils.

Sauron – Sauron is a Maia who was seduced to Melkor's side and serves as Melkor's lieutenant during the Wars of Beleriand. Cruel and clever but cowardly, Sauron rarely fights physical battles personally, preferring to use sorcery. He attacks Huan for the glory of fulfilling the prophecy of Huan's death but surrenders and abandons his fortress when Huan and Lúthien overpower him. After Melkor's downfall, Sauron feigns humility for the Valar, but eventually refuses to undergo the humiliation of accepting their judgement and begins amassing power to rule Middle-earth. Like Melkor, he spreads lies and corruption among the people of Middle-earth to make them easier to control. Sauron, crafty and malicious, accepts defeat when Ar-Pharazôn invades, but then spends years manipulating Ar-Pharazôn into open rebellion against the Valar. Sauron escapes the resulting destruction of Númenor and takes power in Mordor, where he fights the Last Alliance of elves and men. Sauron's greatest trick is his distribution of the Rings of Power among dwarves, men, and elves and his creation of the One Ring that controls the others and contains his power. A man named Isildur cuts the Ring from Sauron's hand, severing his power and incapacitating him until the Third Age when the Ring (which was lost in the meantime) is found again. Sauron then returns to Mordor and wages war against the kingdoms of men. Sauron's arrogance and pride lead to his downfall when he fails to anticipate an inconspicuous Halfling named Frodo who destroys the Ring and Sauron's power with it.

Lúthien – Lúthien is the daughter of Thingol and Melian who falls in love with the mortal man Beren. Despite her father's disapproval, she escapes captivity enforced by both Thingol and Celegorm, insistent on helping Beren. Resourceful and powerful, she rescues Beren from Sauron with the help of the hound Huan and refuses to be left behind for her own protection. Lúthien is a famous beauty and an excellent singer; her voice puts Melkor to sleep, allowing Beren to steal a

Silmaril and complete the quest Thingol assigned him. When Beren is killed soon after, Lúthien's spirit travels to the Houses of the Dead where she sings a tragic song and petitions the Vala Mandos for Beren's return. By loving Beren, Lúthien becomes entangled in his doom—both his fate to complete the quest for the Silmaril and his fate, as a mortal, to die. Still, through the Valar, Ilúvatar allows her to freely choose to return with Beren to Middle-earth and become mortal. When the Silmaril returns to her possession after Thingol's death, the sons of Fëanor don't dare to attack her for it. She doesn't become caught in the Noldor's conflict over it or become overwhelmed by greed as her father does, but it's possible that carrying the Silmaril hastens her natural death.

Beren – Beren, the son of Barahir, is the man foretold by Melian whose fate will allow him to break through her enchantments around Doriath. He falls in love with the elf Lúthien, and her father Thingol sends him on a quest to retrieve one of the **Silmarils** from Melkor's crown to win her hand. Though Beren is frightened of Thingol, he is steadfast in his devotion to Lúthien and finds the courage to undertake the quest. Beren can't accomplish the task alone and receives help from Finrod, Huan, and Lúthien herself. Since Beren doesn't want to keep the Silmaril for himself, though he successfully steals one and becomes involved in the conflict over them, he isn't possessed by greed and doesn't fall victim to betrayal as those touched by the Doom of the Noldor do. As he and Lúthien flee Melkor's tower with the Silmaril, the werewolf Carcharoth bites off Beren's hand and swallows the Silmaril. Later, Beren and Huan kill Carcharoth and get the Silmaril back, but Beren dies in the attempt. Fate demands that Beren and Lúthien be separated by death, since Lúthien, as an elf, can't die and depart the world as Beren must. However, Lúthien's spirit travels to Mandos and pleads for Beren's return, and Ilúvatar makes an exception for her, allowing her to choose the fate of men and to live and die as a mortal with Beren in Middle-earth. Their romance, which does the impossible and defies fate, becomes one of the most famous stories among the elves.

Túrin Turambar – Túrin, a man and the son of Húrin, is the primary victim of Melkor's curse of misfortune and sorrow. He's personally endangered by the curse, but also brings misfortune to those around him. He causes several accidental deaths, including that of his best friend Beleg, and his efforts to defend Nargothrond are turned against him. He is manipulated by Melkor's agent Glaurung into accidentally marrying his sister Nienor, whom he knows as Níniel, a woman with amnesia. After Túrin mortally wounds him, Glaurung reveals the truth to Nienor, who kills herself. Túrin, enraged, kills Brandir, who tells him the news of her death, then throws himself on his sword. Though Melkor engineers the worst aspects of his fate, Túrin is disadvantaged by his own volatile nature. He causes Saeros's death while taking vicious revenge on him, then refuses to accept Thingol's pardon. After a number of failures and defeats,

he grows out of the violence of his youth but doesn't lose his bravado. In Brethil, he takes on the name Turambar, meaning "master of fate," but the name doesn't protect him, and his choice to fight Glaurung leads him to his death. Túrin has opportunities to change his fate, but circumstance, Melkor's interference, and his own self-loathing lead him ultimately to his tragic end.

Nienor/Níniel – Nienor is the daughter of Húrin and Morwen and one of the victims of Melkor's curse of sorrow on Húrin's family. While searching for her brother Túrin, Nienor falls under the dragon Glaurung's spell, which takes her memory. Túrin discovers her, terrified, near the forest of Brethil, names her Níniel, and later marries her, not realizing who she is. When Glaurung comes to Brethil, Túrin mortally wounds him, but he reveals Nienor's identity to her before he dies. Pregnant and horrified, she throws herself into a ravine. Her body is never found, but her name is written on Túrin's gravestone.

Húrin – Húrin is a man and the leader of the house of Hador. He fights in the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand and volunteers to defend the retreat of Turgon's forces as the orcs overpower them. The battle becomes the final stand of the men of Dor-lómin—they're all killed, and Húrin fights alone until his eventual capture. Defiant, Húrin mocks Melkor for asking him about Gondolin's secret location. In retribution, Melkor curses his family with sorrow and misfortune, then forces Húrin to witness the deaths of his children Túrin and Nienor. Though Húrin never begs for mercy, Melkor eventually releases him. Once free, Húrin accidentally reveals the location of Gondolin to Melkor, then travels to the grave of his children, where he meets his dying wife Morwen for the last time. After burying her, he kills the dwarf Mîm and speaks spitefully to Thingol, who fostered Túrin. Melian clears Húrin's mind of his grief and madness, revealing that Melkor twisted the truth of his children's fates. Ashamed of his actions, Húrin leaves and drowns himself, fulfilling Melkor's curse.

Manwë – The husband of Varda and the King of the Valar, Manwë has power over wind and air. The giant eagles are his messengers and servants. Righteous and compassionate, he is the Vala who best understands Ilúvatar's mind and directly asks for his counsel several times during important moments in the history of the world. Manwë's strict moral compass is occasionally a disadvantage to him. After Melkor's first imprisonment by the Valar, Manwë, unable to comprehend evil and believing Melkor must be repentant, allows him to go free, with disastrous results. Manwë is a strict but merciful ruler; when the Noldor elves choose to ignore his warnings and disobey Arda's laws, he abandons Middle-earth to fight Melkor alone until Eärendil, a representative of both elves and men, petitions him for aid.

Eärendil – Eärendil the mariner is the half-elven son of Tuor and Idril and the savior of Middle-earth in the First Age. Raised in Gondolin, he flees with his parents to the Havens of Sirion,

where he marries Elwing. While Eärendil is at sea, the sons of Fëanor attack the Havens to reclaim Elwing's **Silmaril**. After Elwing escapes the battle with the Silmaril and meets Eärendil on his ship, they decide to sail to Valinor to beg the Valar for mercy and aid in the fight against Melkor. The Silmaril guides their way to the hidden shoreline of Valinor, and the Valar hear Eärendil as a representative of both elves and men. Because Eärendil is humble and pleads with them on behalf of the world rather than for his own sake, they grant his request and give his ship the power of flight. He sails in the sky wearing the Silmaril, which becomes known as a star and a beacon of hope, and fights the dragons in the Great Battle when the Valar defeat Melkor. As a half-elf, the Valar give him the choice between the fates of men and elves (mortality and immortality), and, unwilling to be separated from Elwing, he allows her to choose immortality for both of them.

Elwing – Elwing bears a **Silmaril** after the sons of Fëanor sack Menegroth and kill her father Dior. She escapes the Third Kinslaying in the form of a bird and travels to Valinor with her husband Eärendil to petition the Valar for aid. She chooses to remain there as an immortal and learns the speech of birds as he sails the sky with the Silmaril.

Finrod Felagund – Finrod, the eldest son of Finarfin, is a Noldor elf and the king of Nargothrond. Though Finrod follows Fëanor to Middle-earth and is caught in the Doom of the Noldor, he and his people don't participate in the Kinslaying of the Teleri. Wise, generous, and fair, Finrod is the first elf to meet and educate a group of men who enter Beleriand. During the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, a man named Barahir saves Finrod's life, and Finrod swears an oath of friendship with him, though his foresight tells him that the oath will lead to his death. Barahir's son Beren calls in the favor and asks for Finrod's aid in stealing a **Silmaril** from Melkor. Finrod accompanies Beren on his quest and saves his life by fighting off a werewolf when they're captured by Sauron. Finrod dies of his wounds, faithfully redeeming his oath to Barahir.

Isildur – Isildur, the bold and tenacious son of Elendil, is one of the Elf-friends during Ar-Pharazôn's rule of Númenor. When Sauron convinces Ar-Pharazôn to cut down the sacred White Tree of Númenor, Isildur sneaks into the court and steals one of its fruits to grow a new one. He escapes the fall of Númenor and founds the kingdom of Gondor with his brother Anárion in Middle-earth, then joins the Last Alliance and fights with his father and Gil-galad's elves against Sauron. After his father is killed, Isildur uses the hilt-shard of Elendil's broken sword to cut the One Ring from Sauron's hand, impairing his power and ending the war. However, the Ring attracts and compels Isildur, who refuses to destroy it as the elves recommend, enabling Sauron to later rise again. Shortly after, Isildur is killed by orcs when the Ring (which makes him invisible) abandons him and slips from his finger.

Elwë/Thingol – Elwë is one of the elf ambassadors to Valinor

and one of the kings of the Teleri elves. After marrying the Maia Melian, he becomes known as Thingol, and the two of them rule the elves of Beleriand. Thingol is willing to share land with the Noldor elves who later arrive from Valinor, though he refuses to forgive them for killing Teleri elves as they departed. Though he's selective about who is permitted into the protected kingdom of Doriath and initially mistrusts men, he later fosters a young man named Túrin and shelters his family. Thingol's possessiveness leads to his downfall when he refuses to permit a man, Beren, to marry his daughter Lúthien and instead sends him on an impossible quest to steal a **Silmaril** from Melkor's crown. Once he has the Silmaril, Thingol becomes obsessed with it and is murdered by a group of dwarves who steal it from him.

Melian – Melian is a Maia and the servant of Vána and Estë. After the elves awaken in Middle-earth, Melian meets her husband, the elf Thingol, and they build an elven kingdom called Doriath. When Melkor arrives in the surrounding areas, Melian uses her powers to create a defensive barrier around the forest. With the foresight of the Ainur, she gives coolheaded counsel and warnings to Thingol and others in Doriath. When Thingol sends Beren on an impossible quest to steal a **Silmaril** from Melkor, Melian's foresight warns her that the quest will lead to Doriath's ruin. After Thingol's death (caused by his obsession with the Silmaril and an altercation with a group of dwarves), Melian's power fades from the land, leaving Doriath defenseless against the attack, and she returns to Valinor before the kingdom falls.

Maedhros – The eldest son of Fëanor, Maedhros joins his father and brothers in swearing an oath to fight anyone who withholds one of the **Silmarils**. He's the only one of his brothers who refuses to burn the Teleri's ships after Fëanor refuses to send them back for Fingolfin's followers. After being captured by Melkor in Middle-earth and freed by his cousin Finrod, Maedhros passes on kingship over the Noldor to Fingolfin and focuses on healing the rift among the Noldor elves. He founds the Union of Maedhros to attack Melkor and reclaim the Silmarils—a battle which ends in a disastrous loss for the elves—and participates in all three of the Kinslayings in his efforts to reclaim the Silmarils. Though Maedhros is reasonable and diplomatic, he refuses to forsake his oath even if it kills him. Maedhros steals the two remaining Silmarils from Eönwë after Melkor's defeat and, unable to bear the pain when the Silmarils burn him, throws himself into a fiery pit. His fate proves the folly of excessive pride and greed.

Maeglin – The son of Aredhel and Eöl, Maeglin grows up with an interest in his mother's family, the Noldor elves. Eöl keeps Aredhel and Maeglin in the forest, but the two of them flee to the hidden city Gondolin when Maeglin is grown. Enraged, Eöl follows them and accidentally kills Aredhel. Before he's executed (by being thrown from the walls of the city), he curses Maeglin to die the same way. Maeglin has his father's

temperament—reticent and possessive—and falls in love with his uncle Turgon's daughter Idril. He becomes Turgon's counselor and follows him to war, but later becomes jealous and spiteful when a man named Tuor arrives in Gondolin, marries Idril, and wins favor with Turgon. When Maeglin disobeys Turgon and wanders outside the city, he's captured by Melkor and exchanges Gondolin's location for the promise of power and Idril's hand in marriage. During Melkor's invasion, Maeglin tries to take Idril for himself, but Tuor throws him from the walls of the city.

Turgon – Turgon is the son of Fingolfin and the ruler of the elven city Gondolin. The Vala Ulmo inspires him to secretly build Gondolin in the mountains and hide his people from Melkor. Though Turgon is strict about whom he permits to enter and leave Gondolin, he allows Húrin and Aredhel to leave despite their knowledge of Gondolin's location. Tuor leads the armies of Gondolin out of hiding to participate in the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, but their loss forces him to retreat back to the city. Though Ulmo warns Turgon against attachment to his creations and possessions, Turgon grows proud of Gondolin and refuses to flee when Tuor advises it. As one of the Noldor elves who departed Valinor with Fëanor, Turgon is caught in the Doom of the Noldor; because of it, treachery will destroy him. His pride leads to the deaths of many of his people when his nephew Maeglin gives Melkor the location of the city in exchange for Turgon's daughter Idril. Turgon is killed defending the city during Melkor's attack, and Gondolin is destroyed.

Tuor – Tuor, a man and the son of Huor, is chosen by Ulmo to be his messenger and led to the coast, where he falls in love with the sea. Though Tuor delivers Ulmo's warning to Turgon that Gondolin will soon be betrayed, Turgon disregards it. Tuor marries Turgon's daughter Idril, and they have a son named Eärendil. When Turgon's nephew Maeglin reveals Gondolin's location to Melkor and tries to grab Idril, Tuor throws him from the city walls. He and Idril lead the survivors of Gondolin to safety at the mouth of the River Sirion. Drawn by the sea, Tuor and Idril eventually sail west towards Valinor and are never seen again.

Idril – Idril is Turgon's daughter who crosses the Helcaraxë with Fingolfin's Noldor and later lives in Gondolin. Maeglin wants to marry her to inherit Gondolin, but she mistrusts him and instead marries Tuor, a mortal man. Idril creates a secret passage out of Gondolin, allowing many people to flee during the fall of the city. At the end of Tuor's life, she sails west with him, leaving their son Eärendil behind.

Ar-Pharazôn – Ar-Pharazôn is the last king of Númenor. He takes power from the rightful queen, his cousin Tar-Míriel, by marrying her unlawfully. Proudful and power-hungry, Ar-Pharazôn decides to become king of all men and force Sauron to be his servant. Once in Númenor, Sauron uses Ar-Pharazôn's arrogance and fear to manipulate him into ruining Númenorean

tradition, worshipping Melkor, and eventually invading Valinor to overthrow the Valar and (so Ar-Pharazôn thinks) become immortal. Ar-Pharazôn is buried in a landslide in Valinor when Ilúvatar removes Valinor from the physical world and drowns the island of Númenor beneath a massive wave.

Elendil – Elendil is the son of Amandil and the leader of the Elf-friends. Righteous and thoughtful, he escapes the fall of Númenor with his followers and founds the kingdom of Arnor in Middle-earth. When Sauron takes power in Mordor and attacks Gondor, the kingdom founded by Elendil's sons (Isildur and Anárion), Elendil founds the Last Alliance and joins forces with the elves of Gil-galad to attack Mordor. At the end of a seven-year siege on Sauron's tower, Sauron emerges and personally kills Elendil. His sword breaks beneath him and isn't reforged until his descendant Aragorn's lifetime.

Ungoliant – Ungoliant is a creature with unknown origins in the shape of a giant spider. Though she was once a servant of Melkor, she left him to live alone in Avathar. With the power to consume **light** and spin webs of **darkness** from it, she both hates light and is drawn by it. Melkor promises to feed her in exchange for her help in destroying the Two Trees of Valinor and devouring their light. Ungoliant is characterized by her all-consuming greed and gluttony; she grows monstrously huge after feeding on the light but is still hungry. When Melkor gives her jewels stolen from Fëanor to eat but refuses to give her the **Silmarils**, she tries to eat him in retribution. His Balrogs rescue him and drive Ungoliant into the mountains where she mates with lesser spiders and leaves her offspring behind. Though her fate is unknown, it's possible that she consumes herself in her insatiable hunger.

Glaurung – Glaurung, one of the first dragons, serves Melkor and bolsters the strength of his orc armies. He leads the orc attack against Nargothrond and meets Túrin, the son of Húrin, whose family Melkor has cursed to misfortune. Glaurung is Melkor's instrument for enacting the curse; he sets Túrin on the path to ruin by convincing him to go looking for his mother and his sister Nienor. Glaurung is crafty and persuasive—he has the ability to twist the truth and make Túrin believe the worst of himself. When Nienor arrives at Nargothrond looking for her brother, Glaurung places her under a spell that completely wipes out her memory. Several years later, Glaurung travels to the forest of Brethil, where Túrin and Nienor live as a married couple, unaware that they're siblings. Túrin stabs Glaurung, who reveals the secret of her identity to Nienor before he dies, leading to the suicides of both Nienor and Túrin and fulfilling Melkor's curse.

Maglor – Maglor is a famous singer and the second son of Fëanor. Though he later regrets it, he participates in the killing of the Teleri at Alqualondë and swears the Oath of Fëanor. He joins his brothers in the Third Kinslaying but adopts Elrond and Elros after the battle. When Melkor is imprisoned, Maglor wants to return to Valinor and receive the Valar's judgement,

but Maedhros convinces him to steal the two remaining **Silmarils** from Eönwë. Unable to bear the pain of holding the Silmaril, Maglor throws it into the sea and wanders the shore singing about his regret.

Fingolfin – Fingolfin is the second son of Finwë and the half-brother of Fëanor. Though he publicly quarrels with Fëanor, he later follows him to Middle-earth. Calm and steadfast, Fingolfin leads his group of Noldor elves across a treacherous field of ice to reach Middle-earth after Fëanor's people depart on the ships and leave them behind. When the two groups reunite in Middle-earth, Fëanor is dead and Fingolfin, who settles in Hithlum, becomes the first High King of the Noldor. During the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, when Melkor suddenly attacks the elven kingdoms, Fingolfin fights him in single combat. Driven by his rage, Fingolfin wounds Melkor seven times and cleaves off half of his foot before Melkor kills him. The eagle Thorondor rescues his body, and Melkor's wounds never heal.

Celegorm – Celegorm is the third son of Fëanor and a friend of Oromë and the hound Huan. Bound by his father's oath to reclaim the **Silmarils**, he leads an attack against the orcs harassing Círdan. While living in Nargothrond with his brother Curufin, Celegorm meets Beren and later Lúthien, whom he kidnaps, hoping to marry her. Orodreth banishes him from Nargothrond, and Huan abandons him. He's killed by Dior during the Second Kinslaying in Doriath.

Caranthir – Caranthir is the fourth son of Fëanor. Violent and quick to anger, he hates the children of Finarfin, and his outburst against Angrod contributes to the division between the Noldor. In East Beleriand, Caranthir encounters the dwarves and rescues Haleth's people from the orcs. He dies with Celegorm and Curufin in the Second Kinslaying while trying to reclaim Dior's **Silmaril**.

Curufin – Curufin is the crafty son of Fëanor and the father of Celebrimbor. He disheartens the elves of Nargothrond while living there with his brother Celegorm, leading them to avoid open war until the time of Túrin. The two brothers kidnap Lúthien for Celegorm to marry and later attack her and Beren. After Beren nearly kills him and steals his horse, Curufin, embarrassed and angry, attempts to shoot Lúthien. He dies trying to reclaim the **Silmaril** from Dior during the Second Kinslaying in Doriath.

Ulmo – Ulmo is the Vala who controls Arda's water and oceans. Rather than living in Valinor with the other Valar, he prefers to dwell in the oceans where he can watch over Middle-earth and advise men and elves. He frequently offers warnings of Melkor's imminent attacks and occasionally intervenes directly to protect the people of Middle-earth, creating mists and calming storms.

Aredhel – Stubborn and independent, Aredhel leaves Gondolin to search for her old friends, the sons of Fëanor. In her

wanderings, she gets caught in Eöl's spell and later marries him. He forbids her from seeing any of her Noldor family, though she secretly tells their son Maeglin stories about them. Aredhel and Maeglin flee to Gondolin, and she reunites with her brother Turgon. She dies protecting Maeglin from Eöl, who follows them to Gondolin.

Eöl – Eöl is a Dark elf who lives in the forest of Nan Elmoth where he traps Aredhel and later marries her. He follows Aredhel and their son Maeglin when they flee to Gondolin and accidentally kills Aredhel while trying to stab Maeglin. He is put to death by being thrown from the walls and curses Maeglin to die the same way.

Fingon – The elf Fingon is the eldest son of Fingolfin and becomes High King of the Noldor after his death. After the Noldor elves travel to Middle-earth, Fingon seeks to end the Noldor's internal feud (caused when Fëanor abandoned the followers of Fingolfin) by reuniting with Fëanor's eldest son Maedhros. Fingon valiantly climbs the mountains above Angband where Melkor has imprisoned Maedhros and frees him, unifying the Noldor with their friendship. Fingon remains Maedhros's closest ally in fighting Melkor until the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand when he is killed by Gothmog.

Finwë – Finwë is one of first elf ambassadors to Valinor and becomes the first king of the Noldor. When his eldest son Fëanor is banished from Tirion for twelve years by the Valar for threatening Fëanor's younger half-brother Fingolfin, Finwë accompanies him in exile. At the end of the twelve years, Fëanor is invited to Manwë's mountain, but Finwë remains in exile at Formenos and refuses to return until Fëanor has been officially pardoned by the Valar. While the Valar and the elves are occupied, Melkor kills Finwë at the doors of Formenos and steals the **Silmarils**. Finwë's death is the first violent death in Valinor and the catalyst for the Noldor's departure to Middle-earth.

Gandalf/Mithrandir/Olórin – Olórin is a Maia and a student of Nienna, learning pity, patience, and generosity from her. He travels to Middle-earth in the third age as a wizard and takes the names Gandalf and Mithrandir. His role there is to spread hope and wisdom among the Children of Ilúvatar and to help them overcome Sauron. He sits on the White Council and monitors Sauron while he's in Mirkwood, urging the Council to drive him out before he becomes too powerful. Though Galadriel wants him to lead the Council rather than Saruman, Gandalf refuses, unwilling to have allegiance to anyone but the Valar. He's the bearer of the elven ring Narya—given to him by Círdan—and the first to discover the whereabouts of the One Ring among the Halflings. It's primarily due to his planning that the One Ring is destroyed and Sauron is defeated.

Galadriel – Galadriel is the wife of Celeborn and the only daughter of Finarfin. Though she doesn't care about the Silmarils, she follows Fëanor to Middle-earth to rule her own

land. After learning magic and lore from Melian, she rules Lothlórien with the power of the ring Nenyá. She's one of the last remaining elves in Middle-earth during the Third Age and sits on the White Council with the other elf lords.

Thorondor – Thorondor is the Lord of Manwë's giant eagles. He watches over the Noldor, frequently interfering to remove elves from dangerous situations in Middle-earth. He and his eagles rescue Fingon, Maedhros, Beren, Lúthien, Húrin, Huor, and the bodies of Fingolfin and Glorfindel. Thorondor also scratches Melkor's face and leads the eagles against the dragons during the Great Battle.

Huan – Huan the hound is one of Oromë's hunting dogs, gifted to Celegorm, but abandons Celegorm's service to aid Beren and Lúthien in the quest for the **Silmaril**. He has the ability to speak three times before his death; he speaks once to Lúthien when he frees her from Celegorm, once to both Beren and Lúthien to explain a plan for infiltrating Angband, and once to Beren alone, to say goodbye as he dies of his wounds after killing the werewolf Carcharoth.

Finarfin – Finarfin is the youngest and wisest son of Finwë. He initially follows Fëanor towards Middle-earth for the sake of his children, who want to accompany Fëanor and their cousins, but he turns back after Mandos pronounces the Doom of the Noldor. After receiving the Valar's pardon, he rules the Noldor remaining in Valinor.

Beleg – Beleg is one of the wardens of the elf kingdom Doriath and becomes friends with Túrin, Thingol's young human ward. The two defend Doriath together until Túrin causes the death of an elf named Saeros and flees. Beleg receives permission to follow and protect Túrin with the sword Anglachel, though Melian warns him that the sword is malicious. Beleg helps Túrin lead his band of outlaws against Melkor's orcs until Túrin is betrayed and captured. When Beleg rescues Túrin from a band of orcs, Túrin, frightened and unable to recognize Beleg in the dark, kills Beleg with Anglachel. Túrin buries Beleg in the morning, composes a song for him, and remembers him as a steadfast friend.

Mablung – Mablung is one of the wardens of Doriath. After Saeros's death, he counsels Túrin to return to Doriath to ask Thingol's pardon, but Túrin refuses. Later, Mablung witnesses Morwen's disappearance and Nienor's memory loss. When he reunites with Túrin, he explains their fates, confirming for Túrin that his sister Nienor is also his wife Níniel and driving Túrin to suicide. Mablung regrets being used as an instrument of Melkor's curse on the children of Húrin. He's killed when Melian departs Doriath and the dwarves of Nogrod invade to steal the **Silmaril**.

Anárion – Anárion, his father Elendil, and his brother Isildur remain loyal to the Valar and friendly with the elves despite Númenor's corruption. After the Elf-friends escape the destruction of Númenor, Anárion and Isildur establish and rule

the kingdom of Gondor together. He marches against Sauron in the War of the Last Alliance and is killed during the siege of Barad-dûr.

Elrond – Called “Half-Elven,” Elrond is the son of Eärendil and Elwing and chooses the fate of the elves. He fights alongside Gil-galad in the War of the Last Alliance and later founds Rivendell, which he protects with the power of the ring Vilya. He’s close friends with Gandalf and sits on the White Council.

Gil-galad – Gil-galad, the son of Fingon, is sent to live with Círdan on the sea during the Wars of Beleriand and becomes the last High King of the Noldor after Turgon’s death. He remains in Middle-earth after most of the elves depart for Valinor to rule the Grey Havens, which he defends against Sauron with the help of the Númenoreans. He joins with Elendil in the War of the Last Alliance to defeat Sauron, who kills him during the siege of Barad-dûr.

Círdan – Círdan is a shipbuilder and a Teleri elf who remains behind in Middle-earth during the journey to Valinor and becomes the lord of the elves in Falas. Later, he escapes Melkor’s attacks by ship with Gil-galad and participates in the Wars of Beleriand by delivering Ulmo’s warnings and sailing to aid several smaller battles. After Melkor is defeated, he is one of the few elves to remain in Middle-earth. He rules the Grey Havens, briefly bears the ring Narya before giving it to Gandalf, and departs Middle-earth on the last elven ship headed to the west.

Amandil – Amandil is an Elf-friend and the lord of Andúnië in Númenor. He counsels Ar-Pharazôn to trust the elves and follow the Valar until Sauron convinces Ar-Pharazôn to dismiss him. When he hears about Ar-Pharazôn’s plan to attack Valinor, he prepares his son Elendil to flee Númenor with the Elf-friends, then sails towards Valinor to petition the Valar for mercy. He’s never seen again.

Gwindor – Gwindor is a noble elf from Nargothrond who leads the first charge in the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand when his brother Gelmír is brutally executed. His company is ambushed, and he’s held captive for 14 years before he escapes. Gwindor brings Túrin to Nargothrond, where Finduilas, who used to love Gwindor, falls in love with Túrin instead. He’s mortally wounded during Glaurung’s invasion of Nargothrond and begs Túrin to save Finduilas and avoid his own terrible fate.

Finduilas – The daughter of the elf Orodreth, Finduilas falls in love with Túrin when he arrives in Nargothrond. Though, by rescuing her when Nargothrond is sacked, Túrin could have avoided his fate of accidentally marrying his sister Nienor, Glaurung tricks him into abandoning her. When the orcs are attacked by the men of Brethil, they kill their captives rather than allowing them to be rescued, and Finduilas leaves a message for Túrin before she dies. She’s buried on the border of the forest.

Morwen – Morwen, originally from the house of Bëor, falls victim to Melkor’s curse of misfortune on her husband Húrin and their children Túrin and Nienor. She stubbornly refuses to leave Dor-lómin even when it’s invaded, and only leaves when Nienor is an adult. Shortly after, while searching for Túrin, she gets lost in a fog created by Glaurung and isn’t seen again until she meets Húrin at the grave of their children in Brethil. She dies there and Húrin buries her on the other side of Túrin and Nienor’s tombstone.

Tar-Palantir – As the son of an Elf-friend, Tar-Palantir, the 24th king of Númenor, returns to the tradition of choosing a royal name in the elvish language Quenya. He attempts to repair the harm the past few kings have done and resumes Númenor’s ancient religious ceremonies. His brother Gimilkhâd leads a group of men who oppose him, and Tar-Palantir eventually dies grieving the estrangement between Númenor and the elves.

Dior – Dior is the son of Beren and Lúthien. After Thingol is killed by the dwarves of Nogrod, Dior moves to Doriath to rule the Sindar, accompanied by his wife Nimloth and their children Elwing, Eluréd, and Elurín. Dior receives the **Silmaril** after his parents die, and the sons of Fëanor kill him and destroy Doriath while trying to fulfill their oath and reclaim it.

Saruman/Curunír – Saruman is the first wizard to arrive in Middle-earth and the leader of the White Council. He studies the lore of the Rings of Power and eventually begins to want power for himself. While searching for the One Ring, he refuses to take action against Sauron as Gandalf suggests, allowing Sauron to reclaim Mordor. Saruman establishes himself as the lord of Isengard and is later overthrown after his treachery is revealed to the White Council.

Haleth – Haleth takes charge of the Haladin after her father Haldad is killed and keeps them alive for seven days during the orc siege until Caranthir comes to their aid. Caranthir offers her land and protection, but she refuses and leads the Haladin east to the Forest of Brethil. Her people become one of the primary houses of men, known as the House of Haleth.

Barahir – Barahir is the brother of Bregolas and takes leadership of the House of Bëor after his death. During the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, Barahir rescues Finrod, who gives Barahir his ring and swears to help him and his family. After Melkor wins the battle and occupies the land, Barahir and 12 companions, including his son Beren, become outlaws. He’s later killed by Sauron’s forces.

Brandir – Brandir is the lord of the house of Haleth when Túrin arrives in Brethil. He falls in love with Níniel and hears Glaurung’s final words about her identity as Túrin’s sister, but because he walks with a limp from a childhood injury, he’s unable to stop her subsequent suicide. Enraged, he kills Dorlas and tells the people of Brethil what he witnessed. Túrin kills him for slandering him.

Carcharoth – Carcharoth is a werewolf raised personally by

Melkor to guard Angband against Huan. When Beren and Lúthien leave Angband with the **Silmaril**, Carcharoth bites off Beren's hand, swallowing the Silmaril, which burns him and drives him mad with pain. He runs away, killing everything in his path, and eventually reaches Doriath, where he's killed by Beren and Huan, though he mortally wounds both.

Gelmir – Gelmir is an elf of Nargothrond and the brother of Gwindor. He's captured and blinded by Melkor during the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand. Later, he's taken from prison and brought onto the battlefield to be mutilated and killed in front of Gwindor and Fingon's forces. His death begins the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand.

Uinen – Uinen is a Maia and a servant of Ulmo. She's the only one who can calm Ossë's raging waves and returns him to Ulmo's service after Melkor corrupts him. When the Noldor elves attack the Teleri elves and steal their ships, she creates the storm that drowns many of them.

Mîm – Mîm is a dwarf who lives at Amon Rûdh and takes in Túrin and his outlaws after they spare his life. He later betrays Túrin's outlaws to a group of orcs with their assurance that Túrin will be spared. He moves into Nargothrond after Glaurung abandons it, and he's killed by Húrin there.

Amrod – Amrod and his twin brother Amras are the youngest sons of Fëanor. He and Amras both swear the Oath of Fëanor and frequently shelter their brothers during the war against Melkor. They're both killed during the Third Kinslaying when they attack the remnants of Doriath at the Havens of Sirion.

Saeros – A Nandor elf living in Doriath, Saeros is jealous of the honor Túrin receives from Thingol. He insults Túrin at dinner, calling his people wild and animalistic. Túrin forces him to run naked through the woods as a punishment, but he falls into a ravine and dies, leading Túrin to flee Doriath.

Gorlim – Gorlim, one of Barahir's outlaws, is captured as he returns to his house to look for his missing wife. When Sauron promises to reunite him with his wife, he reveals the location of Barahir's camp. After Sauron kills him, he appears to Beren in a dream to admit his mistake.

Amlach – Amlach is a man who argues at a council that men shouldn't aid the elves in their war against Melkor. It's later revealed that Amlach wasn't at the council at all, and the person who spoke was Melkor's spy who took on his appearance. The real Amlach joins Maedhros's service.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Bëor – The leader of the first men to travel into Beleriand, Bëor becomes Finrod's close companion. He settles his people in Estolad before following Finrod to Nargothrond, where he lives as Finrod's vassal until his death. His people become known as the House of Bëor.

Varda – Varda is the Queen of the Valar and the creator of the

stars. She's married to Manwë and revered by the elves. Melkor fears and hates her more than any of the other Valar since she controls **light**, which he's unable to manipulate.

Aulë – Aulë is the Vala responsible for rock, stone, and the other substances that compose Arda. Married to Yavanna, he's the world's first craftsman and the creator of the dwarves.

Yavanna – Known as the Giver of Fruits, Yavanna is the Vala responsible for creating and tending the plants and growing things of Arda. She creates the Two Trees of Valinor and is married to Aulë.

Námo/Mandos – Married to Vairë, Mandos rules the Houses of the Dead and pronounces Ilúvatar's judgement in matters of fate. He announces the Doom of the Noldor as they depart Valinor for Middle-earth. He's moved to pity only once, when Lúthien sings to him, and he returns her lover Beren.

Oromë – Married to Vána, Oromë is the Vala responsible for the hunt. He loves Middle-earth and hunts Melkor's monsters there during the Years of the Trees. He is the Vala that discovers the elves and later leads them to Valinor.

Tulkas – Tulkas the Valiant is physically the strongest Vala and descends to Arda to fight Melkor. Married to Nessa, he enjoys contests of strength and remains one of Melkor's most outspoken opponents in the First Age.

Irmo – Irmo is the Vala who creates dreams and visions. He's the husband of Estë and the brother of Mandos and Nienna.

Vairë – Known as the Weaver, Vairë is the Vala who weaves the story of Arda that hangs in the halls of her husband Mandos.

Nienna – Nienna is the Vala responsible for grief, pity, and hope. She mourns for the suffering of Arda that Melkor causes and often visits the Houses of the Dead to comfort the spirits there.

Nessa – Nessa is the Vala known for her swiftness and her affinity for deer. She marries Tulkas in the Spring of Arda and dances for the Valar just before Melkor's attack on Almaren.

Estë – The wife of Irmo, Estë is a gentle and grey-robed Vala. She is a healer of pain and weariness and provides rest for the people of Valinor.

Vána – Married to Oromë, Vána is the Vala with power over youth. Flowers grow and birds sing wherever she goes.

Eönwë – Eönwë is the herald of Manwë and one of the Chiefs of the Maiar. He greets Eärendil when he arrives in Valinor and guards the **Silmarils** after Melkor's defeat during the Wars of Beleriand.

Ossë – Ossë and his wife Uinen are the Maiar that are best known to elves and men. As a servant of Ulmo, he teaches music, lore, and ship-building to the elves.

Elros – Elros is the Half-elven son of Eärendil and Elwing, fostered by Maglor. Unlike his brother Elrond, who chooses the immortality of the elves, Elros chooses to be mortal and

becomes the first king of Númenor. He builds cities and rules for over 400 years.

Celebrimbor – The estranged son of Curufin, Celebrimbor is a skilled jewel-smith who creates several lesser Rings of Power under Sauron’s instruction and the three elven Rings of Power alone. He’s killed in Eregion during the conflict between Sauron and the elves after the creation of the One Ring.

Frodo – Frodo is the Halfling who travels to Mordor with his servant during the War of the Ring and throws the One Ring into the fires of Mount Doom, destroying it and incapacitating Sauron.

Aragorn – Aragorn is the heir of Isildur who is very similar to Elendil. He carries Elendil’s reforged sword to battle against Sauron’s forces and becomes King of Gondor and Arnor.

Huor – Huor is the grandson of Hador and the younger brother of Húrin. He dies in the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand while covering Turgon’s retreat. His wife Rían gives birth to their son Tuor after his death.

Orodreth – Orodreth, one of Finarfin’s sons, becomes the King of Nargothrond after Finrod and exiles Celegorm and Curufin. He dies in battle when Glaurung conquers Nargothrond.

Tilion – Tilion is a Maia and a hunter of Oromë who volunteers to guide the moon in its path across the sky. He fends off an attack from Melkor’s shadow spirits and faithfully follows Arien, who guides the sun, though his pace isn’t consistent.

Arien – Arien is the Maia who guides the sun across the sky. As a fire spirit, she can withstand the heat of Laurelin’s **light** and cared for the Tree before its destruction.

Glorfindel – Glorfindel is one of the captains of Gondolin and the lord of a noble house. He fights a Balrog that attacks the survivors of Gondolin as they flee the city, and both he and the Balrog fall from the mountain to their deaths.

Amras – Amras is the twin brother of Amrod and the youngest son of Fëanor. Though not active in the war against Melkor, Amras is present at each of the kinslayings incited by his brothers. He dies during the Third Kinslaying while attacking the remnants of Doriath for Elwing’s **Silmaril**.

Angrod – The son of Finarfin, Angrod is one of the few Noldor elves allowed into Doriath. His presence there leads Thingol to ban the use of Quenya, the elvish language, in Beleriand. He and his brother Aegnor are killed in the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand.

Aegnor – Aegnor is one of the sons of the Noldor elf Finarfin. He and his brother Angrod follow Fëanor and their friend Fingon to Middle-earth, and later both die in the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand.

Tar-Míriel – As Tar-Palantir’s only child, Tar-Míriel should have become the queen of Númenor. However, her cousin Ar-Pharazôn marries her unwillingly and steals her throne. During

Númenor’s destruction, Tar-Míriel is swept away by the wave as she attempts to reach the top of Ilúvatar’s Sacred Mountain.

Voronwë – Voronwë is an elf from Gondolin and a messenger on one of the ships sent by Turgon to seek aid from Valinor that never reaches its destination. The Vala Ulmo saves him from drowning so he can lead Tuor to Gondolin.

Ar-Adûnakhôr Adûnakhôr is the twentieth king of Númenor and the first king not to choose a royal name in Quenya. Instead, he chooses a name meaning “Lord of the West,” appropriating the title from Manwë.

Rían – Rían is the wife of Huor and the mother of Tuor. After Huor’s death in the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, she leaves Tuor in the care of the elves of Mithrim and dies of grief on the mass grave from the battle.

Míriel – Míriel is the first wife of Finwë and the mother of Fëanor. She loses all her strength during Fëanor’s birth and travels to Lórien to rest. Once there, her spirit leaves her body and goes to the Houses of the Dead.

Daeron – Daeron is a Sindarin elf and Thingol’s minstrel in Doriath. He’s in love with Lúthien and betrays her meetings with Beren to Thingol out of jealousy. After her disappearance, Daeron wanders Middle-earth looking for her.

Hador – Hador is a descendant of Malach and a servant of Fingolfin, who gives him the fiefdom of Dor-lómin. He forms a noble house of men called the house of Hador and dies defending Fingolfin in the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand.

Nerdanel – Nerdanel is a skilled sculptor and the wife of Fëanor. Though she’s as stubborn as her husband, she’s more patient than him and able to calm his temper. When Fëanor is banished from Tirion, they become estranged.

Emeldir – The Manhearted wife of Barahir and mother of Beren, Emeldir leads the women and children of the House of Bëor out of Dorthonion when it becomes overrun by orcs.

Halmir – Halmir is the lord of the House of Haleth during the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand. When orcs invade Brethil, Thingol sends Beleg and a group of elves to help Halmir fight them.

Haldad – Haldad, the father of Haleth, is part of a group of leaderless men called the Haladin. When orcs attack, he takes charge and builds a stockade. He’s killed leading an attack against the orcs.

Ulfang – Ulfang is a man and a servant of Melkor who joins Maedhros’s union to delay his army’s arrival at Angband. Later, when Maedhros’s army arrives at the battlefield, Ulfang’s men turn and attack it from the rear.

Tar-Atanamir – Though he’s the thirteenth king of Númenor, Tar-Atanamir is the first king of Númenor to cling to power and rule for life rather than passing the throne on to his son during

his lifetime. His reign is the beginning of Númenor's decline in virtue.

Dorlas – Dorlas is one of the woodmen of Brethil who witness Finduilas's death. When Glaurung appears on the edge of the forest, Dorlas promises to help Túrin kill him, but runs into the woods in fear, where he's murdered by Brandir after Níniel's suicide.

Draugluin – Draugluin is the first werewolf and the servant of Sauron. He's killed by Huan during Beren's quest for the **Silmaril**, and Beren uses his pelt to sneak into Angband unnoticed.

Denethor – Denethor, the son of Lenwë, leads the Nandor elves into Beleriand. He allies with Thingol to fight orcs and is killed during the first battle of the Wars of Beleriand.

Gothmog – Gothmog is the Lord of Balrogs and the captain of Angband. He mortally wounds Fëanor and kills Fingon during the Wars of Beleriand. He's killed during the fall of Gondolin.

Galdor – Galdor is the son of Hador and the father of Húrin and Huor. He's killed during an orc invasion in Hithlum seven years before the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand.

Radagast – With an affinity for plants and animals, Radagast is the third wizard to arrive in Middle-earth as Sauron's power grows in Dol Guldur.

Olwë – Olwë is one of the two kings of the Teleri elves. He leads his people to Tol Eressëa and Valinor after the disappearance of his brother Elwë in Beleriand.

Lenwë – Lenwë leads a group of elves known as the Nandor who break off from the Teleri on the journey to Valinor and settle near the River Anduin.

Eärnur – Eärnur is the last king of Gondor before the Stewards rule in his name. A Ringwraith challenges him to single combat, then kidnaps him. He's never seen again.

Meneldil – Meneldil is the son of Anárion and becomes the third king of Gondor after the War of the Last Alliance.

Valandil – Valandil becomes the king of Arnor after the War of the Last Alliance when his three older brothers and his father Isildur are killed by orcs.

Gimilkhâd – Gimilkhâd leads a group of men who oppose his elder brother King Tar-Palantir's policies and adherence to ancient tradition in Númenor.

Boromir – Boromir is the grandson of Bëor. The elves of Beleriand appoint him the leader of the House of Bëor and give him the land of Ladros to rule.

Ingwë – Ingwë is one of the three elf ambassadors who initially travel to Valinor. He's the king of the Vanyar and the High King of the elves in Valinor.

Eluréd – Eluréd is one of the two sons of Dior. He and his brother Elruín are abandoned to die in the forest when the sons of Fëanor invade Doriath.

Elurín – Elurín is one of the sons of Dior. When the sons of Fëanor invade Doriath, Celegorm's servants leave him and his brother Eluréd in the forest to die.

Hunthor – Related to Brandir, Hunthor is one of the men of Brethil. He volunteers to help Túrin kill Glaurung and is killed in the attempt by a falling stone.

Indis – Indis is Finwë's second wife and the mother of Fingolfin and Finarfin. Fëanor dislikes her and his half-brothers.

Nimloth – Nimloth is Dior's wife and Celeborn's relative. She's killed when the sons of Fëanor attack Doriath to take Dior's **Silmaril**.

Celeborn – Celeborn is a kinsman of Thingol who marries Galadriel. She stays in Doriath to be close to him rather than following Finrod to Nargothrond.

Malach – Malach is a man who serves Fingolfin and learns to speak Sindarin. He's the ancestor of the House of Hador.

Bregolas – Bregolas is the lord of the House of Bëor, killed during the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand.

Thranduil – Thranduil is the elven King of Mirkwood. His people try to defend the forest as Sauron's evil invades it.

Bereg – Bereg is a man who vehemently argues against men aiding elves in the war against Melkor. He leads a thousand of Bëor's people south out of Beleriand.

Rúmil – Rúmil is the Loremaster of the Noldor elves who invents writing.

Ilmarë – One of the two Chiefs of the Maiar, Ilmarë is the handmaid of Varda.

Thuringwethil – Thuringwethil is the vampire messenger of Sauron. When Beren and Lúthien sneak into Angband, Lúthien disguises herself as Thuringwethil.

Ancalagon – Ancalagon is the greatest of Melkor's dragons. Eärendil kills him during the Great Battle and throws him down onto the towers of Thangorodrim, destroying them.

TERMS

Ainu/Ainur – The Ainur are the spirits created by **Ilúvatar** before the beginning of the world. Each Ainu (the singular of Ainur) is born out of Ilúvatar's thoughts and understands the specific part of Ilúvatar's mind they come from. Ilúvatar teaches them music, and together they sing the Music of the Ainur from which the world is created. The Ainur are immortal and can be weakened but not killed; **Sauron's** spirit is weakened enough by the destruction of the One Ring that he can no longer affect the physical world. Though, as creatures of spirit, the Ainur don't naturally possess physical bodies, they can clothe themselves in tangible and visible forms. The Ainur who choose to descend to the world are called the Valar and the Maiar.

Arda – Arda is the Quenya word for “Realm” and refers to the world brought into being by **Ilúvatar** after its conceptualization during the Music of the Ainur. It’s the home of the Children of Ilúvatar (elves and men) as well as the dwarves, some of the Ainur, and the beings corrupted by **Melkor**. Originally flat, it’s composed of three main continents: Aman, where the Valar reside, Middle-earth, where men and elves live, and an empty eastern land. Its natural landscapes are crafted by the Valar and altered by subsequent battles with Melkor. During the drowning of Númenor, Ilúvatar removes the land of the Valar from the physical world and raises new continents as Arda becomes round. Arda exists within Eä, the created universe.

Balrog – The Balrogs are fire spirits, a type of Maiar corrupted into **Melkor**’s service. As Melkor’s servants they take physical forms composed of shadow and fire and carry whips. **Gothmog** is the Lord of Balrogs and the captain of Melkor’s fortress Angband.

Maia/Maiar – The less powerful Ainur who descend to Arda to help and serve the Valar are called the Maiar. During the construction of the world, some of the Maiar are seduced by **Melkor** into his service, including the Maia (the singular of Maiar) called **Sauron**. The wizards—sent by the Valar to Middle-earth to aid in Sauron’s defeat—are also Maiar.

Quenya – Quenya is the elven language developed among the Elves of the Light who reside in Valinor. The Noldor elves bring a dialect of Quenya with them to Middle-earth, but **Thingol** bans its use in Beleriand, and Sindarin becomes the primary language among the Noldor.

Vala/Valar – The fourteen most powerful Ainur who descend to build and rule the world are called the Valar. Each Vala (the singular of Valar) has an affinity for a certain domain (such as air, water, and concepts like grief and mercy) and shapes that aspect of the world. Though some of the Valar (like **Ulmo**) intervene more frequently in the lives of elves and men, most of them remain in Valinor and don’t return to Middle-earth after **Melkor**’s final defeat. They are ultimately separated from Middle-earth when **Ilúvatar** removes Valinor from the physical world, though they continue to watch over it from afar.

Valinor – Also known as the Blessed Realm and the undying lands, Valinor is the land of the Valar and the occupied portion of the continent of Aman that lies west of Middle-earth. Inhabited by the Valar, the Vanyar elves, the Teleri elves, and some of the Noldor elves, it has three main cities (Valmar, Alqualondë, and Tirion) and an island (Tol Eressëa) just off the eastern coast. The spirits of the elves on Middle-earth return to Valinor after they die to reside in the Houses of the Dead overseen by the Vala **Mandos**. Valinor is protected from the rest of the world by the Pelóri mountain range and, after the departure of the Noldor, enchantments that turn away ships. After the drowning of Númenor, **Ilúvatar** removes Valinor from the physical world, leaving it accessible only to elves via the

Straight Road.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



UNITY VS. DIVISION

In *The Silmarillion*, J.R.R. Tolkien’s collection of elven myths, the Valar (the spirits who create and rule the world), elves, and men are each brought into being as a like-minded, united group that becomes divided over time. The elves naturally break into smaller groups based on where they want to live and what leader they want to follow. Similarly, the men slowly separate as they leave the place of their awakening to wander Middle-earth. However, Melkor, a rebellious Vala, *intentionally* creates division within and between the races to sow discord, weaken them, and seize power over the world. During the Music of the Ainur, the great song that plans for the creation of the world, Melkor attempts to take control from his creator Ilúvatar, dividing the Ainur between them and throwing the song into chaos. Later, in the Years of the **Trees**, Melkor spreads lies and corrupts the Noldor elves, turning them against both the Valar and their fellow elves, the Teleri. Once divided, they’re nearly impossible to reunite, even to oppose Melkor together. In this way, the struggle between unity and division in Arda (the earth) parallels the cosmic struggle between good and evil. After Melkor’s imprisonment, Sauron takes up his master’s role, spreading lies and estranging the Númenoreans (a race of men) from the other races and their own people. Their division leads to the downfall of Númenor and the sundering of the entire world, when Ilúvatar permanently removes Valinor (the realm of the Valar) from the reach of Middle-earth. While separation is natural in a world with free will and diversity, *The Silmarillion* reveals how division and estrangement can lead to suspicion, weakness, violence, and chaos.

Even before the beginning of time and the creation of the world, Melkor foments division and estrangement. He divides the Ainur (a group made of the Valar and lesser spirits called the Maiar) during the Great Music by changing his part of the song and leading other Ainur to harmonize with him rather than with Ilúvatar. Because Melkor separates the Ainur and creates discordance in the song that plans the world, evil exists in the world that is manifested from that song. This first act of division is the root of all immorality and alienation in Arda. Once the physical creation of the world begins, Melkor continues separating the Ainur by seducing many Maiar into

following him and supporting his domination of Arda, forming the ranks in the battle between good and evil.

Though the elves separate naturally as they grow and migrate around Middle-earth, Melkor intentionally alienates and isolates them to make them easier to manipulate and conquer. In the early years of their existence, he kidnaps many elves, corrupting them into the orcs that he uses as his army and fundamentally dividing the race. Others he divides more subtly, with lies and rumors, making them suspicious of each other and of the Valar. The age of peace in Valinor is ruined when Melkor influences the elf Fëanor to perceive the Valar as tyrants. Fëanor, in turn, convinces his people to mistrust the Valar and depart for Middle-earth, leading to the first killing of elves (the Teleri) by other elves (the Noldor). This estrangement between the Noldor and the other elves isn't overcome until Melkor is finally defeated by the Valar and Fëanor's closest followers are already dead.

In his final bid for dominion over Middle-earth, Melkor attempts to divide the houses of men, alienating them from each other and the elves, since their combined power is a threat to him. During the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, the elf Maedhros unites a large portion of the people of western Middle-earth, though there are elves who still refuse to ally with the Noldor, even to fight Melkor. Orodreth and Thingol's refusal to aid them contributes to the crushing defeat of Maedhros's allies, as does Melkor's corruption of some of the men of Maedhros's army who hinder and betray him. After the battle, Melkor's forces advance into Beleriand, isolating the communities of elves and men and making it nearly impossible for them to unite and rise against him. Divided, they don't pose a military threat to his rule. Only Eärendil, a representative of both elves and men, is able to convince the Valar to reunite Middle-earth and restrain Melkor who divides them.

Sauron, Melkor's lieutenant, uses the same tools—lies and alienation—to weaken the remaining elves and burgeoning kingdoms of men in Middle-earth. He worsens the Númenoreans' estrangement from the elves and the Valar and turns them against their own people, the Elf-friends. He even alienates them from Ilúvatar by convincing them to worship Melkor as the true god. This manipulation, as well as the estrangement that culminates in Númenor attempting to conquer Valinor, leads to the greatest division in Arda's history, enacted by Ilúvatar himself: the sundering of the world, when Valinor (along with the Valar and most of the elves) are removed from the physical world. In this way, for the sake of peace, Ilúvatar embodies and makes physical a deep and preexisting estrangement.

Eventual separation from a whole is a fact of Arda and part of the natural progression of the world. Elves follow the rulers and lifestyles that align with their specific priorities. Brothers split apart and rule different kingdoms. The very land is remade, breaking apart and being reshaped. Men, born in the

east, spread into the west. Free will, individuality, diversity, and growing populations demand it. While it can be natural and benign, division is also a powerful tool for evil. It creates weakness and instability that the antagonists of *The Silmarillion* are quick to take advantage of. As Melkor created discord in the Music of the Ainur, so too does division and alienation create discord in the world of Arda, allowing evil the opportunity to take root.



FATE, DOOM, AND FREE WILL

The Silmarillion begins with the first conceptualization of the world, Arda, by the omniscient being Ilúvatar, and explores the boundaries of free will in a world controlled by fate. There are three kinds of fate at work in Arda—one is individually driven by choices and actions, one is the result of curses and inheritance, and one is the plan of Ilúvatar that drives the world towards a preordained “doom” (a word Tolkien uses to mean a neutral or even positive fated end). The fates of individuals are almost exclusively driven by their own choices rather than divine intervention. Curses, however, such as Mandos's curse on the Noldor and Melkor's curse on the children of Húrin, create fates that are far more difficult to avoid. Still, the Noldor bring their dark fates upon themselves with their greed and violence, and the children of Húrin suffer primarily because of Melkor's interference in their lives. Finally, complicating the first two forms of fate, the “doom” of the world is both malleable and inevitable; no matter what individual choices the people of Arda make, everything contributes to Ilúvatar's wonderful and glorious plan. Not even Melkor can ruin it, despite his rebellion against Ilúvatar and his efforts to mar the beauty and goodness of Arda. In *The Silmarillion*, then, fate ultimately means that things like individual free will and curses work together to bring about Ilúvatar's intentions for the world, though precisely *how* they interact isn't comprehensible to beings who aren't omniscient.

Free will exists on Arda and is granted to all creations of Ilúvatar. The Vala Aulë's dwarves—living beings with speech but no ability to think or move without their creator's command—exemplify life without free will. When Ilúvatar adopts Aulë's dwarves and grants them free will, they're able to feel fear, move without prompting, and “speak with their own voices,” like elves and men. Men, in particular, receive the gift of disobedience from Ilúvatar. He grants them the ability to “shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is fate to all things else,” meaning, if they wish, they can rebel against Ilúvatar's plan for the world. Even so, human disobedience will only increase “the glory” of Ilúvatar's world. All their actions, rebellious or obedient, will contribute to the fulfillment of the doom of the world. The same is true of Melkor, who rebels against Ilúvatar during the Music of the Ainur and later, on Arda, tries to

subvert his plan for the world. Everything Melkor does is incorporated into the doom of the world and is “tributary to its glory”—he can create bitter cold, but it only inadvertently leads to the beauty of snow and frost. Though free will allows for alterations and subversions within Ilúvatar’s plan, in other words, the world’s doom is inescapable.

Some individuals, such as Beren, have a predestined fate that doesn’t impact their free will but is instead the outcome of their choices. Fate isn’t a controlling force; it arises from Ilúvatar’s foreknowledge of the choices characters will make and where those choices will lead them. When Ilúvatar chooses to reveal a future outcome to the Valar or Melian, the people of Arda understand it as fate—something that will definitely happen—and often use language that suggests fate itself has the power to ensure an event, whereas actually, it’s the result of freely made choices. Beren is described as being “defended by fate” during an orc raid, a romantic figure of speech indicating that Beren’s swiftness protects him, and Ilúvatar already knows that Beren’s choices will lead him to a more significant death later. Still, the fates of individuals are uncertain to everyone but Ilúvatar. Melian doesn’t know how Beren’s quest will end because Beren and Lúthien’s choices will impact their fates. Beren and Lúthien aren’t bound by fate, but rather consciously engage with it, deciding whether to “turn from” it or “challenge” it together. For example, Lúthien is “caught” in the fate of men, mortality (which is part of Ilúvatar’s inescapable plan for the world). Her doom, to become mortal and die with Beren, only comes upon her after she falls in love with him—though it might have been foreseen, it isn’t beyond her control. Ultimately, Mandos (the Vala who declares fates) gives Lúthien a choice, and she freely chooses to become mortal to remain with Beren.

Even curses, though they influence the lives of their subjects, are still the results of individual choices and free will. Melkor curses Húrin’s children to sorrow and misfortune but understands that there are opportunities for them to change their fate. Melkor sends Glaurung to personally ensure Túrin’s misery and prevent him from making the choice (rescuing Finduilas) that could have saved him from disaster. Mandos’s curse on the Noldor is similar—it is their punishment and a result of their violent and hateful choices. Mandos gives them an opportunity to avoid it (returning to Valinor to repent), but most of them refuse it. In doing so, they choose to accept the consequences of the curse and the fate of a bad end.

The subject of fate in Arda is a complicated one; not even the Valar (spirits created by Ilúvatar who helped conceptualize the world and now oversee it) have the capacity to fully understand it. Though Ilúvatar showed them a vision of the world that spanned millennia of its existence, they didn’t see the ultimate doom of the world and, since they aren’t omniscient, can’t understand how individuals’ choices and resulting fates contribute to it. Still, they know that Ilúvatar’s doom is

inexorable, and they trust that every choice they and the other inhabitants of Arda make (even Melkor) helps to create it.



PRIDE AND ARROGANCE

In *The Silmarillion*, the world of Arda is plagued by the evil that comes from excessive pride. Before the world is created, Melkor is driven by his pride—his “vain” desire for power and glory—to alter his portion of the Great Music taught to him by his creator Ilúvatar, disrupting the music and marring the world born from it. Fëanor and his sons, in their arrogance, swear an oath that’s impossible to fulfill, leading to centuries of war and conflict in Middle-earth. Their pride and anger drive them to take violent revenge on Melkor and kill anyone—such as the Teleri—who impedes them. Pride is what fuels both Melkor and Sauron’s desire to dominate the world and is a signifier of their evil; they feign humility when pretending to be good. However, every excessively prideful being—Vala, elf, or man—is eventually humbled by their own arrogance. During the Wars of Beleriand, Melkor is defeated because he arrogantly believes that no one will challenge him. The Númenoreans grow so arrogant that they try to overthrow the Valar and are wiped out by Ilúvatar’s intervention. Through the downfalls of the prideful, *The Silmarillion* shows that, though excessive pride is the origin of evil in Arda, it’s also a weakness that begets its own end.

Melkor’s pride is the driving force in his desire to rule Arda, but it ultimately brings about his downfall. His pride motivates him to rebel against Ilúvatar and attempt to usurp him, aggrandizing his own portion of the Great Music. Pride convinces Melkor that he deserves absolute dominion, not only over the Great Music, but also over Arda, the world born from it. With the certainty that he will one day rule the world and enslave all its inhabitants, Melkor spends thousands of years fighting the Valar and killing and corrupting elves and humans. Still, his pride and self-regard lead him to his two worst defeats in Middle-earth. When Lúthien enters Angband, he underestimates her, planning her torture rather than recognizing her as a formidable opponent and allowing her and Beren to steal one of the **Silmarils** from his crown. Later, after his victory in the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand and the fall of Gondolin, Melkor thinks that he’s finally beaten the Noldor and permanently claimed Beleriand. Believing no one can—or would dare—oppose him, he fails to anticipate an attack from the west and falls to the Valar. His pride and his belief in his own power are weaknesses that lead directly to his imprisonment and the end of his presence in Arda.

Many of the tragedies of the elves during the Quenta Silmarillion (the large third part of *The Silmarillion* that refers to the history of the Silmarils) originate in the pride of the Noldor elves and specifically in the pride of Fëanor, “eminent in self-will and arrogance.” Fëanor’s unwillingness to be ruled by the Valar

compels him to lead the Noldor from Valinor immediately and violently. When the Teleri elves refuse to offer the Noldor their ships, the Noldor take the ships by force, killing many of the Teleri and incurring the wrath of the Valar. Fëanor and his sons swear an oath to take revenge on Melkor, an oath that emerges primarily from Fëanor's wounded pride. Melkor has wronged Fëanor by murdering his father, but, more importantly to the oath, he has insulted Fëanor by stealing the Silmarils, which Fëanor believes are rightfully his alone. Consumed by his pride, Fëanor has no reason or moderation; he's killed while approaching Angband alone to attack Melkor and reclaim the Silmarils. After Fëanor's death, his oath drives his sons to commit two more Kinslayings, where five of the seven brothers are killed. The other two live to recognize the futility of their prideful oath and the excessiveness of their search for the Silmarils, though Maedhros takes his own life soon after. Ultimately, Fëanor's pride achieves nothing but the death and destruction of himself, his sons, and most of his people.

Though the Númenoreans are a righteous and enlightened people at the founding of their kingdom, as the generations pass they grow more prideful and less willing to obey the Valar. The ultimate expression of Númenor's pride, the king Ar-Pharazôn's attempt to overthrow the Valar and become immortal, results in direct divine interference from Ilúvatar, who stops the invasion and sinks Númenor beneath a massive wave. As a city drowned by its own excessive pride, Númenor exemplifies the consequences of arrogance in *The Silmarillion*. Pride doesn't just come before a fall, as the proverb says—it *creates* the fall. Humility is the mark of the righteous in Arda. In contrast, excessive pride both reveals evil and ensures its own end.



GREED, JEALOUSY, AND OBSESSION

Greed and jealousy plague the world of Arda in *The Silmarillion*. The primary objects of greed and obsession in the First Age are the titular **Silmarils**, three jewels created by the elf Fëanor. Melkor, himself jealous of the other Valar, spreads greed and jealousy among the elves and men to sow discord, like when he suggests to Fëanor that the Valar want his Silmarils. Later, Fëanor becomes obsessively protective of the Silmarils, and eventually won't let anyone else see them, though they're made of the sacred **light** of the Trees of Valinor, a communal resource. When Melkor steals them, Fëanor and his sons swear an oath to retrieve them at any cost, leading to hundreds of years of war and betrayal in Middle-earth. Ultimately, the Valar Mandos places a curse on Fëanor and his followers that subverts all their efforts, preventing them from recovering the Silmarils and giving all their endeavors an "evil end." Beyond the Silmarils, conflicts arise from jealousy and obsession over power, love, land, and immortality. Greed spreads and corrupts; those with power long to keep it. Through its portrayal of greed in Arda, *The*

Silmarillion emphasizes that, when what should be shared—such as light, beauty, and power—is instead hoarded, evil and corruption result.

Though the Silmarils contain the light of the Trees of Valinor, meant for *all* the elves and Valar to enjoy, they become the subjects of obsessive greed—resulting in conflict that doesn't end until two Silmarils are lost and one is removed from Middle-earth. Envious of Fëanor, Melkor kills Fëanor's father Finwe and steals the Silmarils. The monstrous creature Ungoliant, in turn, wishes to consume their light and tries to kill Melkor to take them. Fëanor and his seven sons, possessive and obsessed, swear an oath to take the Silmarils by force from anyone who tries to keep them, and Fëanor is quickly killed trying to reclaim them from Melkor. Nearly anyone who expresses even a passing desire for the Silmarils, like Thingol, is pulled into the conflict and consumed by greed. By giving Beren the task of bringing him a Silmaril from Melkor's crown to win Lúthien's hand, Thingol involves himself in the conflict and becomes obsessed with the Silmaril, carrying it day and night. A group of dwarves murders Thingol, steals the Silmaril, and lays waste to his kingdom. When his grandson, Dior, reclaims it, Fëanor's sons attack and kill him. Elwing, Dior's daughter, escapes with the Silmaril, and Fëanor's sons hunt her down as well, attacking and killing their fellow elves for the third time in pursuit of the Silmarils. Hindered by Mandos's curse and the powerful greed the Silmarils incur, Fëanor's sons never succeed in claiming Beren's Silmaril. The Silmarils are sought after and fought over like no other resource in Middle-earth; they aren't cursed, but Fëanor's obsession with them spreads like a sickness among the elves.

Greed in other forms similarly leads to chaos, violence, and corruption in Middle-earth. Eöl, possessive of his family, abuses and eventually kills his wife Aredhel and curses their son Maeglin before his own execution. Maeglin, in turn, is corrupted by the same greed as his father. Jealous when his own love, Idril, marries another, he betrays the hidden city of Gondolin to Melkor in exchange for power and Idril's hand. Gondolin, the last real stronghold against Melkor, falls, and many elves die, including Maeglin. The island of Númenor, greedy for power and the ultimate potential of immortality (though it's impossible for men), invades Middle-earth, alienates its own people, and eventually attempts to overthrow the Valar. Númenor gains nothing from its greed but its own swift destruction. Melkor and Sauron both hoard power jealously, planning to rule and enslave the people of Middle-earth and inciting centuries of war. Much of Melkor's cruelty is motivated by "envy"—envy toward Ilúvatar who is able to create life, envy toward the Valar who are happy and beautiful, and envy toward the elves and men for whom the world was created. Once among the people of Middle-earth, he whispers in their ears, spreading his jealousy, greed, suspicion, and discontent to others.

Greed and obsession in *The Silmarillion* corrupt, not only causing destruction, but also spreading to others. Once caught, they're difficult to overcome. The bloody conflict over the Silmarils ends only when the remaining sons of Fëanor, Maedhros and Maglor, are forced to realize they have no claim on the two Silmarils from Melkor's crown. Maglor is glad to see the third Silmaril sailing through the sky as a star, safe from conflict and visible for everyone to enjoy. He recognizes it for what it is: light and beauty meant to be shared rather than hidden. Still, he and Maedhros are unavoidably caught in the violence their own greed has created, Maedhros taking his life and Maglor wandering Middle-earth in regret. They, like Fëanor, Melkor, Sauron, and others, tried to keep at any cost what should be shared, bringing evil upon themselves and others.



INEVITABLE LOSS

The Silmarillion tells the story of the world, Arda, from its conception to the end of the Third Age and the departure of the elves. Loss is woven into the world even before its creation. The Ainu Melkor creates discord in the music that plans the world, damaging it. Melkor continues filling the world with loss even as the Ainu work to shape it before the beginning of time, corrupting and destroying their creations. The people of Arda lose more battles than they win and struggle to prevail over the evil that invades them. Men and elves die violently, kingdoms fall, and the elven realms fade. Even the elves themselves, who are immortal, leave the world eventually. They learn that the world around them is transient, while they persist within it. Over their long lives, they become weary of the constant loss and change, and all choose to pass away to the ancient west, leaving only men behind. The novel spans thousands of years of Arda's history as beauty, goodness, and wisdom are lost and then regained, though in a lesser form, in repeating cycles. Still, at the end of the world, when loss is absolute, the Ainur will sing Ilúvatar's music again and remake the world without grief and decline. *The Silmarillion* presents a world in which loss is inherent and inevitable—everything fades in the passage of time and the presence of evil—but salvation is inevitable, too.

By rebelling against Ilúvatar and altering the Music of the Ainur, Melkor creates evil in the plan for the world. As Melkor's theme competes with Ilúvatar's plan, Ilúvatar adds a new theme to the discord that incorporates Melkor's theme into itself. This new theme, "blended with an immeasurable sorrow, from which its beauty chiefly came," introduces loss and sorrow into the world as a result of Melkor's evil. Melkor's actions constitute something like a biblical fall, in which the universe transitions from a state of innocence to a state of disobedience and guilt, making loss and sin unavoidable. Though Melkor creates evil, changing the world and forcing it into an inevitable decline, he can't fundamentally subvert Ilúvatar's fate for the world. The

details of this fate are unknown to anyone but Ilúvatar, but the Ainur know that they will eventually sing the Second Music of the Ainur to recreate the world without Melkor's influence. Every singer will fully understand their part of the music and perform it perfectly, restarting the cycle without evil, loss, and grief.

The world is marked by cycles of loss—the loss of morality, beauty, people, and nations—in rises and inevitable falls. Much of the sorrow and loss in Arda is the result of the losing fight against Melkor's evil and corruption, both externally on battlefields and internally within individual minds. After the destruction of Almaren, Valinor rises, then declines with the destruction of the Trees and the Kinslaying of the elves. The elven kingdoms in Beleriand are nearly all destroyed by Melkor's armies (such as Gondolin) or by his indirect influence (such as Doriath, invaded by the sons of Fëanor bound by their oath). Men and elves have righteous intentions but find themselves repeatedly corrupted by Melkor's legacy: pride, suspicion, and evil. The kingdom of Númenor falls prey to pride that results in its total obliteration. Some, though not all, of the wisdom of Númenor is salvaged in the burgeoning nations of Arnor and Gondor, yet even they decline in a world marked by evil, where loss is inevitable. Despite the inevitability of the pattern, though, the forces of good still rise after a fall to try again.

Some loss—such as the fate of men to leave Arda when they die and the fate of the elves to reside in the Houses of the Dead if they're killed—is inherent to the world and part of Ilúvatar's plan. Elves watch the world around them change and fade, while men fade and die too quickly to truly understand the transience of the world. These losses are exacerbated by Melkor's influence, which causes the world to fade and makes men fear death. Uncounted men and elves are betrayed and killed during the Wars of Beleriand and Melkor's efforts to conquer Arda. The survivors must contend with the loss of their people, friends, and family, separated from them by fate and death. This loss, while painful, is only temporary; all Ilúvatar's creations will be reunited at the end of the world.

The greatest indicator of inevitable loss in *The Silmarillion* is the departure of the elves and the fading of the other mythic creatures from Middle-earth at the end of the Third Age after the defeat of Sauron. The destruction of the One Ring means the weakening of the three elven Rings of Power that sustained Rivendell and Lothlórien. The elves, the first children of Arda, have no place on Middle-earth once the elven realms fade and the land itself stops sustaining them. Most of them have never seen Valinor and have spent their entire lives on Middle-earth—leaving means losing everything they've ever known, even if there is another land waiting for them in the ancient west. As the elves mourn the loss Middle-earth, Middle-earth suffers from the loss of the elves. When they leave, they take their great age, wisdom, and knowledge of Arda's history with

them, abandoning the land to men, who are called the Strangers because of their short lives on Arda and their correspondingly short memories. The cycles of loss imply that Middle-earth will continue to decline as generations pass and grow farther away from the wisdom and righteousness of the world's earlier history. Though the world dwindles—losing more and more of itself until it reaches its inevitable end—redemption, unification, and healing are just as inescapable in the world's remaking.



MYTH AND MEMORY

In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, a collection of stories spanning from the conception of the world to the Dominion of Men, the narrator frequently mentions how characters and events persist in history, myth, rumor, and memory. Though Tolkien doesn't name or acknowledge his fictional narrator, the narrator has the perspective of an elf, along with the knowledge and reverence for the past an elf would have, adding depth and reality to the stories. The narrator reveals that the elves still mourn Lúthien's beauty, theorizes about the motivations of the Valar, explains that the elves praise the final stand of Húrin's men, and admits when they don't know the truth of a character's fate. These details suggest that when people forget their history, they lose both wisdom and identity. These additions by the narrator, who writes after the events have passed, reveal the long persistence of the stories recorded in *The Silmarillion*, emphasizing their importance to the elves and the universal importance of preserving history and myth.

Through the narrator's asides, Tolkien indicates that there is life and activity in Arda beyond what is recorded in the stories themselves, adding depth to the world. The narrator is only the conveyor of the stories, not a participant in them. Through the narrator's perspective, the reader is privy not only to the history of the elves, but the ongoing elven tradition that interacts with that history. After telling the story of Beren and Lúthien up to Lúthien's decision to become mortal, the narrator returns to the time of their writing, in which "the beloved" Lúthien died "long ago" and the elves still see her beauty in her descendants. By breaking out of the story and explaining how it relates to the beliefs and heritage of the living elves, the narrator creates a sense of realism and the passage of time. The references to the narrator's present emphasize that these stories have survived in the memory of the elves despite the fact that "all the world is changed," and that many years—even millennia—have passed since they happened.

By presenting the stories of *The Silmarillion* from the perspective of an elven narrator, Tolkien reveals what historic and mythic events are important enough to persist in elven memory and be recorded. The narrator explicitly states the impact and effects of some of the stories on the lives and traditions of the elves. While telling the story of Húrin's last

stand to cover Turgon's retreat during the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, the narrator pauses to explain how the elven community perceives it: as the "most renowned" act of heroism in war ever performed by a man on behalf of an elf. By remarking on how some of the stories are understood by the elves of his present time, the narrator indicates that these stories aren't collected merely for entertainment, but because they each hold deep meaning for the elves, emphasizing the values they share and the lessons important to their history.

The elven narrator also emphasizes the universal importance of history and myth in culture and identity. At times, the narrator admits that certain information (such as the fates of characters like Tuor, and the exact reasoning behind the Vala Manwë's decisions) is beyond the realm of elven knowledge. The narrator's language around these instances—"it is said" and "the elves believe"—indicates that the elves are actively thinking and speaking about these stories, interpreting their past, and examining how it interacts with their present. Despite the incomplete nature of these stories, the elves still find them important enough to remember and, more importantly, to incorporate into their belief system and collective identity.

The stories themselves warn against the dangers of forgetting the past and the wisdom of elders, as seen in the fall of Gondolin, the fall of Númenor, and every time characters ignore hard-won experiential advice. History frequently repeats itself; by preserving their history and familiarizing themselves with the stories of *The Silmarillion*, the elves are equipped to avoid the mistakes of their predecessors, understand their traditions, and engage with their identity.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



LIGHT

In *The Silmarillion*, light, which takes many forms, symbolizes beauty, reason, hope, and creativity.

Light appears first as the Flame Imperishable, the part of Ilúvatar's power that gives life, brings things into being, and forms the heart of the world. The Flame Imperishable is divine light (reminiscent of the biblical Holy Spirit, which sometimes appears as flame), and all light created afterwards by the Valar has a symbolic connection to Ilúvatar, mirroring his goodness and creative power. Light is also found in the two Lamps created by the Valar, which foster the growth of the plants and animals on Middle-earth. That light is destroyed, however, when Melkor breaks the Lamps and their fire rages across the Isle of Almaren. Melkor's destructive fire—such as the sacrificial fire of his altar in Númenor and his fire spirit servants the Balrogs—complicates light as a symbol and corrupts it into

a distorted parody of the Flame Imperishable.

After the destruction of the Lamps, Yavanna grows the Two Trees of Valinor, which produce living light untouched by evil. *The Silmarillion* also mentions something called the Light of Valinor, which refers both to the unsullied light of the Trees and the reason and righteousness of its inhabitants. The Light of Valinor can spread from the inhabitants of Valinor to the people of Middle-earth and is visible in the faces of those who embody Valinor's goodness, beauty, and wisdom. While the Trees provide light for Valinor, Middle-earth is lit only by the stars, created by Varda and sacred to the elves. Later, the Star of Eärendil, one of the **Silmarils** that also contain the light of the Trees, becomes a sign of hope and a guiding light for the people of Middle-earth. Though the Silmarils are bitterly fought over, the beauty of the Star of Eärendil is shared by all. After Melkor and Ungoliant destroy the Trees and send the world into **darkness**, the Valar create the sun and moon from the remnants of the Trees to brighten Middle-earth and frighten Melkor into hiding.



DARKNESS

Darkness symbolizes evil, obscurity, fear, and helplessness in *The Silmarillion*. Melkor repeatedly destroys the **light** created by the Valar and brings darkness to the world, using shadow as a shield to hide beneath and as a weapon to confuse and frighten enemy armies. By spreading fear of the unknown dark among elves and men, Melkor and Sauron are able to seduce some of the people of Middle-earth into following them and depending on their teachings and protection. Melkor's physical form casts a large shadow, and he is referred to metaphorically in terms of shadow and darkness; his influence in Middle-earth is a shadow and the threat of his rule is the night.

Darkness is both a lack of the creativity and clarity of light and occasionally "a thing with being of its own," like Ungoliant's Darkness. Melkor attacks Valinor and uses Ungoliant, a spider-like creature, to destroy the Two Trees that provide it with light, plunging it into darkness. Ungoliant has the power to consume light and spin it into webs of darkness, but, when she consumes the sacred light of the Two Trees, she creates an actively malicious Darkness with the power to enter the minds of her enemies and incapacitate their wills.

When not used by Melkor and Sauron, darkness and shadow can represent a more benign obscurity, meant to guard and conceal, as it does in the cloaks of Lúthien and Tuor. In certain instances, such as the twilight under which the elves are born and the nighttime—both tempered by Varda's stars which provide beauty and visibility—darkness can be restful, healing, and restorative. Still, because of the threat of Melkor's monsters and the fear of uncertainty he spread among elves and men, the night is often perceived as a time of fear and

danger.



THE SILMARILS

The Silmarils are three diamond-like jewels created by the elf Fëanor that contain the **light** of the Two Trees of Valinor. Though they're indestructible and incorruptible, blessed by the Vala Varda to burn anything evil that touches them, they symbolize the evils of greed, malice, and possessiveness. The Silmarils are stolen and fought over for as long as they exist in Middle-earth. Their creator Fëanor initially wears them in Valinor, allowing the elves and Valar to see and enjoy them, but eventually becomes possessive and suspicious, locking them away. When Melkor steals them away to Middle-earth, Fëanor convinces his people the Noldor to follow him and reclaim the Silmarils. Fëanor and his sons are immoderate and obsessive; they murder fellow elves, steal ships, and swear an oath to pursue the Silmarils at any cost. Long after Fëanor's death, a man named Beren steals one of the Silmarils from Melkor to give to the elf Thingol. Thingol, like Fëanor, becomes obsessed with the Silmaril, and defends it at the cost of his own life. Nearly everyone who carries the Silmaril meets a bloody end; battles rage and kingdoms fall as the sons of Fëanor try to reclaim it. The violence ends only when the Silmarils are removed from Middle-earth altogether. The Silmaril Beren stole is placed in the sky as a star, to be enjoyed by everyone. The other two Silmarils, taken from Melkor by the Valar, are stolen one last time in an attack by the two remaining sons of Fëanor. When the Silmarils burn them, they realize that their greed has led them to evil and that they have no claim on the jewels. They throw one Silmaril into the ocean and the other into a fiery pit. In this way, the Silmarils come to represent the futility of possessiveness—they're out of Middle-earth's reach forever, and no individual can own them.



QUOTES


Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Mariner Books edition of *The Silmarillion* published in 2014.

Ainulindalë Quotes

☛ Never since have the Ainur made any music like to this music, though it has been said that a greater still shall be made before Ilúvatar by the choirs of the Ainur and the Children of Ilúvatar after the end of days. Then the themes of Ilúvatar shall be played aright, and take Being in the moment of their utterance, for all shall then understand fully his intent in their part, and each shall know the comprehension of each, and Ilúvatar shall give to their thoughts the secret fire, being well pleased.

Related Characters: Ilúvatar, Melkor/Morgoth

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Music of the Ainur (immortal spirits born from the creator Ilúvatar's thoughts) is only beginning, and the world hasn't yet been brought into being. Even so, the elven narrator anticipates the end of the world, which will overturn all the problems created by Melkor's rebellion. During the Music of the Ainur, Melkor mars the originally planned musical theme and divides the Ainur between himself and Ilúvatar, creating a world that contains division and evil. The fact that the narrator already looks forward to the end of the world, when Melkor's influence will be nullified, indicates a preoccupation in elven tradition with the decline of the world and an interest in, if not eagerness for, its ultimate fate.

This passage reveals the fate of the world and records the beliefs of the elves. Though only Ilúvatar understands exactly how it will come about, his unavoidable plan is for the world to eventually end and be remade. Though the "end of days" is inevitable, so is the salvation that follows—perfect understanding, perfect collaboration, and a resulting world made "aright." The second Music of the Ainur will heal the division created by Melkor by reuniting elves and men (whose fates separate them beyond the world after death) and joining them together with the Ainur to create the new world. The ultimate fulfillment of Ilúvatar's plan is a consummate act of creativity and cooperation that unites all of Ilúvatar's creations.

●● But being alone he had begun to conceive thoughts of his own unlike those of his brethren.

Some of these thoughts he now wove into his music, and straightway discord rose about him, and many that sang nigh him grew despondent, and their thought was disturbed and their music faltered; but some began to attune their music to his rather than to the thought which they had at first.

Related Characters: Melkor/Morgoth, Ilúvatar

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 16

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the Ainu Melkor interrupts the Music of the Ainur by adding his own arrogant and self-absorbed thoughts to the song. While separated from the other Ainur, Melkor has ceased to think of himself in the way he was created—as part of the collective. Driven by pride and greed, he now considers himself an exceptional individual, more deserving of glory than the other Ainur and even Ilúvatar, and seeks to aggrandize himself beyond them.

After Melkor becomes estranged from his fellow Ainur, he spreads division and estrangement to others. His new melody causes "discord," interrupting and confusing the Ainur around him. Some falter, some stop singing altogether, and some choose to "attune" themselves to Melkor, following him and rejecting Ilúvatar. Melkor's selfishness provokes a rift in Ilúvatar's first creations, breaking what was formerly a unified group and a harmonious song.

Melkor's estrangement doesn't affect only himself and the other Ainur—it also influences the establishment of the world to come. The Music of the Ainur creates the plan for the creation of the world; Melkor's interruptions become manifested as the capacity for evil and sin. In this way, estrangement and division are the cause of all evil in the world.

●● And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.

Related Characters: Ilúvatar (speaker), Melkor/Morgoth

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage Ilúvatar assures Melkor and the other Ainur that, though the world is now marred by sin and evil because of Melkor's rebellion during the Music of the Ainur, Melkor hasn't altered the ultimate fate of the world. Only Ilúvatar understands how exactly the free will of his creations interacts with his overarching plan for the universe, and he makes it clear to the Ainur that the fulfillment of his plan is inevitable. All the evil that will plague the world because of Melkor *must necessarily* contribute to a beautiful and "wonderful" fate. Melkor's

excessive self-pride is misplaced—since he only understands part of Ilúvatar’s mind, he doesn’t recognize the implications of the fact that Ilúvatar created him. There’s nothing Melkor can do or think that Ilúvatar, his all-powerful and all-knowing creator, isn’t already aware of.

Though Melkor creates division, everything, including him, has its ultimate source in Ilúvatar and is born out of his unity. The estrangement Melkor cultivates among the Ainur (and later among elves and men) is real, but superficial compared to Ilúvatar, the singular unifying origin of the universe. As Ilúvatar’s fate for the world is inevitable, so is Ilúvatar himself—everything, even Melkor’s bitterness and alienation, is born from him and eventually returns to him.

Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ Therefore he willed that the hearts of Men should seek beyond the world and should find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else; and of their operation everything should be, in form and deed, completed, and the world fulfilled unto the last and smallest.

[...]

It is one with this gift of freedom that the children of Men dwell only a short space in the world alive, and are not bound to it, and depart soon whither the Elves know not. Whereas the Elves remain until the end of days, and their love of the Earth and all the world is more single and more poignant therefore, and as the years lengthen ever more sorrowful.

Related Characters: Ilúvatar

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 41-42

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Ilúvatar establishes the opposing fates of elves and men and bestows the gift of freedom on men. The interplay between fate and free will in the world is complex and incomprehensible to anyone besides Ilúvatar. Though all Ilúvatar’s creations have free will and the ability to rebel against his divine plan as Melkor does, Ilúvatar gives men the ability to act outside of the boundaries of the world created by the Ainur. Though men can’t subvert Ilúvatar’s divine plan, they’ll have the power to surprise and rebel against the Ainur, who have godlike foresight through the end of the vision Ilúvatar showed them and an understanding of the world formed during the Music of the

Ainur. Once the world progresses through the end of the vision and the Ainur’s conception of the world during the Great Music, men will remain to shape the world and their own destinies.

Because of this capacity for rebellion, as well, men are not bound to the world like the elves are—they age and die, then their spirits leave the world and travel to some unknown place. They become fundamentally separated from the world, never to be reunited with it or with the elves until the end of days when the world is remade. Elves, unlike men, are bound to the world even after death. Though immortal, they can be killed—but their spirits remain in the world and travel to Valinor to abide there. The elven narrator explains that the elves’ inherent connection to the world intensifies their emotional attachment to it, and their lengthy lives enable them to understand loss more keenly than men can. Men might love the world, but they die quickly and “seek beyond” it while the elves persist, forced to observe its transience and feel the sorrow of loss and change.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☞ Yet this is held true by the wise of Eressëa, that all those of the Quendi who came into the hands of Melkor, ere Utumno was broken, were put there in prison, and by slow arts of cruelty were corrupted and enslaved; and thus did Melkor breed the hideous race of the Orcs in envy and mockery of the Elves, of whom they were afterwards the bitterest foes. For the Orcs had life and multiplied after the manner of the Children of Ilúvatar; and naught that had life of its own, nor the semblance of life, could ever Melkor make since his rebellion in the Ainulindalë before the Beginning: so say the wise.

Related Characters: Melkor/Morgoth, Ilúvatar

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 50

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after the awakening of the elves in Middle-earth and describes the creation of the orcs. Only Ilúvatar can create true life—beings with free will who move and act independently of their creator—meaning Melkor can’t have created the orcs himself. Rather, Melkor corrupts the orcs from the preexisting race of elves—the primary example of how he weaponizes division and estrangement. Melkor divides the entire race of the elves, perverting and torturing one part of the whole into the “bitterest” enemy of the other. The elves were born as a unified group, and Melkor, envious of the blessings given to them by Ilúvatar,

breaks their unity and turns them into their own enemy—dark mirrors of themselves that will plague them for as long as the world exists.



The narrator indicates that this conclusion about the origin of the orcs isn't information revealed to the elves by the Valar or passed down by witnesses, but rather a conclusion drawn by the elves themselves based on their beliefs and traditions. This account reveals that the elves turn to stories to explain the facts of their world, emphasizing the importance of history and myth in understanding and contextualizing the world.

Chapter 7 Quotes

☞☞ Thus ere the Valar were aware, the peace of Valinor was poisoned. The Noldor began to murmur against them, and many became filled with pride, forgetting how much of what they had and knew came to them in gift from the Valar. Fiercest burned the new flame of desire for freedom and wider realms in the eager heart of Fëanor; and Melkor laughed in his secrecy, for to that mark his lies had been addressed, hating Fëanor above all, and lusting ever for the Silmarils. But these he was not suffered to approach [...] for Fëanor began to love the Silmarils with a greedy love, and grudged the sight of them to all save to his father and his seven sons; he seldom remembered now that the light within them was not his own.

Related Characters: Melkor/Morgoth, Fëanor, Finwë

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 68-69

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after the Valar free Melkor from his imprisonment in Valinor and describes the circumstances leading to the disruption of Valinor's peace. Now free and feigning repentance, Melkor spreads discord in Valinor as he did during the Music of the Ainur. United, the Valar and the elves exist in a golden age, strong and happy. Melkor's greatest chance for revenge on the Valar (for imprisoning him) and on the elves (whom he blames as the catalysts of his downfall) is to estrange them from each other. Melkor takes advantage of the Noldor's natural pride, riling them up and turning them against the Valar. He often portrays rebellion as freedom when trying to cause trouble among elves and men, compelling them to perceive any authority as an affront to dignity and liberty (as Melkor himself does).

Fëanor, though he hates Melkor, is prideful and an easy target for Melkor's lies and discontent.

The Silmarils also begin to mar the happiness of Valinor. Their great beauty inspires greed in both Melkor and Fëanor. Fëanor becomes estranged from the Valar and the other elves by his suspicion, by Melkor's influence on his growing pride, and by his obsession with the Silmarils. Though the jewels belong to him, the light that they contain does not, and his insistence on hiding away what should be shared leads to evil and corruption. Greed for the Silmarils spreads like a plague to Middle-earth and causes the world's first violent deaths.

Chapter 9 Quotes

☞☞ Then perforce Morgoth surrendered to her the gems that he bore with him, one by one and grudgingly; and she devoured them, and their beauty perished from the world. Huger and darker yet grew Ungoliant, but her lust was unsated. 'With one hand thou givest,' she said; 'with the left only. Open thy right hand!'

In his right hand Morgoth held close the Silmarils, and though they were locked in a crystal casket, they had begun to burn him, and his hand was clenched in pain; but he would not open it. 'Nay!' he said. 'Thou has had thy due. For with my power that I put into thee thy work was accomplished. I need thee no more. These things thou shalt not have, nor see. I name them unto myself for ever.'

Related Characters: Ungoliant, Melkor/Morgoth (speaker), Fëanor

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:   

Page Number: 80

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after Melkor and Ungoliant destroy the Two Trees of Valinor and flee to Middle-earth. While convincing Ungoliant to help him, Melkor promises to satisfy her hunger. Ungoliant swallows light, and her hunger is insatiable; she is the embodiment of absolute greed, consuming everything she can until she eventually consumes herself. She devours beauty and light, possessing them, turning them into darkness, and destroying them for everyone else. After consuming the light of the Two Trees, Ungoliant grows monstrously huge, large enough to

frighten Melkor into fulfilling his promise to her, up to a point. He gives her Fëanor's other jewels but can't bring himself to give up the Silmarils and let her destroy them.



Though Ungoliant is a force of thoughtless greed and hunger, Melkor's greed matches (and perhaps exceeds) hers. He denies Ungoliant her food despite the danger she poses to him and claims the Silmarils for himself "for ever." In this way, he consumes beauty, light, and goodness just as Ungoliant does. Rather than sharing the Silmarils with her or anyone else, he hoards them and keeps them for himself, even though they cause him physical pain. Because of his possession of the Silmarils, beauty perishes.

☛☛ Their Oath shall drive them, and yet betray them, and ever snatch away the very treasures that they have sworn to pursue. To evil end shall all things turn that they begin well; and by treason of kin unto kin, and the fear of treason, shall this come to pass. The Dispossessed shall they be for ever.

Ye have spilled the blood of your kindred unrighteously and have stained the land of Aman. For blood ye shall render blood, and beyond Aman ye shall dwell in Death's shadow. For though Eru appointed you to die not in Eä, and no sickness may assail you, yet slain ye may be, and slain he shall be: by weapon and by torment and by grief; and your houseless spirits shall come then to Mandos.

Related Characters: Námo/Mandos (speaker), Fëanor, Ilúvatar

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 88

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Mandos delivers the Doom of the Noldor, foretelling the fate of the elves who prepare to depart Valinor for Middle-earth. Driven by their own pride and by Fëanor's greed and obsession with the Silmarils, the Noldor elves have killed their fellow elves, the Teleri. Mandos reveals that the pride of Fëanor and his sons, a great motivator of evil, will lead to their downfall. Everything they begin will lead to an "evil end," especially their search for the Silmarils. Similarly, the violence of the Noldor elves will provoke more violence, and the lives they've taken will lead to their own eventual deaths.

Melkor succeeded in dividing the elves and the Valar. The Noldor are now "dispossessed," forever alienated from the

Valar, their fellow elves, and even each other. Mandos foretells that the pursuit of the Silmarils will lead them to betray and mistrust each other as their own endeavors will betray them. Estranged from others and among themselves, the Noldor will only become weaker, more suspicious, and more inclined to violence.

The Doom of the Noldor is also called the Curse of Mandos, though "curse" is something of a misleading term. Mandos doesn't have the power to create an evil fate for the Noldor; he is merely reporting the foreknowledge that Ilúvatar has given him. The Noldor's fate is the one they create for themselves by killing their fellow elves and allowing themselves to be controlled by pride and greed. The consequences that follow are the results of their own actions and choices, not any divine intervention or punishment. Mandos's curse is only a warning of what the Noldor will face in Middle-earth.


Chapter 11 Quotes

☛☛ But at that last word of Fëanor: that at the least the Noldor should do deeds to live in song for ever, he raised his head, as one that hears a voice far off, and he said: 'So shall it be! Dear-bought those songs shall be accounted, and yet shall be well-bought. For the price could be no other. Thus even as Eru spoke to us shall beauty not before conceived be brought into Eä, and evil yet be good to have been.'

But Mandos said: 'And yet remain evil. To me shall Fëanor come soon.'

Related Characters: Manwë, Námo/Mandos (speaker), Fëanor, Ilúvatar

Related Themes:     

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 98

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs as Mandos brings word of Fëanor's response to the Valar's warning and offer to the Noldor to return to Valinor and repent. Fëanor maintains his oath to pursue the Silmarils and declares that his deeds will be remembered in song until the end of the world. Manwë agrees—Fëanor will be remembered. The fact that the elven narrator of *The Silmarillion* has recorded the story here is proof of that, and the inclusion of the discussion about the song and memory of the elves emphasizes again the importance of history and myth to elven tradition and

identity.


The price Manwë refers to is laid out in the Doom of the Noldor; the Noldor's efforts will be in vain, they will be betrayed, and they will betray each other. Their pride and greed will lead them to nothing but ruin and loss. Manwë, the Valar who best understands Ilúvatar's mind, knows, as many characters don't or can't, that every dark and evil occurrence on Arda will result in beauty and contribute to the divine plan for the world. All loss leads eventually to the salvation that will come after the end of the world. Even so, Mandos, who rules the Houses of the Dead, recognizes that the beauty of the songs that will emerge from Fëanor's actions doesn't negate the very real harm he's causing the world now.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☞ Then Fingon the valiant, son of Fingolfin, resolved to heal the feud that divided the Noldor [...] Long before, in the bliss of Valinor, before Melkor was unchained, or lies came between them, Fingon had been close in friendship with Maedhros; and though he knew not yet that Maedhros had not forgotten him at the burning of the ships, the thought of their ancient friendship stung his heart. Therefore he dared a deed which is justly renowned among the feats of the princes of the Noldor: alone, and without the counsel of any, he set forth in search of Maedhros; and aided by the very darkness that Morgoth had made he came unseen into the fastness of his foes.

Related Characters: Fingon, Maedhros, Melkor/Morgoth, Fingolfin, Fëanor

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Fingon undertakes a quest to save Maedhros and heal the rift among the Noldor elves. Melkor's lies drove the Noldor to depart Valinor, and Fëanor's abandonment of Fingolfin's people led to the estrangement among the Noldor; neither is Fingon's fault. Still, he recognizes his ability to bridge the gap between the two groups and heal the division because of his former friendship with Maedhros. Though Fingon assumes Maedhros participated in the betrayal of Fingolfin's people, both the greater good and the ties of friendship compel him to act.

Melkor weakens the power of the Noldor by dividing them;

Fingon understands the strength of unity. He seeks out Maedhros both because reconciling the two groups of the Noldor means they have more of a chance to thrive in Middle-earth and defeat Melkor and because he simply misses his friend. Friendship can heal the evils caused by Melkor: friendship, cooperation, trust, and love—everything Melkor doesn't understand and seeks to destroy. Fingon's reunion with Maedhros, however, doesn't heal the Noldor's division perfectly. Many of them are still wary of the proud sons of Fëanor, whom Maedhros leads away to live separately.

Chapter 17 Quotes

☞ Now the world runs on swiftly to great tidings. And one of Men, even of Bëor's house, shall indeed come, and the Girdle of Melian shall not restrain him, for doom greater than my power shall send him; and the songs that shall spring from that coming shall endure when all Middle-earth has changed.

Related Characters: Melian (speaker), Beren, Bëor

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 144

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Melian predicts Beren's arrival in Doriath. Individual fates such as Beren's are the result of individual choices and foresight that predicts their outcomes, not divine intervention. Fate (or "doom") is sometimes referred to as a force that controls or compels people, but it's almost always figurative language rather than a real force that acts on the world. Here, Melian claims that Beren's doom will "send him" to Doriath, but fate doesn't send him anywhere—his own choices lead him to his doom. Still, this is one of the more ambiguous moments in *The Silmarillion*, where fate appears to actually act upon the world. The Girdle of Melian prevents anyone less powerful than she is from entering Doriath, but Beren is permitted to enter because he possesses a "doom" that is greater than Melian's power.

It's possible that Melian is once again referring to doom figuratively—that she, gifted with foresight, will allow Beren through the Girdle so he can fulfill his fate. Melian doesn't make it clear, and the narrator doesn't clarify, either. It's also possible that, in this instance, Beren's fate is a real force that overpowers the enchantments of Melian's Girdle. If so, it

may be divine intervention that enables him to pass through the Girdle, or it may be the fact that he will one day carry a Silmaril (an object more powerful than Melian), but Melian's words imply that it might be something else. The "songs that shall spring from that coming" are lasting and powerful. If fate is the result of foresight, it may be that what allows Beren to break through the Girdle is these "songs"—the enduring power of story itself.

☛ All these were caught in the net of the Doom of the Noldor; and they did great deeds which the Eldar remember still among the histories of the Kings of old. And in those days the strength of Men was added to the power of the Noldor, and their hope was high; and Morgoth was straitly enclosed.

Related Characters: Melkor/Morgoth

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

This passage comes after the narrator's description of the Houses of men and relates their deeds. Because of their close connection with the kingdoms of the Noldor in Beleriand and their participation in the Noldor's wars, the houses of men are caught up in the Noldor's fate of loss, suspicion, and betrayal. This indicates that the houses, only just established, will eventually fall as the Noldor will fall, victims of their own greed. The Doom of the Noldor, like greed, spreads to others in Beleriand. The Houses of men are subject to it and also share in the Noldor's fame. As Fëanor predicted, the Noldor's deeds win them lasting remembrance in the history and myth of the elves. The men who fight with them are similarly remembered "still" as important figures in the history of the elves, indicating the elves' interest in preserving the past as a whole and not simply the exploits of their own people.


This union of men and elves, besides tying the Houses of men to the fate of the Noldor, is a powerful defense against the threat that Melkor poses in Beleriand. Melkor always seeks to divide and weaken his enemies. Together, however, men and elves are strong enough to trap Melkor in his fortress. Unity is a creative and productive force; it brings the people of Beleriand hope and fortifies them against all of Melkor's attacks—whether he attacks by armies, lies, and fear.

Chapter 19 Quotes

☛☛ *Farewell sweet earth and northern sky
for ever blest, since here did lie
and here with lissome limbs did run
beneath the Moon, beneath the Sun,
Lúthien Tinúviel
more fair than mortal tongue can tell.
Though all to ruin fell the world
and were dissolved and backward hurled
unmade into the old abyss,
yet were its making good, for this—
the dusk, the dawn, the earth, the sea—
that Lúthien for a time should be.*

Related Characters: Beren (speaker), Lúthien, Melkor/Morgoth, Ilúvatar

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 178



Explanation and Analysis



Before he enters Angband to try and steal one of Melkor's Silmarils, and assuming he's about to die, Beren sings this Song of Parting. In it, he praises the world for its goodness and beauty and for its creation of Lúthien, the most beautiful person Beren has ever seen. Beren's song is emblematic of the idea that, no matter what loss and evil exists in the world, its "making" is good because of the wonder and beauty that also result.

Ilúvatar first introduces this idea after Melkor mars the Music of the Ainur and refers to the large-scale good of his divine plan; no matter what evil results from Melkor's meddling, it will only contribute to the benevolent fate of the world. Beren, a man who doesn't know about the fate of the world or the divine plan, intuitively recognizes the inherent goodness of the world. He focuses on its beauty—"the dusk, the dawn, the earth, the sea"—and ultimately decides that the existence of the world is worth all the suffering, not because of a far-off divine outcome, but simply because it allowed Lúthien to exist. Even in the decline of the world, there is goodness, light, and harmony in the union of a man and an elf.

Then Morgoth looking upon her beauty conceived in his thought an evil lust, and a design more dark than any that had yet come into his heart since he fled from Valinor. Thus he was beguiled by his own malice, for he watched her, leaving her free for a while, and taking secret pleasure in his thought. Then suddenly she eluded his sight, and out of the shadows began a song of such surpassing loveliness, and of such blinding power, that he listened perforce; and a blindness came upon him, as his eyes roamed to and fro, seeking her.

Related Characters: Melkor/Morgoth, Lúthien, Beren, Sauron, Melian, Finrod Felagund

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

Melkor is disadvantaged by his own pride and greed on several occasions. In this passage, after Beren and Lúthien sneak into Angband, Melkor recognizes Lúthien and confronts her, but doesn't immediately imprison or incapacitate her. Instead, he leaves her "free for a while" for his own amusement and underestimates her, preoccupied by his "evil lust." Though Tolkien generally uses "lust" to mean simple desire and greed, the implications here are, if not sexual, certainly malicious. Melkor's plans for Lúthien are left obscure, but, whatever they are, they're distracting.

In his pride, Melkor assumes that Lúthien is no threat to him, despite ample evidence (her defeat of Sauron and her entry into Angband) to the contrary. Lúthien, trained in magic by Melian, is incredibly powerful. When she enchants him, he is unable to combat her, listening "perforce" to her song. Though it's possible to fight elven enchantments (as Finrod and Sauron fought when he and Beren were captured), Melkor's guard is down, and he's defenseless against Lúthien as she strikes him blind, then puts him and all his court to sleep. Finally, Melkor's pride and greed—which compelled him to steal the Silmarils in the first place—ensure that he loses at least one Silmaril.

This doom she chose, forsaking the Blessed Realm, and putting aside all claim to kinship with those that dwell there; that thus whatever grief might lie in wait, the fates of Beren and Lúthien might be joined, and their paths lead together beyond the confines of the world. So it was that alone of the Eldalië she has died indeed, and left the world long ago. Yet in her choice the Two Kindreds have been joined; and she is the forerunner of many in whom the Eldar see yet, though all the world is changed, the likeness of Lúthien the beloved, whom they have lost.

Related Characters: Lúthien, Beren, Námo/Mandos, Ilúvatar

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 187

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after Lúthien petitions Mandos for Beren's life and Ilúvatar (through the Valar) offers her a choice between the immortality she was born with and a mortal life with Beren. Though the tale of Beren and Lúthien is full of figurative language suggesting that Lúthien is somehow caught or trapped by Beren's fate, ultimately, she freely chooses it. This idea of "doom" as a choice exemplifies how individual fate functions on Arda—it's the result of actions and choices rather than a magical, controlling force.

A different sort of fate established by Ilúvatar—the fate of men to die and elves to live on—is immutable unless altered through divine intervention, as it is here. The fates of men and elves are fundamentally separate—men leave the world and elves are bound to it until the end of days. In her choice, Lúthien ties herself to Beren even beyond death and, through their descendants, unites their two races as they have never been united before.

Her death (and, more importantly, her departure from the world entirely) is a loss for the elves and a loss for the world. Though, from the narrator's perspective, Lúthien died "long ago," her beauty lives on in the memory of the elves and in her descendants. Her life and her loss are important enough to the tradition and identity of the elves to persist as stories generations after her death and beyond the fundamental altering of the world during the drowning of Númenor. Despite the division among the elves, they are joined together by shared history and shared grief; they remember their loss and continue to mourn Lúthien "the beloved" as one of their own.

Chapter 20 Quotes


☞☞ Thus was the treachery of Uldor redressed; and of all the deeds of war that the fathers of Men wrought in behalf of the Eldar, the last stand of the Men of Dor-lómin is most renowned.

[...]

Last of all Húrin stood alone. Then he cast aside his shield, and wielded an axe two-handed; and it is sung that the axe smoked in the black blood of the troll-guard of Gothmog until it withered, and each time that he slew Húrin cried: 'Aurë entuluva! Day shall come again!'

Related Characters: Húrin (speaker), Gothmog, Turgon, Melkor/Morgoth, Maedhros, Fëanor, Fingon

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs during the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, when Húrin urges Turgon to flee the battle, and the men of Dor-lómin protect the retreat of Turgon's elves. The end of the battle, in which Húrin stands alone, is representative of the problems faced by the men and elves of Beleriand even before the attack. They're greatly disadvantaged by their own division and isolation. Though Maedhros forms a united army of disparate groups of men and elves, they're undermined by Melkor's spies, planted to betray them, and by their own people who refuse to stand beside the sons of Fëanor, even to oppose Melkor. Now, with Turgon's elves gone and his own men dead, Húrin faces Melkor's forces alone. The battle is lost—isolated, Húrin can't win, just as Beleriand, divided as it is, can't defeat Melkor.

The narrator calls the last stand of the men of Dor-lómin the "most renowned" act of any men in war, revealing the qualities of men that the lasting tradition of the elves most reveres: resolution, self-sacrifice, swift action, and stubborn hope. Though Húrin faces defeat and death, he refuses to surrender, fighting beyond the deaths of his men and beyond hope of rescue. He calls out a modified version of Fingon's battle cry from early in the battle ("The day has come!"). He realizes that Fingon was wrong—the day has not yet come—but it *shall* come again. In the midst of incredible loss, there is still hope for a better future.

Chapter 21 Quotes

☞☞ 'Farewell, O twice beloved! A Túrin Turambar turun ambartanen: master of doom by doom mastered! O happy to be dead!'

Related Characters: Nienor/Níniel (speaker), Túrin Turambar, Glaurung, Melkor/Morgoth, Húrin, Gwindor

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 223

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Níniel remembers her identity as Nienor, Túrin's sister, and realizes that their curse has caught up to them—she is married to Túrin and pregnant with his child. Nienor and Túrin are haunted by Melkor's curse on Húrin's family, which is carried out largely by the dragon Glaurung. During his travels, Túrin changes his name repeatedly in an attempt to avoid his fate. As Gwindor recognizes, however, Túrin can't escape Melkor by changing his name—his fate lies in himself, not in what he calls himself. Still, Túrin disregards Gwindor, taking on the name Turambar (meaning "Master of Doom") as a sign that he rejects the fate Melkor plans for him.

Túrin's stubbornness, however, is born of arrogance. He repeatedly changes his name rather than his behavior. Melkor interferes to ruin Túrin's life, but Túrin also makes his own mistakes, driven by his volatility, pride, and contradictory self-loathing. When met with opportunities to change, he almost always fails to take them, trapped in his destructive patterns by misfortune, Melkor's influence, and his own nature. The revelation that Túrin and Nienor have married their sibling is the culmination of Melkor's curse. Túrin might call himself the master of doom, but his doom (Melkor's curse) ultimately overpowers him. In light of this defeat, Nienor calls it "happy" to be dead—she and Túrin found little happiness in life—and takes her life rather than continue to face the consequences of the curse.


Chapter 22 Quotes

☞☞ But Thingol perceived their hearts, and saw well that desiring the Silmaril they sought but a pretext and fair cloak of their true intent; and in his wrath and pride he gave no heed to his peril but spoke to them in scorn, saying: 'How do ye of uncouth race dare to demand aught of me, Elu Thingol, Lord of Beleriand, whole life began by the waters of Cuiviénen years uncounted ere the fathers of the stunted people awoke?'

Then the lust of the Dwarves was kindled to rage by the words of the King; and they rose up about him, and laid hands on him, and slew him as he stood.

Related Characters: Elwë/Thingol (speaker), Beren, Lúthien, Melkor/Morgoth

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 233

Explanation and Analysis

This passage takes place when the dwarves Thingol has commissioned to set the Silmaril into a famous dwarven necklace called the Nauglamír claim they have a right to it and attempt to keep it. Since acquiring the Silmaril after Beren and Lúthien stole it from Melkor's crown, Thingol has become obsessed with it, constantly carrying it with him, and suspicious of others. Greed spreads among those who come in contact with the Silmarils like a sickness; Thingol is right that the dwarves are affected by it. By desiring the Silmaril, both Thingol and the dwarves have fallen under the Doom of the Noldor, which predicts betrayal and loss for those who seek the Silmarils. As a result, the entire kingdom of Doriath falls—the dwarves kill Thingol and invade the forest.


This passage also exemplifies the evils that emerge from hatred and division between the races of Middle-earth. Thingol's pride makes him scornful not only of the dwarves in front of him who want the Silmaril, but of the race of dwarves as a whole. As one of the first elves to awaken in the world, Thingol thinks highly of himself and disdains the dwarves, whom he calls "uncouth" and "stunted." His rage and suspicion fuel his words; previously, Thingol was an ally of the dwarves, who built his city Menegroth, and maintained a cordial relationship with them. Though the dwarves' greed is their primary motivation in killing Thingol, Thingol's arrogant insults of their race are what drives them to immediate violence. Thingol's pride creates an estrangement between the two races that lasts throughout the Third Age.

Chapter 23 Quotes

☞☞ Then Turgon pondered long the counsel of Ulmo, and there came into his mind the words that were spoken to him in Vinyamar: 'Love not too well the work of thy hands and the devices of thy heart; and remember that the true hope of the Noldor lieth in the West, and cometh from the Sea.' But Turgon was become proud, and Gondolin as beautiful as a memory of Elven Tirion, and he trusted still in his secret and impregnable strength, though even a Vala should gainsay it; and after the Nirnaeth Arnoediad the people of that city desired never again to mingle in the woes of Elves and Men without, nor to return through dread and danger into the West.

Related Characters: Turgon, Ulmo, Tuor, Melkor/Morgoth

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 240

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after Tuor delivers Ulmo's message that the Doom of the Noldor is nearly finished and the city of Gondolin is about to fall. Rather than fleeing the city, Turgon ignores Ulmo's warning because of his confidence in Gondolin's defenses and his pride in the beauty of the city. The elves often become attached to their beautiful creations—the Noldor love the Silmarils and Teleri love their ships—and it usually leads them to trouble. Turgon, who has seen firsthand the results of those attachments, is still too arrogant to recognize that he's falling into the same pattern. He prioritizes his pride in the city over the safety of his people. As a result, Turgon dies and Gondolin falls, victims of pride and of the Noldor's curse.



Ulmo's words about the "true hope of the Noldor," spoken to Turgon just before his move to Gondolin, refer to the West (Valinor) and to the fruitlessness of isolation. By hiding the city, Turgon protects it from Melkor, allowing it to last longer than any other elven city in Beleriand. Isolation is a defense, but one that can only last for so long. Turgon, like all of the Noldor, is doomed to be betrayed and lose everything he creates. Isolation from "the woes of Elves and Men without" can't save him from it—only the "true hope" Ulmo alludes to can. This hope is the aid of the Valar. The elves and men of Beleriand, even united, can't overcome Melkor or defend themselves forever. Only by joining with the Valar and unifying all of Arda can the Noldor be saved both from Melkor's threat and from themselves.

Chapter 24 Quotes

“If it be truly the Silmaril which we saw cast into the sea that rises again by the power of the Valar, then let us be glad; for its glory is seen now by many, and is yet secure from all evil.’ Then the Elves looked up, and despaired no longer; but Morgoth was filled with doubt.

Related Characters: Maglor (speaker), Maedhros, Melkor/Morgoth, Fëanor, Eärendil, Elwing

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 250

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the two remaining sons of Fëanor, Maglor and Maedhros, see Eärendil carrying Elwing’s Silmaril through the sky on his flying ship. Maedhros, who still wants to fulfill his oath and possess the Silmarils, recognizes it. The “evil” Maglor refers to is ambiguous; one obvious “evil” who wants the Silmaril (and already possesses the other two) is Melkor. Away in the sky with Eärendil, the Silmaril is out of his reach. But Maglor, more so than his brother, understands the evil that has come from their own greed and their pursuit of the Silmarils—suspicion, war, betrayal, and the three Kinslayings. It is likely that, in addition to Melkor, “all evil” refers to the evil the sons of Fëanor themselves, and all the others who fought over the Silmaril, have created in Middle-earth.

The original evil that came from the Silmarils was Fëanor’s desire to hide away their light (taken from the Two Trees of Valinor) from everyone besides his immediate family. The light of the Trees was for all of Valinor to share, but, in the Silmarils, it has been fought over and hoarded for years. Nearly everyone involved in the pursuit of the Silmarils sought to possess their beauty, not share it as it is meant to be shared. Now, Maglor recognizes that the sky is the best place for the Silmaril—out of reach and visible for everyone to enjoy, where it can provide light for all and not fall victim to greed again.

“Yet it is said that Morgoth looked not for the assault that came upon him from the West; for so great was his pride become that he deemed that none would ever again come with open war against him. Moreover he thought that he had for ever estranged the Noldor from the Lords of the West, and that content in their blissful realm the Valar would heed no more his kingdom in the world without; for to him that is pitiless the deeds of pity are ever strange and beyond reckoning.

Related Characters: Melkor/Morgoth, Eärendil

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 250

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs just before Melkor’s defeat at the hands of the Valar. Once again, Melkor’s pride blinds him to the power and capability of others; it is a weakness that leads directly to his downfall. Because Melkor can’t believe anyone would challenge him, he is unprepared for the Valar’s attack and quickly captured.


Similarly, because Melkor doesn’t understand mercy and love, he has no reason to believe that the estrangement between men, elves, and Valar will ever be healed. He works hard to divide them and has succeeded in doing so. Eärendil, the half-elven product of the love between men and elves, is representative of unity between the races and also unanticipated by Melkor. As a representative of both races, Eärendil is the one able to reunite Beleriand and Valinor, creating a world unified against Melkor despite Melkor’s best efforts to separate it.

One of Melkor’s fatal flaws is his lack of empathy—he can’t understand the feelings and motivations of others and has no interest in learning beyond what he finds useful to exploit the flaws of his enemies. He understands fear, suspicion, and hate, but he can’t comprehend the foolish bravery and persistence of the people of Beleriand or the mercy of the Valar. Because of this lack of understanding, he assumes that the Valar are like him, desiring conquest and uninterested in the lives of the people they’ve conquered. This assumption means the Valar’s attack on his fortress is not only surprising, but incomprehensible to him.

“But the jewel burned the hand of Maedhros in pain unbearable; and he perceived that it was as Eönwë had said, and that his right thereto had become void, and that the oath was vain. And being in anguish and despair he cast himself into a gaping chasm filled with fire, and so ended; and the Silmaril that he bore was taken into the bosom of the Earth.

Related Characters: Maedhros, Eönwë, Maglor

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 254

Explanation and Analysis


In this passage, Maedhros, one of the last remaining sons of Fëanor who swore an oath to pursue the Silmarils at any cost, finally reclaims one of the jewels. Despite Eönwë's warning that Maedhros's many crimes in pursuit of the Silmarils make his claim to them void, Maedhros doesn't understand the warning until the Silmaril, enchanted to burn anything evil that touches it, scorches him. Ultimately, Maedhros's greed—and the violence that came from it—is pointless. He can't keep the Silmaril and can't even bear to live after touching it. He fulfils his oath, but only at the cost of his own life. Maedhros's end indicates that the result of greed and obsession in *The Silmarillion* is pain and death.

The pursuit of the Silmarils eventually kills nearly every man, elf, and dwarf directly involved in it and causes incredible collateral damage—the collapse of kingdoms and the murder of innocents. In the end, no one individual claims the Silmarils; two are lost forever, and one is placed in the sky to be appreciated by all the world. In the fates of Maedhros and his brother Maglor (who is similarly burned by a Silmaril and throws it into the sea), the Doom of the Noldor is complete.

☞ Yet the lies that Melkor [...] sowed in the hearts of Elves and Men are a seed that does not die and cannot be destroyed; and ever and anon it sprouts anew, and will bear dark fruit even unto the latest days.

Related Characters: Melkor/Morgoth

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 255

Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs after Melkor's final defeat by the Valar and his imprisonment in the Void beyond the world. Though Melkor himself is no longer a threat, his influence remains in the world. Because of his interference during the Music of


the Ainur, evil came into being and the world was created in a state of perpetual loss and decline. Once elves and men awoke in the world, he taught them fear and suspicion that they then passed down through generations. His lies and the division they caused persist within the "hearts" of the people of Middle-earth and can't be eradicated just because Melkor himself is gone.

Though the world is briefly reunited by Eärendil's plea to the Valar, men and elves will grow estranged again, both because of Sauron's influence and because of the remnants of Melkor's lies in their own natures. Pride and greed drive them apart and turn them against each other. Melkor's evil is a permanent fixture in the world that will never be healed until the end of days when the world is remade entirely, and the Music of the Ainur is sung again by all of Ilúvatar's creations.

☞ Here ends the SILMARILLION. If it has passed from the high and the beautiful to darkness and ruin, that was of old the fate of Arda Marred; and if any change shall come and the Marring be amended, Manwë and Varda may know; but they have not revealed it, and it is not declared in the dooms of Mandos.

Related Characters: Manwë, Varda, Ilúvatar, Námo/Mandos

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 255

Explanation and Analysis

This passage concludes the large middle section of *The Silmarillion* that tells the story of the Silmarils. It reveals the elves' consciousness of the loss that pervades their declining world. Their lives and memories are long, and they witness and remember the ways the world has changed, even if only through the stories of myth and history before their awakening. The preservation of this myth is important because it holds the memory of "the high and the beautiful"; the way the world began and has now fallen away from.

The narrator has a sense of resignation about the fate of Arda. There is nothing the elves can do about the world's slow decline into "darkness and ruin" except witness it and record it in their traditions and songs. The decline the elves witness became their fate when Melkor disrupted the Music of the Ainur and marred Ilúvatar's intentions for the

world. Though loss is particularly painful to the elves who are bound to the world and live long lives there, their tradition tells them that the marring of Arda will be healed when the world ends and the Music of the Ainur is sung again. Here, however, the elven narrator implies that it is not the Valar that revealed this tradition to the elves. Rather, it emerges from the elves' own belief system. Not even the Valar know Ilúvatar's plan for the end of the world, and, if they have since learned, they have not shared it with the elves. In the absence of certainty, the elves have faith that when the marring of the world is complete, it will be amended.

Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age Quotes

☛ But when all these things were done, and the Heir of Isildur had taken up the lordship of Men, and the dominion of the West had passed to him, then it was made plain that the power of the Three Rings also was ended, and to the Firstborn the world grew old and grey. In that time the last of the Noldor set sail from the Havens and left Middle-earth for ever [...] and an end was come for the Eldar of story and song.

Related Characters: Aragorn, Isildur

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 304

Explanation and Analysis

This passage concludes *The Silmarillion*. The end of the power of the elven Rings means that the elven realms in Middle-earth fade away. The land can't support the elves any longer—they become weary (“old and grey”) and decline

as the world declines. Because of this, they depart Middle-earth for Valinor, a more stable, immortal land, where they can find rest and healing. Though Valinor is technically still part of Arda, it is fundamentally separate from the rest of it and exists beyond the world's roundness. In leaving Middle-earth, the elves detach themselves from the majority of the world they so love. Still, their fate is to fade away from Middle-earth as part of its decline.

Though the “end” the narrator refers to isn't the end of the elves altogether (since they survive still in Valinor), their departure from Middle-earth is a profound ending. It is the end of the elves' time as part of the greater world's history and the world's loss of their constancy, magic, and memory. They leave the world in the care of the Strangers, men, who live only short lives and then depart. Men love the world less than the elves, who live long lives and are bound to the world. The world will continue to decline in the absence of the elves, and likely faster, since the short memory of men means wisdom is lost much more quickly. The end of *The Silmarillion* is one of victory, but also of profound loss.

It is noteworthy that the elven narrator refers to the elves as being “of story and song.” Myth and history are so important to the cultures and traditions of the elves that they consider themselves born from story and living within it. Myth and history are not only important to them, but part of them; essential components of their identity. There is a sense also that their “story and song” are tied inherently to Middle-earth, which they leave behind. Middle-earth was the place of their awakening, and, now that they leave it forever, that part of their identity is lost. The elves undergo a profound separation (from mankind, from Middle-earth, and from an aspect of their very selves) that will only be healed at the end of the world when everything is remade.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

AINULINDALĒ

Ilúvatar creates a group of beings called the Ainur before anything else exists and teaches them each a different part of a song he created. Each one sings alone at first, only understanding their part, until Ilúvatar shows them a “mighty theme” that contains his plans for the universe. The Ainur bow, amazed.

Ilúvatar commands the Ainur to harmonize their individual parts of the song to make “Great Music.” He reveals that since he gave the Ainur something called the “**Flame** Imperishable,” they each have the power to create variations within their individual part of the song as long as it remains in harmony with the others.

The Ainur begin to sing the theme together in harmony and the music spills out of the dwellings of Ilúvatar and into the Void, filling it. The Ainur have never made music like it since, though it’s believed they’ll make even greater music—sung perfectly—at the end of days.

The theme continues without flaws until Melkor, one of the Ainur, attempts to empower his part of the song by adding a melody that doesn’t harmonize with the greater theme. Before the beginning of the song, Melkor often went to the Void looking for the **Flame** Imperishable because he wanted the power to create new Beings, like Ilúvatar can. He never finds it because “it is with Ilúvatar.” In the Void, Melkor begins to think differently than the other Ainur and expresses those thoughts in the song, creating discord. Some of the Ainur stop singing, and others alter their parts to harmonize with his.

Ilúvatar listens as the music of the Ainur grows more chaotic, then stands, smiles, and lifts his hand. In the song, a new and different theme begins and takes over. Again, Melkor’s discord contends with it, the two songs clashing until Melkor’s takes control.

In the beginning, there is perfect unity among the Ainur, created at the same time by different parts of the same mind. All things come from one single being: Ilúvatar, who has a plan for the fate of the world even before it’s created.



Though the Ainur are individuals with free will, they exist initially in perfect harmony with each other, as shown through their music. Each sings a slightly different part and adds their own ideas to it, but still adheres to the greater unifying theme.



The elven narrator alludes to the end of the world even before the world has been created, revealing the elves’ interest in both the world’s decline and its subsequent salvation. The clarification that, one day, the Music of the Ainur will be sung correctly implies that the music being sung now is about to be marred or disrupted in some way.



Melkor’s rebellion is driven by his greed and envy. He longs for Ilúvatar’s power of creation, not understanding that only Ilúvatar can truly create life. Melkor’s separation from his fellow Ainur is both physical and mental—he goes off on his own, and, because of it, begins to think of himself as an exceptional individual rather than an equal part of a whole. Once divided from the Ainur, he creates more division by not only changing the song but causing others to join him.



As the creator of the Music, Ilúvatar is the ultimate master of the fate of the universe. Where Melkor creates discord, Ilúvatar, able to accept and incorporate the changes into his plan, restores harmony.



Ilúvatar stands again, looking stern, and raises his hand. Another theme, softer and sadder than the others, rises among the Ainur. The Ainur sing the two themes at the same time, though Melkor's theme, vain and repetitive, grows louder, attempting to overpower Ilúvatar's.

Ilúvatar, "terrible to behold," stands a third time and raises both hands. With a single chord, he ends the Great Music. Ilúvatar warns Melkor that he can't play any music that isn't ultimately part of Ilúvatar's plan.

Ilúvatar then leads the Ainur to the Void and shows them a vision of the World their music will become—a home for the Children of Ilúvatar (elves and men). The more the Ainur watch, the more they love the Children, and many wish to go prepare the World (called Arda) for them. Melkor pretends he wants to do the same, but actually envies them and wants to rule them.

The Ainur contemplate different aspects of Arda as they observe it. Ulmo, a great musician, thinks of water. The noblest Ainur, Manwë, thinks of wind and air. Aulë thinks of earth. Ilúvatar explains how Melkor's meddling hasn't ruined Arda, but only made it more beautiful—his bitter cold makes Ulmo's water into snow and frost, and his intense heat creates clouds and rainstorms. The vision of Arda fades before the Ainur can witness the Later Ages or the end of the world.

Ilúvatar knows the Ainur want the vision to become real, so he says, "Eä! Let these things Be!" and sends the **Flame** Imperishable into the Void to form the heart of the World. Some of the Ainur decide to remain with Ilúvatar, and others descend to the World and bind their powers to it—these Ainur are called the Valar, "the Powers of the World."

When the Valar reach the world, they realize everything is still unformed. They have to craft the world they saw in the vision and planned in the Great Music. They spend "uncounted" ages constructing Arda, and Melkor meddles with everything Manwë, Aulë, and Ulmo create. Melkor attempts to declare himself the king of Arda, but Manwë leads the other Valar to oppose him, and he withdraws to other regions.

Now the Music itself is divided. This Music, which creates the blueprint for the creation of the world, is marred by Melkor's arrogance and selfishness. The world that results from the Music will be similarly tainted with evil and loss.



Melkor may attempt to take control from Ilúvatar, but he can never meaningfully subvert Ilúvatar's will since—in some way no one but Ilúvatar understands—every act of free will exists within and contributes to the fate of the world.



Much of the Ainur's knowledge about fate and the plan for the world comes from this vision. In it, the purpose of the world is revealed: it is a home for more of Ilúvatar's creations, and the role of the Ainur is to craft it. Melkor, who previously envied Ilúvatar, now envies his beloved creations—elves and men, who are not yet even born. Though still proud and wrathful, Melkor learns to feign humility to gain access to Arda.



The Ainur, though born from parts of Ilúvatar's mind, don't fully understand it. Though they can't comprehend how, Ilúvatar assures them that every act of free will contributes to the ultimate beauty and glory of Arda—even acts of rebellion. Though the Ainur see much of the fate of Arda, Ilúvatar doesn't allow them foresight about the end of the world, which only he sees clearly.



The Ainur are divided again, though this time it is by their own choice and Ilúvatar's will. Those that leave Ilúvatar to descend to the world become inextricably tied to it—bound to Arda, its fate, and its people until the unknown end of the world.



Even before the construction of the world is finished, Melkor fills Arda with loss, destruction, and evil. By rebelling in the Music of the Ainur and subverting the Valar's efforts on Arda, Melkor begins the cycles of loss and renewal that form the world. Melkor can cause destruction but fails to create anything—he doesn't have the power to make himself a king.



The Valar clothe themselves in physical forms—some male and some female as a reflection of their “difference of temper”—to look like the Children of Ilúvatar. When Melkor sees them walking around he becomes jealous and also takes on a “dark and terrible” physical form. Melkor again fights the Valar for control of Arda. He destroys or corrupts everything the Valar create, but Arda still slowly takes shape and becomes finished, though it looks different than the Valar intended.

The Valar have no natural physical forms, yet they have innate gender and take on bodies that reflect their spiritual selves. The Valar appear as the Children of Ilúvatar, whom they love and anticipate, while Melkor takes on a form that reflects his evil and malice. Melkor can't completely subvert Ilúvatar's will. He causes suffering and loss, changing the world from its initial concept, but the world is still created as Ilúvatar intended.



VALAQUENTA

The elves call the Ainur who descended to earth the Valar and the men call them gods. There are fourteen of them, not including Melkor. Melkor is the mightiest Ainu who descended to the World, but Manwë best understands Ilúvatar's purposes and is appointed King of Arda. His wife is Varda, the Lady of the **Stars**, who is revered by the elves and called Elbereth. Melkor fears and hates her more than anyone else. Ulmo, the Lord of Waters, loves elves and men but doesn't often come to land. His waters hear the troubles of Arda, and he reports them to Manwë.

The elven narrator describes the Valar and their roles according to elven tradition. Though Melkor is powerful, he lacks understanding—a flaw that contributes to his arrogance and leads him to many of his defeats. He hates and fears what he can't control, such as Varda's light. Though Manwë is called the King, the Valar don't come to Arda to conquer it, but to foster its beauty and life and guide it on Ilúvatar's intended path.



Aulë—who, like Melkor, loves to create, but isn't selfish with his creations—has lordship over earth, rock, and crafts. His spouse is Yavanna, the Giver of Fruits, who cares for the growing things of Arda. Námo (also called Mandos), the brother of Irmo, obeys Manwë and rules the Houses of the Dead. His wife is Vairë the Weaver, who makes tapestries of everything that happens in Time. Irmo, the master of dreams, lives in Lórien and is married to Estë the healer. Nienna “dwells alone,” mourning Melkor's influence in Arda, and often visits Mandos' realm to comfort the dead.

The Valar each have an aspect of the world that they tend to. Some of their domains (like that of Mandos) are not yet relevant before the existence of the Children of Ilúvatar. Nienna, though she doesn't create the physical features of the world, has already taken up her role as the Valar of grief and mercy. She mourns the world itself and the ways in which Melkor harmed it during the Great Music and mars it still.



Tulkas, the strongest Vala, descends to Arda to fight Melkor. His wife is Nessa, who loves to dance and runs with deer. Oromë, a hunter who loves the lands of Middle-earth, is married to Vána the Ever-young. When the Valar descend to Arda, they are accompanied by lesser spirits also created before the beginning of time called the Maiar, who act as their helpers. The elves don't know how many Maiar there are, since they don't often interact with the Children of Ilúvatar.

Once again, the narrator reveals their elven perspective—there are things the elves still don't know about the world, such as the precise number of Maiar who came to Arda. What they do know is that the Maiar came to aid the Valar and contribute their strength to the creation and protection of the world.



Some of the best known Maiar are Ilmarë, the handmaid of Varda, Eönwë, the herald of Manwë, and Ossë and Uinen, the vassals of Ulmo. Melkor almost succeeds in convincing Ossë to join him, but is thwarted by Ossë's wife Uinen, who brings Ossë back to Ulmo.

Though Melkor can't corrupt the Valar, he attempts to corrupt and divide the lesser spirits, the Maiar. Though he frequently succeeds, unifying forces like love and trust can combat some of the estrangement Melkor creates.



Other famous Maiar are Melian, who serves both Vána and Estë and tends to Lórien’s trees, and Olórin who “learned pity and patience” from Nienna. Though Melian later walks among the elves as a Maia, Olórin prefers to either remain invisible or disguise himself as one of the Children of Ilúvatar, sharing hope and wisdom as a friend to the people of Middle-earth.

Melkor falls into “contempt for all things” and continues corrupting the works of the Valar and seeking power. He wields **darkness** to create evil in Arda, and many of the Maiar are corrupted by his lies and promises into joining his side. Among these are the spirits called Balrogs and one of Aulë’s Maiar named Sauron.

CHAPTER 1. OF THE BEGINNING OF DAYS

During the Valar’s war with Melkor, Tulkas’s descent to Arda drives Melkor to the outer **darkness** of the world. A period of peace follows, and the Valar finish the construction of the world. To provide **light**, Aulë makes two lamps, which Varda fills and Manwë blesses before they’re placed on pillars in the north and south. Yavanna’s plants begin to grow, and animals live among them. After Arda is completed, Manwë organizes a feast for the Valar on the Isle of Almaren. This begins the Quenta Silmarillion, or the History of the Silmarils.

Melkor hears about the feast from his spies among the Maiar. Jealous and hateful, he waits until Tulkas falls asleep after the feast, then descends to the north of Middle-earth with his followers and builds an underground fortress called Utumno. When the lands around it wither, the Valar realize he’s returned. Before the Valar can find his hiding place, Melkor attacks, breaking the two **lamps** and spilling fire across Arda, then hides away again. The Valar focus their attention on salvaging Middle-earth.

The Isle of Almaren is destroyed in the fires, so the Valar move from Middle-earth to the Land of Aman on the border of the world next to the sea that encircles Arda. They raise up mountains as a defense against Melkor; Manwë puts his throne on the peak and the rest of the Valar build their houses behind them. The land, named Valinor, grows more beautiful than Middle-earth, and nothing dies or withers there.

Though the Valar keep themselves apart from Middle-earth for the most part, the Maiar sometimes travel there to live among the elves and men. Olórin, who lives in disguise in Middle-earth for a time and helps to rectify the division caused by Melkor and Sauron, is better known as the wizard Gandalf.



Melkor succeeds in dividing the Maiar, bringing many over to his side to oppose the Valar and support his bid for dominion over Arda. Over time, his envy turns into malice and contempt, and he seeks to corrupt and destroy what he can’t possess for himself.



The history of the Silmarils, according to the elves, doesn’t begin with the creation of the Silmarils but with the completion of the world and, more importantly, the first creation of daylight. The stars already exist over Middle-earth, but they’re dim. The lamps illuminate the world, making it visible as it has never been before, and driving away Melkor’s shadow.



Whatever the Valar create, Melkor seeks to destroy—especially light, which is reminiscent of the Flame Imperishable that he can never attack or possess. Melkor has only destructive power—in his hands, light isn’t a creative and clarifying force, but a catastrophic one, burning the land and the work of the Valar. His very presence is destructive, corroding the world around him.



Valinor is created as a place exempt from the destruction and loss that exists elsewhere in Arda because of Melkor. The Valar defend it against his attack and, in future days, disallow mortals to enter. It is a land that resists change, for better or worse.



Beside the gate of the city of Valmar, Yavanna sings a song that grows two trees. One—named Telperion—sheds white **light** and has flowers that produce silver dew, and the other—named Laurelin—sheds golden light and has yellow flowers. Each day, Telperion blooms first for seven hours, then its light fades as Laurelin's grows. The Valar consider the first time Telperion bloomed to be the first hour of the first day on Arda and begin to count time.

Middle-earth remains in twilight, lit only by Varda's **stars**, and the Valar rarely visit it. In their absence, Melkor wanders unchecked. Manwë rules Valinor peacefully, Aulë works as a craftsman, and Ulmo resides in the ocean, ensuring that water and life still run through Middle-earth. Yavanna travels to Middle-earth to heal the growing things Melkor harms and advises the Valar that another war with Melkor is inevitable before the Children of Ilúvatar arrive. Oromë also goes to Middle-earth and hunts Melkor's monsters.

Since none of the Ainur fully understand the theme of the Great Music that introduced the Children of Ilúvatar, they didn't add anything to it, making the Ainur the "elders" of elves and men, rather than their creators or masters. Ilúvatar approves of the creation of Arda and names the children that will live there: Quendi (elves) who will "have the greater bliss" in the world and be the most beautiful, and Atani (men) who will be restless but will have the power "to shape their life" beyond the plan of the Great Music. Ilúvatar knows that men will abuse this gift of freedom, but their actions only contribute to the glory of his work.

Because of the gift of freedom, also, men will only live for a short time in the world and then depart to somewhere unknown. The elves will live until the end of the world unless they're killed, in which case they remain in Valinor in the Houses of the Dead. As time progresses, the Valar will envy men for their ability to die, though Melkor makes men fear it. Still, the Valar know that men will join in the Second Music of the Ainur, though they don't know Ilúvatar's plan for the elves after the end of the world.

The Two Trees replace the two lamps as the lights of the Valar's realm. Composed of growing, living light, they are sacred and untouched by evil. Now that the physical features of the world have been completed, some of the constructed elements—such as the first record of time by the ageless and immortal Valar—also begin.



The Valar disagree on what to do about the threat Melkor poses. Most of them remain in Valinor, overseeing their own domains there, but a few still travel to Middle-earth to ensure that Melkor doesn't take over the continent completely. In the vision of Arda shown to them by Ilúvatar, the elves awoke somewhere in Middle-earth. If the Valar don't act, the elves will awaken under Melkor's rule.



Ilúvatar is the only creator of all sentient life. He bestows true life and free will on the Ainur, elves, and men, but makes each race with distinct characteristics. To men he gives a special gift—the gift of freedom, which allows the possibility of disobedience. Though no one can subvert Ilúvatar's plan for the world (which allows for free will within it), men will have the ability to create their own fates after what the Ainur conceived of during the Great Music has come to pass and after their vision of Arda ended. All free will, even used for evil, will eventually create beauty in Ilúvatar's plan.



Elves and men will be fundamentally separated after death—elves are bound to the world forever and men are bound to leave the world forever. Though there is naturally loss in this separation, it doesn't become a frightening loss until Melkor's influence makes men fear death. The elves' tradition promises that the separation is only temporary—all division will be healed at the end of the world, though they don't yet know their own part in it.



CHAPTER 2. OF AULË AND YAVANNA

Aulë wants to teach his craftwork to others. Unwilling to wait for the arrival of the Children of Ilúvatar, he secretly creates the dwarves. When the first seven dwarves are finished, Ilúvatar asks Aulë why he's attempted something beyond his authority. Aulë, who doesn't have Ilúvatar's power to create life and free will, can only make puppets. Aulë explains that he wants the dwarves to live and experience Arda, which has room for many creatures. He calls himself a child playing at what he's seen his father do.

Aulë offers to destroy the dwarves, who shrink away from him. Ilúvatar stops him and explains that he has given the dwarves life and incorporated them into his plan for the world. Still, he won't reward Aulë's impatience, and puts the dwarves to sleep in the mountain until after the elves arrive. He predicts that the dwarves, as Aulë's children, will have conflict with the Children of Ilúvatar. The dwarves, hardy and stubborn, believe that they return to Aulë after death and will assist him in remaking Arda after the end of the world.

Aulë reveals the creation of the dwarves to Yavanna, who tells him that the dwarves won't love the plants of Middle-earth like she does and will abuse nature. Aulë argues that the elves and men will also use the natural world for food and shelter. With Melkor's influence, the Children of Ilúvatar might lose all respect for plants and animals.

Anxious, Yavanna goes to Manwë and wishes that the trees could speak on behalf of the natural world. Ilúvatar reveals to Manwë that the trees spoke in the Great Song and sends him to assure Yavanna that he hasn't forgotten her. Spirits will come to dwell among nature to protect it in the form of the great eagles and the shepherds of trees. Yavanna tells Aulë that his children will have to beware the guardians of her nature, but Aulë only insists that the dwarves and the Children of Ilúvatar will still need wood.

CHAPTER 3. OF THE COMING OF THE ELVES AND THE CAPTIVITY OF MELKOR

During that time, only Oromë and Yavanna come to Middle-earth, where evil and "dark creatures" walk. Yavanna puts some of the natural world to sleep so it won't age before the elves arrive. Melkor's corruption and influence grows, and he creates a new fortress near the western shore commanded by Sauron and called Angband. Yavanna tells the council of the Valar that the Children of Ilúvatar will wake up eventually to find Middle-earth overrun by evil if they don't do something about Melkor.

Aulë's creation of the dwarves is an act of arrogance, but it is foolish arrogance—born of impatience rather than envy or malice. Aulë is very like Melkor in his desire to create life of his own, but unlike Melkor's, Aulë's is an unselfish desire. He wants to share the beauty of the world and the joy of craftwork with others, but he doesn't have Ilúvatar's power to create free will, so he can't give the dwarves true life.



Also unlike Melkor, Aulë has the humility to ask for forgiveness and immediately offers to rectify his transgression however he can. Rather than allowing them to be destroyed, Ilúvatar adopts the dwarves as his own children and gives them true life. Still, since they were made by Aulë, who only understands part of Ilúvatar's mind, the dwarves will have conflict with men and elves, Ilúvatar's true children.



The dwarves, created by Aulë alone, will be very like Aulë and will probably lack the diversity of the other races. Still, Aulë is right to realize that all the races will need to use Yavanna's nature to live, and that Melkor will take advantage of their worst qualities to harm the land.



Through this story, the elves reveal the origins of the dwarves, the shepherds of the trees (also known as ents), and Manwë's messengers, the giant eagles. There will be inevitable conflict between Yavanna's shepherds and Aulë's dwarves, just as there will be some inevitable destruction of the natural world to sustain the Children of Ilúvatar, even without Melkor's influence.



Most of the Valar avoid Middle-earth, though it's their own creation and the fated birthplace of the Children of Ilúvatar. Yavanna and Oromë work to mitigate the damage Melkor is doing to Middle-earth, but they can't combat him alone. They need the agreement and cooperation of all the Valar to remove Melkor from the continent, if it's even possible to do so.



Tulkas urges them to begin another war with Melkor, but Manwë reminds the Valar that the elves are fated to wake up in **darkness**, under only the **light** of the stars. Varda, who already created stars, leaves the council and begins the “greatest of all the works of the Valar.” She takes the shining dew from Telperion and uses it to craft new, brighter stars and constellations. Because of this labor, the elves call her the Kindler and the Queen of the Stars.

As Varda finishes her labor, the elves wake up in the bay of Cuiviénen, and the first thing they see is starlight. They live by the water for a long time, exploring the world, then begin to create language and name themselves the Quendi. As Oromë rides through Middle-earth on a hunt his horse stops suddenly, and he hears the sound of singing. By this chance, the Valar discover that the elves are awake.

Oromë is “filled with wonder” seeing the elves, and names them the Eldar (the people of the **stars**), but many of the elves are afraid of Oromë since Melkor has plagued them with spies and evil spirits. If any of the elves venture too far away from the bay and disappear, a lie begun by Melkor leads them to assume Oromë the hunter caught them. Melkor corrupts and enslaves the elves he captures and uses them to create the race of orcs—possibly his worst crime. The noblest of the elves, however, are drawn to Oromë and don’t run from him.

Oromë travels to Valinor to tell the Valar the news, then returns immediately to Middle-earth to stay with the elves. Ilúvatar counsels Manwë to lead the Valar to defend the elves from Melkor. The Valar fight Melkor in the north-west of Middle-earth, destroying much of the land, but winning a swift victory and driving him back to Utumno. The siege of Utumno changes the shape of Middle-earth and ends with Tulkas capturing Melkor and restraining him in chains made by Aulë.

Though Melkor’s capture leads to an age of peace, the Valar don’t find all the hiding places in Utumno and Angband, so many evil things (including Sauron) escape. When the Valar bring Melkor back to Valinor to face the council of the Valar, Melkor begs Manwë for pardon and is denied. They imprison him in the Houses of the Dead, where no one can escape, and plan to wait three ages before allowing him to ask for pardon again.

This fate—that the elves will wake in darkness—is one decreed by Ilúvatar and will certainly happen no matter what the Valar do. Still, rather than leaving the elves in the near-total darkness under her dim stars, Varda creates new stars from Telperion’s living light. Though Middle-earth remains in twilight and under Melkor’s influence, the elves will have the constellations to see by and to give them hope.



Ilúvatar hid the details of the elves’ arrival from the Valar, so their awakening is a surprise. By the time Oromë discovers them, they have already grown and learned enough to create their own language and music. They awaken (as the Ainur were created) as a united race with one home and one language.



Here, the elven narrator explains what the elves believe to be the origin of the race of orcs. Melkor sows fear and division among the elves because he hates and fears them—united (and united with the Valar) they’re far more powerful. By kidnapping and corrupting elves into orcs, he divides the entire race and uses it to create its own ancient enemy.



The time comes for the Valar to return together to Middle-earth and defend the elves from Melkor. United, they can defeat him, but the victory is not without cost—it harms much of the land and alters the very shape of Middle-earth. Melkor universally provokes loss and destruction, even in his defeat.



With Melkor’s capture, his immediate interference in the world is briefly ended. However, though he is imprisoned, his influence in Middle-earth remains, as it will throughout the history of Arda. His servants can’t be wholly eradicated, and neither can the lies and fear he spreads among the Children of Ilúvatar.



The Valar argue about how to care for the Quendi. Some want to heal the wrongs of Middle-earth and leave the Quendi there, but others fear for their safety and want their companionship. The Valar decide to summon the Quendi to Valinor to live with them, as Mandos knows is part of their fate. “Many woes” result from the invitation.

The ultimate reasoning behind bringing the elves to Valinor is that the Valar simply want to know them, since the Children of Ilúvatar are the reason for their descent to Arda in the first place. The elven narrator recognizes in hindsight that this choice to invite the elves sets the world on a path towards further loss and sorrow.



The Quendi are fearful and hesitant to come, so Oromë selects ambassadors to travel to Valinor first. Ingwë, Finwë, and Elwë meet the Valar, then return to advise the rest of the Quendi to come to Valinor, leading to the first division of the elves. Most of the elves (called the Eldar after this) follow their leaders to Valinor. Others called the Avari (or Unwilling) refuse to come and are separated from the Eldar.

The division of the elves is inevitable and natural, though it is provoked early on by the Valar’s invitation. As the population grows, the elves wish to follow different leaders and live in different lands. Still, the separation is a moment of loss and profound change, since the elves will never be truly reunited while the world lasts.



The first group of elves to depart Middle-earth, led by Ingwë, is called the Vanyar, or the Fair Elves, who rarely return to Middle-earth. The next group, led by Finwë, is called the Noldor, or the Deep Elves, and is loved by Aulë. The biggest group is led by Elwë and his brother Olwë and is called the Teleri, or the Sea-elves. The elves that make it to Valinor are collectively called the Elves of the **Light**. Other members of the Eldar don’t complete the journey, becoming lost on the road or lingering in Middle-earth. They, along with the Avari, are called the Elves of the **Darkness**.

Contributing to the sense of loss around the sundering of the elves are the groups that literally become lost on the path to Valinor, wandering away from the larger group or being left behind. There are even new factions among the elves who do make it to Valinor, divided by their temperaments, interests, and leaders. They break themselves into three main groups, and the elves left behind on Middle-earth become scattered.



The Eldar’s trek to Valinor is long, since they enjoy the sights of Middle-earth as they travel and often stop moving entirely if Oromë isn’t there to lead them. The Teleri almost stop to live near the Anduin river, and one elf named Lenwë leads many elves away from the march to Valinor. They become the Nandor, who possess extensive knowledge of nature. Eventually, all three groups of Eldar reach Beleriand, the westernmost part of Middle-earth at the edge of the sea that leads to Valinor.

Though the elves freely choose to come to Valinor, in doing so, they also lose Middle-earth, the land of their awakening. This is a significant loss for the elves, who are bound to the land and made by Ilúvatar to love it—significant enough that many can’t bring themselves to leave. Even those who do eventually depart are reluctant and refuse to travel onward without prompting.



CHAPTER 4. OF THINGOL AND MELIAN

In the time after the elves wake, Melian, who is always followed by nightingales, travels from Lórien to Middle-earth to sing. The elves reach Beleriand, and Elwë often walks through the forest to search for his friend Finwë. When he passes through the woods of Nan Elmoth, he hears Melian singing and follows the sound, forgetting all his responsibilities. Seeing her, Elwë falls in love, and “a spell” falls on him. Many years pass while they stand silently together.

Even during the journey, the elves have become separated. While trying to search for his companion, Elwë goes missing. Falling in love with Melian separates Elwë from the other elves, both because he marries outside his own race (she is a Maia) and because he stands literally frozen in time while many of the elves depart for Valinor.



The Teleri search for Elwë after his disappearance but can't find him, so Olwë leads them on towards Valinor. Elwë never reaches Valinor during his life and Melian doesn't return as long as their kingdom lasts. Their children, half-elf and half-Maia, are the "fairest" of the Children of Ilúvatar. Elwë (now called Thingol) and Melian rule the Eldar remaining in Beleriand—Gray-elves or Elves of the Twilight.

The elven narrator reveals part of the fates of Thingol and Melian shortly after introducing their kingdom. Thingol will never return to Valinor, but he will briefly unite the elves of Beleriand under his rule, and his children with Melian will be important in the history of the elves.



CHAPTER 5. OF ELDAMAR AND THE PRINCES OF THE ELDALIË

The elves fear the sea that separates Middle-earth from Valinor until Ulmo comes to Beleriand to talk to them and play music. Ulmo uproots an island and uses it as a ship to carry the Eldar to Valinor. The Teleri are too late to make the crossing with the Vanyar and the Noldor, so they wait beside the sea and Ossë and Uinen teach them sea-lore. Eventually, Ulmo returns to bring them to Valinor. Those who remain with Ossë are called the Falathrim, led by Círdan, and are the first ship-makers of Middle-earth.

The elves continue to become divided by both physical space and experience. Rather than traveling with the other groups, the Teleri remain with Ossë and Uinen, learning about the sea and growing to love it. Though most of them, too, travel to Valinor eventually, they have been changed by their experiences and naturally grow apart from the Vanyar and Noldor.



The friends of Elwë, unwilling to leave for Valinor without him, are called the Eglath, or the Forsaken People, and wander Beleriand longing for Valinor. When Elwë wakes up from his trance, he is reunited with his people and appears tall and gray-haired, like one of the Maiar. Though he wants to see the **light** of Valinor's Trees again, he's content to see the same light visible in Melian's face.

Elwë, too, is changed by his experiences—his appearance is altered, he goes by a different name, and he benefits from Melian's wisdom. Though the Forsaken People are victims of the loss that arises from separation, they are eventually reunited with Elwë and no longer forsaken.



Ossë calls out after the Teleri on their voyage, and they beg Ulmo to stop. Ulmo sets the island down in the Bay of Eldamar, and the Teleri stay there in sight of Valinor but under the **stars**. It becomes known as Tol Eresseä, or the Lonely Isle. Both the Valar and Finwë are upset to learn that the Teleri won't come to Valinor, and Finwë grieves that Elwë was left behind in Beleriand. The Valar create a gap in the mountains so the Vanyar and Noldor can see the stars and so the **light** of the Trees can touch the Lonely Isle.

The Teleri end their journey just short of Valinor—they aren't in Middle-earth any longer, but neither have they truly rejoined the Vanyar and Noldor. To accommodate all three groups of elves, the Valar open the mountains to let the light of the Trees spill onto the island and make the stars of Middle-earth visible in Valinor. Though the Teleri aren't all the way to Valinor yet, all three groups of elves live in the same light.



Inside the valley, the elves build a city called Tirion and live peacefully. Yavanna makes them a tree in the image of Telperion. A seed from that tree is planted on the Lonely Isle, producing a tree named Celeborn, and a seed from Celeborn later becomes the White Tree of Númenor. While quarrying for stone to build Finwë's house, masons discover the first gems, and the Noldor begin to cut and distribute them.

Yavanna's gift to Tirion is not only significant because of its similarity to Telperion, but because, in the future, it will become an important symbol. Its cycles of death and rebirth parallel those of the world—loss and successive growth in new nations. Meanwhile, the elves thrive in Valinor, growing, building, and learning.



Finwë's sons are Fëanor, high-spirited, Fingolfin, valiant and steadfast, and Finarfin, wise and fair. Fëanor's sons are Maedhros, Maglor, Celegorm, Caranthir, Curufin, Amrod, and Amras. Fingolfin's children are Fingon, the future king of the Noldor, Turgon, the future lord of Gondolin, and Aredhel the White. Finarfin's children are Finrod, Orodreth, Angrod, Aegnor, and Galadriel, whose hair is as golden as Laurelin's **light**.

Eventually, Ossë teaches the Teleri ship-building, and they leave the Lonely Isle and reunite with the other Eldar. They build their own city, Alqualondë, on the shore of Valinor. As time passes, the Vanyar decide to leave the city of Tirion and live on Manwë's mountain or further inland, out of sight of Middle-earth. The Noldor, however, can't forget Middle-earth. Fëanor and his sons explore Valinor, rarely living in one place for long.

CHAPTER 6. OF FĒANOR AND THE UNCHAINING OF MELKOR

In the peaceful days after the arrival of the Eldar, Fëanor (meaning Spirit of **Fire**) is born. After his birth, his mother Míriel tells Finwë that she'll never have other children—she's given all her strength to Fëanor. Manwë sends her to Lórien to heal, but when she falls asleep there, her spirit goes to the Houses of the Dead.

After her death, Finwë gives all his love and attention to Fëanor, who grows up clever and stubborn. He helps Rúmil of Tirion develop written language and devises a better way of polishing gems. He marries Nerdanel, who is as stubborn as him, but more patient, and able to "restrain" him when he's too hotheaded. Some of their sons inherit her temper, and some of them inherit Fëanor's.

Fëanor has "no great love" for his father's second wife, Indis, and their two sons Fingolfin and Finarfin. It's said later that if Finwë hadn't divided his house by remarrying, Fëanor might have made different choices and avoided the approaching disaster. Still, Fingolfin and Finarfin are great figures, and without them the history of the Eldar wouldn't be as great.

The elven narrator provides this information early, listing out Finwë's descendants and their identifying characteristics before they're actually born. This indicates both the importance of Finwë's line for the remainder of the story and the narrator's commitment to clarity—though the elves don't know certain aspects of their traditions with certainty, genealogies are well-recorded.



Though the Teleri finally join the Vanyar and the Noldor in Valinor, the three groups never truly become one community again. They're united under the guidance of the Valar, but they each reside in different places in Valinor and have different leaders and priorities. The fact that Fëanor chooses to wander—much as Melkor did in the Void—indicates that he thinks differently from the rest of the Noldor.



Míriel's is the first recorded death among the elves—one of weariness rather than violence. She isn't gone from the world, since her soul remains in Valinor, but she is permanently separated from her husband and son until their own deaths when they join her in the Houses of the Dead.



Fëanor is represented as one of the greatest (though not necessarily the best) elves to ever live. He burns brightly and excels at everything he does. Yet that isn't always a good thing. His spirit is so forceful that it tires his mother to the point of death, and his temper and pride are difficult to control.



It is noteworthy that by remarrying and joining his house to Indis, the daughter of the Vanyar king, Finwë is at the same time dividing his house. Fëanor doesn't perceive his father's remarriage as an extension of his family, but as an invasion. His resentment and jealousy, the narrator warns, will lead to disaster. Even so, the elves wouldn't change history to avoid it, since their history is part of their identity.



Meanwhile, after three ages pass, Melkor is brought again to the council of the Valar and begs for pardon, hiding his jealousy and hate. Manwë, who can't comprehend evil, believes that Melkor is cured of it and grants his pardon. Ulmo and Tulkas aren't deceived by Melkor but can't disobey Manwë.

Melkor hates the Eldar because their arrival in Middle-earth led to his downfall. As a result, he pretends to offer them friendship and teach them. The Noldor particularly enjoy his craftiness and hidden knowledge. Later, Melkor claims that he taught Fëanor his craft, but he lies—Fëanor hates Melkor more than any of the Eldar and is the first one to name him “Morgoth.” Though Fëanor becomes influenced by Melkor's malice towards the Valar, he's driven only “by the **fire** of his own heart” and acts alone.

Melkor is no longer capable of true repentance; his humility before the Valar is merely an act that hides his pride and jealousy. While Manwë is a just king, his inability to understand his enemy is a distinct disadvantage to him and to the world.



Now freed, Melkor returns to spreading lies and division among the elves and between the elves and the Valar—his favorite method of weakening his enemies. The Noldor, proud and cunning, are an easy target for Melkor. He hates them, but he's also jealous of their prosperity and of Fëanor's skill. Here, again, the narrator alludes to the trouble Fëanor causes—he is inadvertently influenced by Melkor, but not his accomplice.



CHAPTER 7. OF THE SILMARILS AND THE UNREST OF THE NOLDOR

Fëanor has a new idea—or possibly has some premonition of his fate—about how he can preserve the **light** of the Trees of Valinor. Using all of his craft and skill, he creates the **Silmarils**. Though they look like clear diamonds, they're completely unbreakable. Inside the jewels, Fëanor traps the blended light of the Trees. The Silmarils are “indeed living things” and find joy in refracting the light of the Trees into new colors. All of Valinor is amazed by them. Varda blesses them so that anything evil that touches them will be scorched and Mandos predicts that the fate of the world is locked inside them.

Melkor, who craves to possess the **Silmarils**, works secretly to destroy Fëanor and ruin the relationship between the elves and the Valar. He begins to subtly corrupt the Noldor with his words, convincing them that the Valar are jealous of them and suppress their power. He also reveals the secret of the coming of men, which the Valar haven't yet explained to the elves. The rumor spreads that the Valar are holding the elves captive so that men can take over Middle-earth.

Valinor's peace is poisoned as the Noldor become prideful and begin to speak against the Valar. Fëanor is especially influenced by the rumors and desires “freedom and wider realms.” He becomes greedy with the **Silmarils**, preventing others from seeing them and forgetting that their light doesn't belong to him. Melkor spreads lies that Fingolfin and Finarfin plan to usurp Fëanor as Finwë's heir with the support of the Valar. When the Noldor are angry enough, Melkor coaxes them into creating weapons.

The Silmarils, though Fëanor's creation, are composed of the living light of the Trees—light meant to be shared and enjoyed by all of Valinor. The Silmarils themselves are almost alive and take joy in creating beauty. Their light is perfectly pure and untainted—taken from the unsullied Trees, encased in jewels, and blessed by Varda. Most of Mandos's predictions are vague—though he reveals that the Silmarils are important to the fate of the world, he doesn't indicate how. Only time will tell whether they provoke goodness, evil, or some mixture of both.



Melkor covets almost everything he sees—he is the first of many to become obsessed with the Silmarils and try to steal them at any cost. To satisfy his own greed and anger, Melkor sows chaos and destroys Valinor's peace. He works harder to divide the Noldor and the Valar, taking advantage of his own foreknowledge and the Noldor's innate pride and stubbornness.



Melkor's plan succeeds, and the happiness of Valinor begins to decline. Fëanor is the next person to be possessed by greed for the Silmarils—though their light belongs to all of Valinor, he hides them away, suspicious of his allies and brothers. Melkor subtly urges him towards rebellion by convincing the Noldor to think of it as freedom instead.



Fëanor begins to speak openly about rebellion against the Valar and promises to lead the Noldor back to Middle-earth. When Finwë holds a council, Fëanor walks in—fully armed—to hear Fingolfin speaking against him. Fëanor publicly threatens Fingolfin, who ignores him and leaves the council.

The Valar are dismayed by the arrogance of the Noldor and assume Fëanor is the leader of the unrest. They summon him before their council and discover that Melkor is the true agitator. However, Fëanor is still guilty of drawing his sword on his brother and is banished from Tirion for 12 years as punishment. Mandos promises that, after those years, everything will be resolved if Fingolfin forgives him, and Fingolfin is quick to promise that he will.

Fëanor leaves silently for exile with his sons, and Finwë also follows him, leaving Fingolfin to rule the Noldor in his absence. In doing so, Finwë accidentally convinces Fëanor that he was right to mistrust his brothers, making Melkor's lies seem true. They make a stronghold in the north called Formenos and fill it with gems and weapons.

Melkor takes the form of a cloud and disappears as the Valar search for him. He appears to Fëanor and attempts to befriend him by offering his aid and suggesting that the **Silmarils** aren't safe in Formenos. Though Fëanor considers the offer, Melkor's mention of the Silmarils convinces him that Melkor wants them for himself. Fëanor curses Melkor and sends him away. Finwë sends a messenger to Manwë about Melkor's appearance, but Melkor has already fled Valinor to the north. Valinor is safe for the time being, but the threat of Melkor's return troubles the elves and the Valar.

CHAPTER 8. OF THE DARKENING OF VALINOR

Oromë and Tulkas hunt for Melkor in the north but can't find him since he secretly traveled south of Valinor to the "dark region" called Avathar where Ungoliant lives. Taking the shape of a monstrous spider, she has the power to consume **light** and use it to spin webs of **darkness**. The elves believe she might have descended to Arda from the darkness around the world. She was once a servant of Melkor, but later left him to creep closer to the light of Valinor, which she both hungers for and hates.

The division Melkor has sown in Valinor has become physical—Fëanor plans to leave altogether to return to Middle-earth and threatens his brother with violence. In his pride, he has ceased to respect or fear the Valar.



Though Melkor is ultimately to blame for the trouble in Valinor, that fact doesn't diminish Fëanor's own pride and transgressions, which the Valar decide he must be punished for. Fingolfin recognizes the division around him and tries to heal it by forgiving and placating Fëanor, volatile where Fingolfin is steady.



Even with the Valar's intervention, the Noldor are divided. Finwë's decision to leave Fingolfin in charge only further inflames Fëanor's mistrust of his brothers and makes his suspicions seem justified.



In this case, Fëanor's paranoia around the Silmarils is justified. Melkor wants the jewels and will do anything to get them. This, too, contributes to Fëanor's certainty that others like the Valar and his brothers are attempting to steal what is rightfully his. The Valar recognize the threat that Melkor poses to Valinor and the harm that he's already done—Valinor's age of peace has ended, and the world is sliding into conflict again.



Ungoliant is a being of pure greed. She consumes and destroys beauty and light. Like Melkor, she both wants to possess it and hates the sight of it. The elves don't know where she came from—she might be a Maia, or she might be something else, a being created out of the Void. She leaves Melkor's service because she isn't motivated by pride or loyalty—only hunger.



Back in his old form of a dark lord, Melkor seeks Ungoliant out and bribes her to help him take revenge on the Valar by promising to feed her anything she wants. Ungoliant weaves a cloak of **darkness** around them both and uses her webs to climb over the mountains that surround Valinor. Melkor sees the **light** of the Two Trees and laughs.

On Manwë's mountain there is a festival to praise Ilúvatar and celebrate the gathering of Yavanna's fruit with music and a feast. The Vanyar and the Noldor arrive, leaving both Valmar and Tirion empty. Manwë plans to use the feast to heal the separation among the Noldor and make peace between Fëanor and his brothers. Fëanor comes—though Finwë refuses to meet the Noldor while Fëanor is banished—and Fingolfin forgives Fëanor as he promised. They shake hands, and Fingolfin (not knowing what his words will soon mean) swears to follow Fëanor and let nothing divide them.

At the hour when the **light** of the Trees mingles, Melkor and Ungoliant arrive in Valinor as a dark cloud. Melkor stabs each Tree with his spear, and Ungoliant drains them dry of their sap, then drinks the dew that pools beneath them in the Wells of Varda. She swells so much that Melkor becomes afraid of her. Withered by Ungoliant's poison, the trees die, and **darkness** falls over Valinor—darkness that isn't just a lack of light, but has a malice and will of its own.

Varda is the first to notice the shadow, and the music of the festival ceases. Manwë, who can see through the dark, notices an impenetrable **darkness** (Ungoliant and Melkor) fleeing northward and sends Tulkas and Oromë's hunters after them. But as they catch up with Ungoliant, her darkness blinds and confuses them. When the darkness passes, Melkor is gone, and his revenge is complete.

CHAPTER 9. OF THE FLIGHT OF THE NOLDOR

The Valar gather around the dead Trees beneath Varda's stars. Yavanna declares that, though she can't remake the Trees, she can revive them with the **light** of Fëanor's **Silmarils**. The Valar ask if he will give the Silmarils to Yavanna, but Aulë, who understands the difficulty of the request, urges them to give Fëanor time. Fëanor tells the Valar that, just as Yavanna can't make more Trees, he can't make anything like the Silmarils again, and to see them destroyed would kill him. Fëanor feels that he's surrounded by enemies and remembers Melkor's suggestion that the Valar want the Silmarils. He won't give them up willingly.

Melkor and Ungoliant's inner monstrosity is externally visible. They take forms that frighten others, implying that, while pretending to be good in Valinor, Melkor took on a more pleasing physical form. Melkor's promise to Ungoliant is doubly a lie, since he has no intention of feeding her after using her, and since she can never be fully satisfied.



The divisions Melkor creates are difficult to mend. Though the Valar reach out to Fëanor to bring him back from exile, Finwë's pride is injured by the insult of his son's banishment and he refuses to come. Fingolfin again makes every effort to heal the division between himself and Fëanor, hoping to placate him by swearing an ill-fated promise to follow him. The elven narrator alludes to the trouble Fëanor will lead Fingolfin into because of Fingolfin's efforts towards unity.



The light of Valinor, emblematic of creativity, life, and hope, isn't only snuffed out by Ungoliant, but consumed and turned into darkness. The more Ungoliant consumes and the more goodness she destroys, the more monstrous she grows physically. Though Melkor is probably the most powerful being in Arda, Ungoliant's greed is a threat even to him.



When the light of the Two Trees is destroyed, life in Valinor briefly halts; the festival ends, and the resulting darkness stops the Valar in their tracks. Melkor, who envied the happiness of the people of Valinor, has found a way to ruin that happiness in one decisive attack.



The creations of the elves are vitally important to them—Fëanor implies that he has put something of himself into the Silmarils. He can't live without them, and he can't survive their destruction. Fëanor fails to recognize that the Trees are as important to Yavanna as the Silmarils are to him. And, unlike the Silmarils which he claims for himself alone, the Trees bring light to all of Valinor. Circumstance again gives credence to Fëanor's paranoia and Melkor's insinuation that the Valar want the Silmarils for themselves.



As Manwë accepts Fëanor's refusal and Nienna stands to mourn the Trees, a messenger arrives to tell them that Melkor has killed Finwë and stolen the **Silmarils**. Fëanor curses Melkor and names him Morgoth, "the Black Foe of the World," the name the elves know him by. Fëanor also curses Manwë's invitation, wishing he'd been at Formenos to defend his father, though he couldn't have saved him from Morgoth. Distraught, he runs from the Valar.

Meanwhile, Morgoth and Ungoliant pass through the northern wastes of Araman and cross over a strait filled with "grinding ice" to Middle-earth. Ungoliant guesses that Morgoth, fleeing to Angband, is trying to escape her to avoid fulfilling his promise. She's still hungry, and she wants the jewels they stole from Formenos. Reluctantly, Morgoth gives them to her to eat but refuses to give her the **Silmarils**, which have begun to burn his hand through their crystal box.

Ungoliant wraps Morgoth in **darkness**, and he cries out. The Balrogs hiding in Angband hear him and come to his aid, burning Ungoliant's webs and driving her into a valley in Beleriand where other spiders live. Later, she mates with them and kills them, then departs for the south, leaving her descendants behind. Though her fate is unknown, some say that, in her hunger, she devours herself. Morgoth rebuilds his armies in Angband and forges himself a crown set with the **Silmarils**. His hands are permanently blackened from touching them. He's filled with hate and devotes himself to domination and evil.

Though the Vanyar remain with the Valar to mourn the Trees, the Noldor return to Tirion, where Fëanor suddenly appears, though he's technically still banished. A "master of words," he gives an angry speech and declares his kingship over the Noldor. He asks why they should serve the Valar, who are kin to Morgoth, and refuses to live with them in Valinor. He urges the Noldor to follow him back to Middle-earth, since Valinor doesn't offer either protection or light, and accidentally echoes Morgoth's own rhetoric to convince them not to trust the Valar.

Finally, Fëanor promises that they will wage war on Morgoth until they reclaim the **Silmarils**. Then the Noldor alone will possess their light and be the rulers of Arda, above every other race. Fëanor swears an oath on the name of Ilúvatar that he'll pursue anyone who tries to keep a Silmaril from the Noldor "with vengeance and hatred" to the end of the world. His sons swear the same.

Contrary to Fëanor's fears, the Valar won't take the Silmarils from Fëanor by force, even to save the Two Trees. It is Melkor who resorts to theft, committing the first murder in Arda's history and escaping with the Silmarils. In his grief, Fëanor overestimates his own abilities and believes he might have been able to protect his father if not for the Valar.



If all the light of Valinor couldn't satisfy Ungoliant's hunger, Fëanor's jewels certainly won't either. Ungoliant is insatiable—even if Morgoth feeds her, she'll always want more. Though Morgoth is more calculating and less mindlessly hungry than Ungoliant, he matches her in greed, refusing to give up the Silmarils even as they burn him.



Morgoth and Ungoliant are formidable allies and well-matched enemies. Though the force of their greed is similar, Morgoth has cunning and power beyond Ungoliant's capabilities. Driven by her hunger, she has difficulty thinking beyond her immediate desires. Her greed eventually leads her to destroy herself—an indication of what could happen to Morgoth, who already irreparably injures himself in his greed for the Silmarils.



After the destruction of the Trees, the elves who came together for the festival break apart again. Though Fëanor hates Morgoth, his vices are not unlike Morgoth's, and he is very susceptible to Morgoth's lies. Fëanor's pride and anger have finally driven him to outright rebellion. He incites his people, the Noldor, to leave Valinor, convincing them that the Valar are no better than Morgoth.



Fëanor's oath is one of the things that most effectively divides the world in the coming years. By swearing it, Fëanor and his sons promise to make anyone their potential enemy. His pride, his desire not to be ruled, and his obsession with the Silmarils drives Arda into a seemingly endless war with Morgoth and with each other.



Fingolfin and Turgon speak against Fëanor, nearly leading to a fight, but Finarfin calms them down. Galadriel longs to rule her own land in Middle-earth, so she speaks in favor of leaving Valinor. After a long debate, the majority of the Noldor are enflamed by Fëanor and decide to follow him immediately. The Valar watch, saddened by the accusations against them and unwilling to hold the Noldor captive if they wish to leave. Still, they aren't convinced that Fëanor can control the Noldor, most of whom are loyal to Fingolfin and want him as their king. Fingolfin will accompany the Noldor because his son wants to leave, because he refuses to abandon his people to Fëanor's rashness, and because of his promise to follow Fëanor. Finarfin accompanies them regretfully.

The elves who follow Fëanor do so for many reasons. Galadriel's pride makes her interested in ruling her own land. Others, like Finarfin, don't want to leave at all but hope to avoid a conflict. Fingolfin is bound both by his promise to follow Fëanor and his loyalty to his people. The younger, more rash generation of elves is most taken by Fëanor's arguments, and some of their elders follow for their sake, unwilling to be separated from them and entrust their safety to Fëanor. While a clever speaker, Fëanor is not an experienced leader.



Manwë sends a message as they depart, counseling them not to leave and formally banishing Fëanor because of his oath. Fëanor laughs and tells the Noldor that if they don't find joy beyond Valinor, they'll at least find freedom. He leaves a message for Manwë that he's not being idle in his grief like the Valar are; even if he can't overthrow Morgoth, he'll attack him so fiercely the Valar will hear about it. The Noldor are split—the followers of Fëanor leave without looking back, and the followers of Fingolfin are slow and reluctant to depart, burdened by possessions to remind them of Valinor.

The Valar don't want to control the Noldor, but they also don't want them to be corrupted by Morgoth's influence as Fëanor is. All the Valar can offer is a warning, though Fëanor happily ignores it; once again, his confidence and arrogance convince him that he has the power to defeat Morgoth. The Noldor are united in following Fëanor, but they are divided in heart. Fingolfin's people will leave Valinor, but they are both less eager and slower in doing so.



Fëanor asks for boats from the Teleri, who are grieved that the Noldor are leaving and refuse to help them. Their ships, like Fëanor's **Silmarils**, are the creations of their hearts and not easy to give up. Fëanor decides to take the ships by force, and the Noldor are beaten back in the following battle three times, with many deaths on both sides. Fingon, leading the Noldor loyal to Fingolfin, joins the fight before he knows what caused it and overcomes the Teleri, killing most of their mariners. The Noldor attempt to man the ships, but Uinen raises the sea and wrecks many of them.

Fëanor is too consumed by his purpose, driven by the Silmarils and his own pride, to think rationally about his actions. Fingon is similarly hasty, though less malicious. The result is a horrific crime—the first killing of elves by other elves and the beginning of a long estrangement between the Noldor and the Teleri. The battle becomes known to the elves as the first Kinslaying.



The majority of the Noldor escape and reach the borders of Araman. Mandos appears on the cliff above them and delivers a curse foretelling that the Valar will shut them out of Valinor and that Fëanor's oath will constantly betray them and cause evil. For killing the Teleri, the Noldor who die in Middle-earth won't find mercy in the Houses of the Dead, and the ones who survive will become weary and diminished. Fëanor insists that he'll keep his oath and add to his fate—his deeds will be remembered in song until the end of the world.

The curse doesn't force the Noldor to betray each other—instead, it merely warns them of the natural consequences of their actions, foreseen by Mandos. The pursuit of the Silmarils will lead only to chaos, suspicion, and ruin. Though Fëanor is right—his deeds have been remembered by the elves—the consequences Mandos cautions them about raise the question of whether lasting glory is worth the price.



Finarfin turns back with many of his people and is pardoned by the Valar, but his sons stay with Fëanor and Fingolfin's sons. Fëanor leads the Noldor to the Helcaraxë, the treacherous bridge of grinding ice that leads to Middle-earth. Fëanor debates what to do, since the Helcaraxë is dangerous and impassable but there are too few ships to carry all the Noldor. Fëanor gathers everyone loyal to him and leaves secretly on the ships, abandoning Fingolfin and his people.

The division among the Noldor that occurs when Finarfin decides to return to the Valar is a necessary one—the groups have different priorities and wish to live in different lands. The division that results from Fëanor's departure, however, is a grave betrayal of Fingolfin and his people, and one that could have easily been avoided.



When they land, Maedhros asks his father who will return to ferry the rest of the Noldor across the strait. Fëanor laughs, refuses to go back for “needless baggage” and, assuming Fingolfin will return to Valinor, burns the Teleri's ships. Fingolfin's people see the **fires** and realize they've been betrayed. Not yet weary, they refuse to return to Valinor in shame. Led by Fingolfin, Finrod, and Galadriel, they cross the Helcaraxë, where many of them die.

Fëanor's fervent desire to reach Middle-earth, now that he's there, has become malice—there is no other reason to leave Fingolfin behind. Maedhros is the only one of Fëanor's followers to care about their abandonment of their own people, but he can't change his father's mind. Fingolfin's followers, stubborn and prideful in their own right, decide to risk their lives to reach Middle-earth rather than beg the forgiveness of the Valar.



CHAPTER 10. OF THE SINDAR

Melian and Thingol rule over all the elves of Beleriand, called the Sindar, and have a daughter named Lúthien. Though much of Middle-earth is still sleeping under Yavanna's spell, Melian fills Beleriand with life.

For a time, Thingol and Melian unite the scattered elves of Beleriand under one name and one rule. Melian gives new life to the sleeping land, beginning an era of growth in Middle-earth.



During Melkor's captivity, some dwarves leave their mountain halls in the east and cross the mountains into Beleriand. The elves, amazed to find other creatures on Middle-earth with language, called them the Naugrim. The dwarves learn the elves' language and form a tentative friendship, trading and sharing knowledge. Melian guesses that there won't be peace in the world forever, so Thingol commissions the dwarves to build him an underground fortress that he calls Menegroth. The elves aid in the construction, adding images of the beauty of Valinor and nature.

During this time, there is peace and unity in Beleriand even between different races. The dwarves—who Ilúvatar warned would not always get along with the elves and men—are allies of the elves. Still, Melian's foresight warns her that this era of peace won't last forever. As a Maia, she saw the vision of Arda and understands the world's cycles of growth and decline. Consequently, she is able to prepare for the inevitable future loss.



Near the end of Morgoth's captivity, the dwarves report to Thingol that the evil beasts of the north have multiplied. The dwarves forge weapons for the Sindar, and they drive the wolves and orcs out of Beleriand. The Nandor are defenseless against the orcs, so Denethor (the son of Lenwë) leads his people to Beleriand for Thingol's protection. Prosperity follows, and the Sindar develop runes for record-keeping.

In Morgoth's absence on Middle-earth, his evil creatures have evidently thrived. Still, since he is not there to lead them, they are much more easily driven back by the dwarves and elves that now claim Beleriand, especially since the elves and dwarves work together to oppose them.



After Ungoliant destroys the Trees and is betrayed by Morgoth, she flees into Beleriand. Melian forces her from the Sindar's forests to the mountains in the north. Morgoth's orc armies march into Beleriand and begin plundering Thingol's scattered people. Cut off from Círdan, Thingol joins with Denethor to kill the orcs in the first battle of the Wars of Beleriand.

After Denethor is killed in the battle, many of his people, now called the Laiquendi, or Green-elves, become secretive and refuse to participate in the war. When Thingol returns from battle, he learns that the orcs have trapped Círdan's forces near the sea. Thingol brings all the Sindar he can contact into the forests around Menegroth, and Melian uses her power to create the Girdle (an impassable ring of confusion) around the land. The land is afterwards called Doriath, the guarded kingdom.

CHAPTER 11. OF THE SUN AND MOON AND THE HIDING OF VALINOR

The Valar mourn both the Trees and Fëanor, who is corrupted by Morgoth's influence. Manwë weeps to hear Fëanor's response to his warning but accepts Fëanor's declaration that he'll be remembered in songs; beauty will come from evil, like Ilúvatar promised. Mandos predicts that Fëanor will soon join the Houses of the Dead.

Yavanna and Nienna use all their power to try to revive the two Trees. Telperion grows one last silver flower, and Laurelin grows a last golden fruit. Aulë makes vessels to hold the flower and fruit, then gives them to Varda, who places them in the sky as **lamps** and gives them the power to travel on appointed paths. The Valar resolve to bring light to Middle-earth to hinder Melkor's plans and prepare for the arrival of men.

Telperion's flower, steered through the sky by the Maia Tilion, becomes the **moon**, and Laurelin's fruit, led by Arien, becomes the sun. Arien, a spirit of fire, cared for Laurelin before its destruction and didn't fear its heat. Tilion was a hunter of Oromë. The moon (named Isil) rises first, to the amazement of Morgoth's servants and the delight of the elves. As it rises, Fingolfin marches into Middle-earth.

Morgoth's return to Middle-earth brings war and division. Though Melian is able to drive Ungoliant out of their lands, Morgoth's armies split up the Sindar, isolating them in small groups and making it difficult for them to form a united army.



With Morgoth's armies scattered across Beleriand and breaking up the Sindar, Thingol attempts to unite as many elves as he can in Doriath, a single fortified realm. There, the elves within the Girdle are safe from danger and division, though they are at the same time necessarily closed off from their allies outside the forest.



Morgoth's attack on Valinor destroyed both the Trees and Fëanor, who is now banished and permanently estranged from the Valar. Still, Manwë recognizes that Fëanor was right about his future fame. The elves will remember his deeds, though they will lead him to his death soon, and even acts of rebellion will eventually result in beauty.



Light in Arda is fractured into increasingly smaller pieces, from the lamps to the Trees which produce the stars, the Silmarils, and now the sun and moon. The Valar decide to light not only Valinor, but all of Arda, since men are not fated to awaken in darkness. Light in Middle-earth will allow the arrival of men and thwart Morgoth, who prefers to work his evil in darkness.



Though most of the Maia associated with fire join Morgoth and become the Balrogs, Arien remains loyal to the Valar and aids them in lighting the world. The arrival of the moon, the first light brighter than the stars to touch Middle-earth, gives hope and clarity to Fingolfin's Noldor and dismays Morgoth's dark creatures.



When the **sun** (named Anar) rises, Morgoth is dismayed. Varda planned for the sun and moon to remain constantly in the sky, but Tilion, straying from his path, is burned by Anar. Irmo and Estë argue that Middle-earth should be allowed a period of sleep when the stars are visible, so Varda decides that the sun and moon will descend beneath the earth in the west and rise again in the east. Tilion still doesn't have a consistent pace, though he always follows Arien.

The **light** of the sun and moon isn't the same as the light of the Trees before they were touched by Ungoliant—that light exists only in the **Silmarils**. Morgoth hates the lights and sends spirits of **shadow** to attack Tilion, but Tilion defeats them. Morgoth fears to attack Arien and hides from her.

The Valar raise their mountains higher and set guards in the gap where the city of Tirion is. They position islands full of “**shadows** and bewilderment” in front of Valinor to divert ships and hide from Middle-earth. None of the messengers that sail towards Valinor ever arrive, except for one.

The sun brings harsh clarity to Middle-earth, forcing light down on all of Morgoth's hidden plans. After all his trouble to destroy the light of Valinor, the Valar respond initially by making light inescapable. Still, the elves love the twilight and revere the stars, so Varda hides the sun and moon for a number of hours, creating day and night.



Light is now impure, forever tainted by the evil of Morgoth and Ungoliant. Even the Silmarils, which contain the still-untainted light of the trees, sit in Morgoth's crown. Morgoth hates light, repeatedly stealing and destroying it, but Arien is powerful enough that he doesn't even attempt to touch her.



After the creation of light over Middle-earth, the Valar retreat again into their own land, using enchantments to enforce its separation from the rest of the world. The estrangement is long-lasting; the narrator alludes to the future, in which the barrier between Valinor and Middle-earth will be upheld with only one exception.



CHAPTER 12. OF MEN

The first time the **sun** rises, men wake up in the land of Hildórien in the east of Middle-earth. They stray towards the west, following the sun, and the elves call them the Atani. The land finally wakes from Yavanna's sleep and blooms as men spread around Middle-earth. Men learn to fear the Valar, who keep to themselves and don't appear to guide them, but they meet and befriend the **Dark** elves.

In those days, men are similar to the elves in stature and strength, but they are more foolish and frail. The elves don't know what happens to men after they die, since only Beren ever returned from the dead. Though they become estranged later, men and elves are companions and allies against Morgoth. The children of elves and mortals (Eärendil, Elwing, and Elrond) receive both the beauty of the elves and a choice between the fate of elves or humans.

The men awaken as fated and (like the elves when they awoke) fear the Valar who are different from them and rarely present; the Valar's absence from Middle-earth has made them strangers to an entire race. The men, who awaken as one group, naturally separate and spread around the land.



The narrator mentions the major points of division and unification between men and elves. They become separated in death, since men leave the world when they die, and in time the races will grow apart. Now, however, they are joined in their fight against Morgoth who seeks to divide them, and in future days they will be joined by marriage, when children will be born with the blood of both races.



CHAPTER 13. OF THE RETURN OF THE NOLDOR

When Fëanor burns the ships, the flames are also seen by Morgoth's spies. As the Noldor travel inland to the fields of Mithrim, Morgoth attacks, starting the second battle of the Wars of Beleriand. Though ambushed and outnumbered, the Noldor drive away the orcs and hunt them all the way to the Havens, where they also kill the orcs that besiege Círdan's forces. The elves of Beleriand are amazed by the arrival and strength of the Noldor.

Though first dismayed by the loss of his troops, Morgoth becomes pleased as Fëanor runs ahead of the Noldor and follows the orcs back alone to attack him. Morgoth sends Balrogs to surround Fëanor, who is wounded by Gothmog (the Lord of Balrogs) and carried away by his sons. Fëanor tells them to stop—he's dying from his wounds.

Looking at the mountains above Angband, Fëanor realizes that the Noldor can't overthrow Morgoth alone, then curses Morgoth and warns his sons to keep their oaths. When he dies, the **fire** of his spirit immediately burns his body to ash. He's never been seen again in Middle-earth, and his spirit has never left the Houses of the Dead.

Morgoth sends messengers to Fëanor's sons, announcing his surrender and offering to give up a **Silmaril** for peace. Maedhros suggests that they pretend to make a treaty with Morgoth and then betray him. Both Morgoth and the Noldor bring armies to the meeting place, but Morgoth's forces overpower the Noldor and take Maedhros captive in Angband. Morgoth offers to return him if the Noldor will leave Middle-earth, but they refuse, so he hangs Maedhros by his wrist from a precipice above Angband.

As the **sun** rises, Morgoth's armies flee into Angband and Fingolfin leads his Noldor up to the gates of Angband unopposed. Maedhros calls out to them, but they can't hear him over their own trumpets. Realizing that Angband is stronger than he'd assumed, Fingolfin turns back to find Fëanor's sons in Mithrim. The reunion is tense; Fingolfin's Noldor blame Fëanor's followers for abandoning them. Morgoth laughs at their division and sends smoke to shield the land from the sun.

Even divided, the Noldor are powerful. Fëanor's followers are zealous and enflamed by Fëanor's purpose, eager to found new lands and take revenge on Morgoth. Their arrival also begins the effort to reunite Beleriand, which has been divided by Morgoth's forces, by freeing Círdan's people from the siege.



Fëanor has never understood the power of unity. Rather than joining with the elves of Beleriand or even waiting for his own forces, he runs ahead to attack Morgoth and is mortally wounded as a result, apprehended before he can even reach Morgoth's fortress.



Fëanor's last act is to urge his sons to adhere to the oath that has led to his own violent death and (he knows from Mandos's warning) will lead them also to ruin. Fëanor's spirit is bright and fierce, enabling him to create the most beautiful jewels in Arda, but leading him only to disaster in the end.



Neither Morgoth nor Maedhros have any intention of keeping their promise to meet peacefully. Morgoth would never give up the Silmarils so easily, nor would the sons of Fëanor waste an opportunity to take revenge for the deaths of their father and grandfather. Even to save Maedhros's life, the Noldor won't abandon Middle-earth, and the other sons of Fëanor won't give up their oath.



Though Morgoth didn't cause it directly, the estrangement between the two factions of the Noldor is a result of his influence over the people of Valinor—the lies and suspicion that corrupted Fëanor. Now, that estrangement benefits him by making the Noldor less of a threat. Not even a greater external enemy (Morgoth himself) can reunite them.



Fingon, Fingolfin's son, decides to resolve the feud so they can unite against Morgoth by seeking out Maedhros, who was once his close friend. Camouflaged by the **shadows** Morgoth created, he climbs the mountains above Angband looking for a way into the fortress. When he can't find a way, he takes out his harp and sings a song about Valinor. Maedhros, hanging above him, begins singing along.

Fingon climbs up as far as he can go, but cries when he can't reach Maedhros. With no hope of escape, Maedhros asks Fingon to kill him. Fingon strings an arrow and prays to Manwë to take pity on them. Manwë has great eagles stationed in the mountains to watch over the Noldor, and Thorondor, their king, grabs Fingon and flies him up to Maedhros. Fingon can't break the chain around Maedhros's wrist, so he cuts off Maedhros's hand, freeing him, and Thorondor carries them back to Mithrim.

Maedhros heals and Fingon is praised for his heroism—through their friendship, the Noldor are reunited. Maedhros begs forgiveness for abandoning Fingolfin's followers and supports Fingolfin's claim to kingship, though not all of his brothers approve. As Mandos foretold, the pursuit of the **Silmarils** causes Fëanor's sons loss—the loss of their father and the loss of their kingship over the Noldor.

Thingol doesn't welcome all of the Noldor into Doriath, and only allows Finarfin's sons through the Girdle because their mother was Thingol's niece. Angrod brings Thingol's message—that they can inhabit the lands of Dorthonion—to the Noldor, and Caranthir starts a violent argument. The Noldor fear the quick anger of Fëanor's sons, so Maedhros leads his brothers away to live apart from the rest of the Noldor. There, Caranthir's people ally with the dwarves against Morgoth, despite their mutual dislike. Maedhros remains friendly with the houses of Fingolfin and Finarfin but doesn't forget his oath.

Thirty peaceful years after the first **sunrise**, Turgon and Finrod, traveling together, receive a vision from Ulmo urging them to prepare for Morgoth's attack. While a guest of Thingol, Finrod has the idea to build a similar underground fortress, which he constructs in the Caverns of Narog, aided by the dwarves. Galadriel, who falls in love with a relative of Thingol's named Celeborn, remains in Doriath and learns lore from Melian. Ulmo appears to Turgon again and leads him to a hidden valley where Turgon plans to build a city.

Fingon recognizes that the way to reunite his people isn't by allying against a stronger enemy, but by healing within himself and rebuilding trust and friendship with others. He takes the first step by risking his life to seek out Maedhros, even though he doesn't know Maedhros spoke out for him when Fëanor burned the ships.



Though the Noldor have forsaken Valinor and no longer accept the rule of the Valar, Fingon still thinks of them in his moment of need, and they still aid him. The Valar have closed themselves off from Middle-earth and the Noldor, but they haven't entirely abandoned them to Morgoth. Fingon's prayer to Manwë saves Maedhros's life and aids in the Noldor's reunion.



Fingon's quest is successful—Maedhros is alive, and the Noldor are reunited through their friendship. Though Mandos was right that the Noldor betray each other and suffer loss because of the Silmarils, Maedhros's return is a brief moment of unity and generosity amid the chaos.



Though Thingol once unified all of Beleriand, he is now extremely selective about who he allows within the boundaries of Doriath, closing himself and his people off from the rest of Middle-earth. Meanwhile, the reunion of the Noldor is short-lived. Many of Fëanor's sons are too volatile to live peacefully with the rest of their people, and Maedhros separates them for everyone's good. On their own, they forge new alliances and maintain their connection to the other Noldor.



The longer the Noldor live in Beleriand, the more they spread and grow around the land. Many of the grandsons of Finwë decide to build their own fortresses and rule their own people to prepare for future battles with Morgoth. Beleriand never regains its former unity under Thingol; instead, smaller realms appear.



Morgoth attacks suddenly, believing that the elves aren't prepared, but Maedhros and Fingolfin drive them back. Still, the elves can't breach Angband or take back the **Silmarils**. Morgoth begins kidnapping and corrupting elves, using them as his servants and spies. Morgoth tries again to attack from a different direction, but Fingon spots the orcs and drives them into the sea. Morgoth then sends out Glaurung, the first of the dragons, to terrorize the elves, but Fingon surrounds him with archers and drives him back into Angband. Two hundred peaceful years follow.

Though the elves of Beleriand are prepared to defend themselves against an attack from Morgoth, they don't have the power to fulfill Fëanor's oath and reclaim the Silmarils. When Morgoth's direct attacks are repeatedly rebuffed, he returns to his old tactics of corrupting minds and turning the elves against each other, further weakening them and deepening their suspicion.



CHAPTER 14. OF BELERIAND AND ITS REALMS

In past ages, Morgoth raises the Iron Mountains to guard his citadel Utumno, then builds another fortress called Angband, with a tunnel connecting them. He piles the slag from the tunnel on top of Angband to form the towers of Thangorodrim, which produce smoke and pollution.

As the Valar use mountains to defend themselves, so does Morgoth close himself in from the rest of Beleriand. He, however, pollutes and destroys the land surrounding his fortress.



West of Thangorodrim is the Land of Mist, called Hithlum, ruled by Fingolfin and Fingon. It's separated from the rest of Beleriand by the Mountains of Shadow. Most of Fingolfin's Noldor live there in Mithrim. Fingon has control of the southwest, called Dor-lómin. Turgon rules Nevrast, west of Dor-lómin. Angrod and Aegnor rule a piece of highland as vassals of Finrod, the lord of Nargothrond and the valley of the River Sirion. There, on an island in the river, Finrod builds a watchtower called Minas Tirith. He rules over all the elves of West Beleriand who live between the river and the sea, except in Falas where Círdan rules. Finrod's land is the biggest, though he's the youngest of the Noldor's great lords. Still, Fingolfin is the leader of all the Noldor, succeeded by Fingon.

Rather than all gathering in one region of Beleriand, the Noldor spread around and form discrete cities and settlements. It means they control much of the land, making it more difficult for Morgoth to invade, but it also means that they're easily isolated—by suspicion, by distance, and by Morgoth's forces. Still, these realms, each governed by a different king, are united under the leadership of Fingolfin, the High King of the Noldor.



In East Beleriand, Thingol and Melian rule over Doriath, and the offspring of Ungoliant lurk in the Mountains of Terror. South of Doriath are the Twilight Meres and the Falls of Sirion. Near the valley of the river Gelion is the hill where Denethor died. East of the highlands of Dorthonion, ruled by Angrod and Aegnor, are the plains where the sons of Fëanor live. The area is open to attack, with few hills to guard it. Maedhros's citadel is on the Hill of Himring, and Celegorm and Curufin fortify the Pass of Aglon between Himring and Dorthonion. Maglor rules the land between two branches of the river Gelion, and the Noldor's cavalry fortifies that area and the nearby mountains. The cavalry is mainly composed of the people of Caranthir, who control the land east of the river Gelion, called Thargelion. None of the Noldor cross the Blue Mountains east of the Gelion.

Though the Noldor firmly establish their presence in Beleriand by spreading themselves around and establishing cities and kingdoms, Beleriand isn't completely safe. The elves still face the threat of attack—depending on their location and defenses—from Morgoth and from the dark creatures that live in the Mountains of Terror. Ultimately Fëanor's speech to the Noldor before they departed Valinor was true—in Middle-earth, there is an opportunity for many of the Noldor to become kings and rule their own lands.



CHAPTER 15. OF THE NOLDOR IN BELERIAND

Turgon finds the hidden valley in the mountains and secretly constructs a citadel called Gondolin, the Hidden Rock. As he prepares to travel there, Ulmo tells Turgon that he'll hide the city's entrance, and that it will last the longest against Melkor of any of the elven cities. He also warns Turgon that "the true hope of the Noldor" is in the west and comes from the sea. Lastly, Ulmo reminds him of the curse of the Noldor given by Mandos—Gondolin might fall to treachery because of it.

If Gondolin does fall, Ulmo predicts that someone will come from Nevrast to warn Turgon, and that person will bring hope to elves and men. He instructs Turgon to leave a sword in his old house for that person to find so Turgon can recognize him later, which Turgon does. Ulmo departs, and Turgon gathers his people into Gondolin and shuts the gates. For over three hundred years, Gondolin prospers and grows to look similar to Tirion in Valinor.

Galadriel talks about Valinor with Melian often, but doesn't usually discuss anything that happened after the destruction of the Trees. Melian doesn't believe that the Noldor came to Middle-earth as the Valar's messengers, as they claim. Galadriel explains that they came for vengeance on Morgoth and tells Melian about the kin-slaying at Alqualondë. Melian warns Thingol about the **Silmarils** and foretells that the world will be "broken in battles" before they're recovered from Morgoth.

Rumors of the Noldor's departure from Valinor spread among the Sindar, probably due to Morgoth's influence. Thingol confronts Finrod about the Noldor's lies, and Angrod blames the kin-slaying on Fëanor and his sons. Thingol promises to remain friends with the followers of Fingolfin but forbids Quenya, the language of the Noldor, in Beleriand. The Noldor are forced to speak Sindarin.

At a feast, the sons of Finarfin gather with Galadriel, who asks why Finrod isn't married yet. Finrod has a premonition that one day he'll swear an oath and need to be free to "go into **darkness**" to fulfill it, and that his realm won't last to be inherited by his son.

Though Gondolin will protect Turgon and his people longer than any of the other elven cities, it won't hide them forever. It will eventually be betrayed and destroyed, like everything else the Noldor build in Beleriand. Neither will it be able to permanently save them from the threat of Morgoth. Only with the help of the west (the land of Valinor, to the west of Beleriand) will the Noldor be truly safe.



Gondolin, as a well-kept secret, is necessarily isolated from the other Noldor settlements and the rest of Beleriand. By remaining isolated—not involving itself in the Noldor's squabbles and their conflict with Morgoth—the city is kept safe. Still, at Ulmo's urging, Turgon prepares for the time when Gondolin will inevitably fall.



Mandos has already predicted that the Silmarils will be caught up in the fate of the world—now Melian reveals that there is much more bloodshed to come before they change hands again. This passage also reveals that the Noldor have lied to the Sindar about their purpose in Middle-earth. Rather than admit to their crimes against the Teleri and risk estranging themselves further from the other elves, they claim to have been sent by the Valar to help fight Morgoth.



Morgoth's suspicion and rumor, once begun, take on a life of their own and perpetuate themselves. As punishment for the Kinslaying, Thingol bans the use of Quenya, denying the Noldor elves a fundamental part of their identities and compelling them to conform to the language of Beleriand, further separating them from Valinor, their former home.



Finrod foresees both his own death and the destruction of his kingdom. The doom of the Noldor will destroy all the elven realms, his own included.



CHAPTER 16. OF MAEGLIN

Aredhel accompanies Turgon to Gondolin but, after two hundred years, wants to leave. Turgon eventually allows her, though he doesn't want anyone who knows about Gondolin to live outside its walls. He sends her with an escort to take her to their brother Fingon, but she leads them to find Fëanor's sons instead.

The guards of Doriath direct her around the Girdle of Melian to find Celegorm. On the way, she becomes separated from her companions and, after searching for them, carries on without them. The region is full of Ungoliant's creatures and the companions return to Gondolin, assuming that Aredhel is dead. Aredhel is welcomed to Celegorm's home, but he isn't there, and she becomes restless and departs again. She wanders into Nan Elmoth (the forest where Melian and Thingol met) where a **Dark** elf, Eöl, lives.

Eöl blames the Noldor for the return of Morgoth and the killing of the Teleri but is friendly with the dwarves, often traveling to their mountains and learning metalwork from them. Seeing Aredhel passing through the forest, he sets enchantments to prevent her from leaving and drives her towards his house. When she arrives, tired from traveling, he welcomes her, and they eventually marry.

Aredhel isn't unwilling to be married, but Eöl forbids her from seeking **sunlight** or meeting any of the Noldor. They have a son, who Eöl names Maeglin, meaning Sharp Glance, because Maeglin can "read the secrets of hearts." He grows up much like his father—reticent and powerful—but prefers his mother, who tells him stories of her family. Maeglin wants to discover where Turgon lives and meet the Noldor, but Eöl forbids it, and the trust between them is broken.

While Eöl is at a feast with the dwarves, Maeglin urges his mother to guide the two of them to Gondolin, and they depart. Eöl returns early and pursues them, catching up in time to see them pass through the gates into Gondolin, where Turgon welcomes them. The guards capture Eöl and bring him to Turgon.

Aredhel is safe in Gondolin, isolated from the rest of Beleriand, but she also feels trapped by both the walls and her brother and longs to see her old friends. She insists on rejoining the world rather than being shuffled from one fortress to the next.



Aredhel is friends with her cousins, the sons of Fëanor, and, like them, she is both stubborn and proud. Rather than waiting for the protection of a traveling companion, she sets off again on her own after reaching Celegorm's house. She thought she wanted to reunite with her friends, but it seems that after spending so long in Gondolin, she simply wants to wander.



Eöl lives alone, away from other elves, an indication that he thinks differently from others in some way and is likely (like Morgoth) rebellious and misanthropic. His entrapment of Aredhel confirms his dishonesty, if not his outright wickedness.



Eöl is manipulative, jealous, and controlling. He hates the Noldor, yet he marries one and forces her to deny her family. Though the narrator doesn't clarify, Eöl behaves like someone who has fallen victim to Morgoth's influence and therefore become suspicious and possessive.



Aredhel would rather return to Gondolin, where at least she has the freedom to move freely around the city and see her family, than remain with Eöl, subject to all his restrictions. Eöl, however, despite his anger and suspicion towards Aredhel and Maeglin, doesn't want them beyond his reach and control.



Turgon greets Eöl and tells him that he's free to live in Gondolin but can't ever leave. Eöl refuses to remain in Gondolin and demands that Maeglin leave with him. When Turgon insists that Eöl's choice is to stay or die, Eöl chooses death and attempts to kill Maeglin. Aredhel jumps in front of him, taking the blow, and dies that night from the poisoned wound. Eöl is sentenced to death and, before he's thrown from the walls of the city, he curses Maeglin to die the same way.

When denied what he wants (his son and wife), Eöl turns to violence—if he can't possess Maeglin, he'll kill him to prevent him from living happily in Gondolin. Eöl is bitter enough in his defeat, when he fails to kill Maeglin, to curse him instead. Eöl tried to teach his son to be like him and succeeded in many ways. Now, as many of their vices are the same, their deaths will be the same, too.



Though Turgon's daughter Idril mistrusts him, Maeglin is loved by the people of Gondolin. When Turgon finally leaves the city and marches to war, Maeglin accompanies him. Maeglin is in love with Idril but can't marry her because they're cousins and because she doesn't love him. Guessing his feelings, Idril likes him less, and sees something "crooked" in him—what the elves later call the curse of Mandos. Over the years, Maeglin's love turns to bitterness, and he seeks power in other places.

Though Maeglin appears helpful and friendly, he is very like his father in his possessiveness. When Idril doesn't love him in return, he turns to other outlets for his emotion—violence, manipulation, and power-seeking. The elves, considering the story after its completion, call Maeglin's affection for Idril and subsequent behavior a result of the curse of the Noldor, implying that his actions will lead him to loss and betrayal.



CHAPTER 17. OF THE COMING OF MEN INTO THE WEST

During the years of peace in Beleriand, Finrod, while hunting in the east, wanders alone towards the Blue Mountains. He hears singing in a valley and looks down into a camp of men led by Bëor. Finrod hides until they fall asleep, then picks up one of their harps and plays music for them. He decides to live with them and teach them, and they call him Nóm, meaning wisdom.

Though the elves of Beleriand were skeptical and fearful of the arrival of men when Morgoth spread rumors about them, Finrod welcomes and teaches the men he meets. Rather than treating them as outsiders and interlopers, he becomes their defender and guide.



Bëor won't tell Finrod much about where they came from, only that they've left a **darkness** behind them and seek **light** in Beleriand. The elves don't know for certain, but it's said that Morgoth went among the men when they were young and spread fear and lies to make them hate the elves, though his plan didn't work since he had to return to Beleriand to fight the Noldor. Bëor reports that many other men are crossing the mountains to Beleriand.

Even before the elves know of the awakening of men, Morgoth attempts to turn them against each other. Fortunately, his efforts largely fail because of his preoccupation with fighting the Noldor. Morgoth plagues the early men the same way he did the early elves—by teaching them fear and mistrust.



The elves of Ossiriand (the land beside the Blue Mountains) ask Finrod to tell the men to return to the east—they don't want to live with strangers. Finrod tells Bëor to gather the wandering men and lead them instead to a land near Doriath they call Estolad, the Encampment. When Finrod returns to his own land, Bëor accompanies him for the remainder of his life.

Some of the elves are less welcoming to Bëor's followers than Finrod. Still, the men make a home in Beleriand and form lasting alliances with the elves. Finrod's attachment to the men doesn't only result in good will between the races, but personal friendship.



Other men arrive, some moving to the north and others seeking out Bëor's people. Finrod visits the men often, and other elves become friendly with them, naming them the Edain. Fingolfin sends messengers welcoming them, and many men travel away to serve the kings of the Eldar, including a man named Malach who lives in Hithlum and learns to speak Sindarin. Over generations, the men of Estolad begin to migrate around Beleriand and the lands of the elves.

Thingol is displeased with the presence of the men and only allows them to have lands in the north. He declares that no man will ever enter Doriath. Melian says nothing to him but tells Galadriel that a man of Bëor's house will come to Doriath, and history will remember him. Her Girdle won't be able to prevent him since he has a fate stronger than her power to keep him out.

Morgoth's influence stirs up discontent among the men remaining in Estolad. At a council of men, a man named Amlach argues that the Valar aren't real and that the elves have provoked the dangerous creatures in the north with their greed. The Elf-friends know that Morgoth is real and sends spies among them because he fears them. Still, a man named Bereg leads many people out of the lands of the elves, though Amlach swears he wasn't at the council—implying that Morgoth's servant impersonated him there—and joins Maedhros's service.

Morgoth, angry that he can't estrange the elves and men, sends orcs to attack a scattered group of men called the Haladin. Among them is a man named Haldad who builds a stockade and organizes a defense. Both he and his son are killed in the battle, so his daughter Haleth leads her people until Caranthir comes to their aid a week later. Caranthir finally realizes the valor of the Edain and offers Haleth land and protection if she'll move to the north, but she refuses to be ruled and leads her people west to the Forest of Brethil. Though Brethil is in Thingol's land, Finrod obtains permission for her to settle there as long as her people guard the forest against orcs.

Eventually, the elves decide that the men should have their own lands and leadership. Hador Lórinđol, a descendent of Malach and a servant of Fingolfin, is given lordship over Dor-lómin and becomes the greatest ruler of the Edain. Sindarin is spoken there, but the men remember their own language as well, which becomes the language of Númenor. Boromir, the grandson of Bëor, is given command of the people of Bëor. All of their descendants are caught by the curse of the Noldor and are still remembered by the elves.

As more men arrive, the elves must learn to share Beleriand with them. Through the men who live among the elves, the two races become acquainted. By living with the elven kings, men learn about the culture and traditions of the elves, then grow and expand their own communities and cultures, spreading around Beleriand.



Thingol is suspicious of all newcomers to Beleriand—men are only another race to guard his borders against. Melian, however, foresees a man who will break through the Girdle because his important fate is more powerful than she is, and the Girdle only repels what is less powerful than her. However this man enters Doriath and whatever his fate is, Melian knows that his story will be remembered.



Morgoth's influence among the men of Beleriand finally results in action that benefits him—the departure of many men from the land and their refusal to fight him—but it also disadvantages him in small ways. By meddling in the lives of men, Morgoth makes enemies of some of them, such as Amlach, who had no quarrel with Morgoth until one of his servants impersonated him.



Haleth proves that, while many of the communities of men are willing to befriend the elves, they are less willing to be ruled by them. Men are as powerful and resilient as the elves and, though younger, they are as capable of governing themselves and defending themselves against Morgoth's attacks, both physical and psychological, when properly armed and prepared.



Since men have proven themselves capable, the elves give them a share of the lands of Beleriand. Middle-earth is for men and elves to share, not for only the elves to rule over. The close friendship of the elves and men results in a more equal partnership as fellow inhabitants of Beleriand and benefits them both. However, because they share the land and even language, men also share in the Noldor's fate of betrayal and loss.



The men of the Three Houses prosper. The house of Hador is the strongest, the house of Bëor is most like the Noldor, and the house of Haleth is largely solitary. Though the lives of the Edain are lengthened in Beleriand, Bëor dies at almost four hundred. With his death, the elves understand for the first time the concept of a death of weariness rather than violence. The men of Beleriand grow nobler than the men elsewhere who don't know about the **light** of Valinor.

Despite their fate to share in the doom of the Noldor, men prosper in close friendship with the elves, who teach and guide them. The elves, too, learn and better understand their own fate of immortality in comparison with the fate of men. The concept of weariness is new to them, but Mandos promised that they would grow to understand it in time, even if they can't die from it as men can.



CHAPTER 18. OF THE RUIN OF BELERIAND AND THE FALL OF FINGOLFIN

With his own people growing strong, and with the aid of the houses of men, Fingolfin considers attacking Angband to destroy Morgoth's threat to them. However, the Noldor aren't eager to start a war during a period of peace. Before they can agree, Morgoth attacks suddenly in winter, sending Glaurung and the Balrogs to burn the plains of Ard-galen and killing many Noldor caught in the **fire**. This begins the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand. Armies of orcs follow, attacking the Noldor's fortresses. The battle ends in the spring, but the war continues.

With men and elves united in Beleriand, Morgoth poses less of a threat to their safety. As the strength of the men and elves of Beleriand has grown, so have Morgoth's armies. Beleriand can successfully defend its land against his orc armies, but not everyone believes they have the power to permanently end Morgoth's power in Middle-earth. Their alliance is strong, but not strong enough.



Some of the elves of Beleriand seek shelter in fortresses and some flee altogether. Angrod and Aegnor are killed, along with Bregolas, the lord of the house of Bëor. Bregolas' brother Barahir saves Finrod's life when he's surrounded by a company of orcs, and Finrod swears an oath of friendship to him and his family and gives him his ring. Fingolfin and Fingon, driven back into their fortresses, are unable to aid the sons of Finarfin. Hador and his son also fall protecting Fingolfin, and Hithlum remains unconquered.

As in the first battle of the Wars of Beleriand, Beleriand's forces are scattered. They flock to different areas of safety, defensible cities and fortresses, and are forced to abandon the countryside to the enemy. During the battle, Finrod swears an oath to a man of the house of Bëor, possibly the oath that he mentioned would lead him into darkness and death. An oath of friendship is a powerful force among the people of Beleriand, who are cursed to betray each other.



The elves rally to Finrod and Maedhros, but the orcs take Maglor's Gap and Glaurung burns the land. They manage to keep the orcs from entering Ossiriand and the wild lands of the south. When news arrives that the sons of Finarfin and Fëanor are overthrown, Fingolfin believes it means the ruin of the Noldor and rides alone to Angband, so enraged that his eyes shine like a Valar's. He challenges Morgoth, who emerges in black armor, looming over Fingolfin. Fingolfin gleams under his **shadow** "like a **star**" with his silver armor and glittering sword.

In the face of the destruction of everything the Noldor have built, Fingolfin, their king, attempts to end the war through single combat. During the duel, he appears as Morgoth's opposite, shining with starlight beneath Morgoth's darkness and shadow. Though Fingolfin doesn't actually have the capabilities of a Valar, his rage and Noldo stubbornness (as well as Morgoth's underestimation of Fingolfin's strength) give him power.



Morgoth swings Grond, the giant hammer, and it cleaves a hole in the earth when Fingolfin jumps aside. As Morgoth swings the hammer, Fingolfin wounds him seven times but eventually grows tired. Morgoth crushes Fingolfin to the ground with his shield, then steps on his neck. Fingolfin's last act is to cut Morgoth's foot with his sword.

Morgoth accepts Fingolfin's challenge with arrogance, not believing Fingolfin is a threat to him. Now, though Morgoth wins the fight, he is left wounded. This is the only time he ever meets one of the elves in combat, and he never again voluntarily emerges from his tower to fight.



The story is too sad for the elves to sing about, but it's carried by the great eagles to Gondolin and Hithlum. Thorondor files down and scratches Morgoth's face before rescuing Fingolfin's body. The pain of Morgoth's wounds can't be healed, so he walks after that with half a foot and a scarred face. Fingon takes leadership of the Noldor and sends his young son Gilgalad away to the Havens.

Morgoth hunts down Barahir's men until the situation becomes so desperate that his wife Emeldir arms the women and children and leads them to Brethil. All the men they leave behind are killed until only 13 remain: Barahir, his son Beren, his two nephews, and nine others. They become outlaws and wander barren lands.

For two years the Noldor defend the western pass near the river Sirion until Sauron and another servant of Morgoth conquer Minas Tirith with sorcery. Many elves are kidnapped into Angband, and Morgoth spreads lies and jealousy among the Noldor, who fall victim to them because of their curse. At this time, the Swarthy men enter Beleriand and ally with Maedhros—some of them remain faithful to the elves and some betray them, as Morgoth intends.

When the orcs finally invade the people of Haleth, Halmir their lord requests aid from Thingol, who sends Beleg Strongbow and his wardens to destroy the orcs. With Brethil's protection, Nargothrond gathers its strength. Húrin and Huor, the grandsons of Hador, are fostered in Brethil by their uncle Haldir. While fighting orcs, they're cut off from their company and protected by a mist from Ulmo before Thorondor carries them to safety in the city of Gondolin.

They remain with Turgon for a year, and Húrin learns about elf-lore and kingship. They request to leave and return to the war, and Turgon allows it since they don't know how to find the entrance to Gondolin. Maeglin is glad to see them leave but tells them they're lucky to be allowed. The brothers swear to keep what they saw of Gondolin secret, and the eagles take them back to Dor-lómin. They refuse to tell their father Galdor where they've been, but Morgoth hears of their strange reappearance.

The narrator claims that the elves don't sing about Fingolfin's death, but they clearly preserve the story in other ways. Fingolfin is one of the great heroes of elvish history, strong enough to strike lasting blows against Morgoth, Arda's greatest enemy, whose wounds never heal. Fingolfin's seven blows remain visible on Morgoth's body and plague him constantly, like the burns on his hands from the Silmarils.



Morgoth's push south into Beleriand means further separation for men and elves. Not only do communities become isolated, but individual families are divided and never reunited again in their lifetimes.



Morgoth continues attacking the people of Beleriand both with his armies and with his lies. He finally succeeds in turning some of the groups of men into his allies and spies against the elves, and further exploits the doom of the Noldor to create suspicion and betrayal in their own ranks.



Each time the men and elves unite, they prove again that they are stronger together than apart. Allied, they are able to defend themselves from imminent attacks and gather their strength to fight another day. While he can defend his own people inside Doriath, Thingol must branch out and aid the people of Beleriand if he wants to create any true change.



Turgon doesn't usually allow the citizens of Gondolin to leave for good reason. Even if they don't intend to, it would be easy for them to reveal the city's location to Morgoth, who would certainly take the opportunity to destroy it. Though Húrin and Huor swear to keep Gondolin a secret and don't even know its precise location, Morgoth's awareness of their disappearance is troubling.



Turgon doesn't believe it's time yet to march to war and reveal Gondolin but builds ships in secret and sends them to Valinor to ask for the pardon and aid of the Valar. None of them ever reach Valinor, and Gondolin's doom approaches. Morgoth sends more spies into Beleriand, but he can't find either Turgon or Finrod. He recalls his orcs for a few years to prepare for a final blow against the elves and men.

Though Turgon isolates his people for their own protection, he recognizes that they can only defeat Morgoth as a strong united force. He protects himself with isolation but turns to the possibility of a united Arda for aid. Even while hiding away in Gondolin, he sends messages out, hoping to find allies in Valinor. He is unsuccessful, and the narrator alludes to Gondolin's approaching destruction.



Seven years after the fourth battle of the Wars of Beleriand, Morgoth attacks again, killing Galdor. His son Húrin drives back the orcs and begins to rule the house of Bëor. Fingon struggles to hold back the orcs in Hithlum until Círdan sails to his aid from the west, winning the day. At that time, the remaining outlawed men of the house of Bëor are all killed except Beren.

Though Morgoth's orcs are driven back from the important elven strongholds for now, the victory comes at a great cost. The orcs are still free to roam the land between the strongholds, isolating them, and nearly the entire House of Bëor is destroyed.



CHAPTER 19. OF BEREN AND LÚTHIEN

The last remaining men of the house of Bëor settle near a lake in Dorthonion. One of the outlaws, Gorlim, has a wife who disappeared during the war, so he visits his house secretly to see if she returned. Morgoth's spies learn of his visits and trap him there. He doesn't speak under torture, but, after Sauron promises to reunite him with his wife, he reveals the location of Barahir's camp. Sauron kills Gorlim and sends orcs to ambush and kill Barahir's men. Only Beren, who is away on a mission to spy on the enemy, survives. Beren has a dream about Gorlim and hastens back to the camp to find the outlaws dead.

Morgoth divides his enemies to weaken them and lead them to betray each other. Cruelly, Sauron uses the promise of reunion to do the same. Both Sauron and Morgoth are skilled at exploiting the weaknesses of their enemies. Often those weaknesses are pride and greed, but sometimes, too, they are love and fear. Morgoth's attacks, which divide both families and kingdoms, have taken a toll on individual lives, not only on the effort of the war.



Beren buries his father and swears vengeance. He hunts down the orcs that killed the outlaws and kills their captain, reclaiming Barahir's cut-off hand and Finrod's ring. Beren wanders Dorthonion for four years and contributes to the war alone, killing beasts and performing feats of "lonely daring." Though there's a price on his head, orcs flee from him, and eventually Morgoth sends Sauron to kill him. Beren flees Dorthonion and climbs the Mountains of Terror (filled with spiders, where no other elf or man has been) into Doriath.

Alone now that all his companions are dead, Beren performs feats of daring that no one else has ever accomplished. One of those feats is his entry into the protected forest of Doriath, which nothing less powerful than Melian can enter without her permission. She predicted that one man's fate would be more powerful than her magic and allow him to break through the Girdle—that man is Beren.



As Melian predicted, Beren's fate allows him to pass through the Girdle, "grey and bowed" from his difficult road. In the summer woods he sees Lúthien (Thingol and Melian's daughter) dancing and falls in love. With dark hair and grey eyes, Lúthien is the most beautiful of the Children of Ilúvatar. She vanishes before Beren can speak, and he wanders searching for her, calling her Tinúviel, meaning Nightingale.

Beren is fated to enter Doriath, meaning that his own choices will lead him there, but Ilúvatar and the Ainur have already foreseen the result of his choices. No external power forces Beren to fall in love with Lúthien—he simply does. Similarly, it is his own choice to linger in the safety of Doriath, hoping to see her again.



Near spring, Beren hears her singing and calls out to her. When Lúthien turns to look at him, she falls in love, and her “doom” falls on her. Still, she runs away as the sun rises. Beren lies on the ground, pained. His pain is a “payment” for the grief he’s fated to cause Lúthien—since he’s mortal, Lúthien’s love for him will make her mortal too.

“Beyond his hope,” Lúthien returns to Beren in the woods and visits him secretly through the spring and summer. Daeron, a minstrel, also loves Lúthien and betrays her meetings with Beren to Thingol. Thingol, who loves Lúthien and hates men, confronts her, but she refuses to say anything until he swears not to kill or imprison Beren. When Thingol has Beren brought into Menegroth as a thief (of Lúthien or her affection), Lúthien welcomes him as a guest. Beren is frightened of Thingol, but, looking at Lúthien and Melian, he finds the courage to speak and announce that he loves Lúthien. Melian advises that Thingol let go of his anger, since Beren’s fate is tied to his.

Beren presents Finrod’s ring as proof of his nobility, but Thingol demands that Beren retrieve a treasure to win Lúthien—he must bring Thingol a **Silmaril** in his own hand. With that request, Thingol becomes ensnared in the curse of Mandos. Everyone listening assumes Thingol is sending Beren to his death, since not even all the Noldor could retrieve a Silmaril from Morgoth. Beren laughs that Thingol is selling his daughter for a “little price,” only a jewel, and agrees to undertake the task. Melian tells Thingol that whether Beren fails or succeeds, Thingol has doomed either his daughter or himself.

Beren travels out of Doriath and into Nargothrond, where, sensing he’s being watched, he raises Finrod’s ring and demands to be taken to the king. Finrod recognizes him, and Beren explains the death of his father and his quest for Lúthien. Finrod realizes that, as he predicted to Galadriel, his oath to give aid to Barahir and his family will now lead to his death.

The language around Lúthien’s fate is often obscure and figurative. Her fate falls upon her as she falls in love with Beren—it’s the moment that influences all her choices going forward, which will lead to her fate. From the perspective of the elves, Lúthien is “doomed” both in the neutral sense (meaning fated) and in the negative sense—to die with Beren rather than live on with the elves. To the elves, this is a sorrowful change, though the story itself is happy and beautiful.



Beren and Lúthien are joined by love until jealousy separates them. The jealousy is both Daeron’s and Thingol’s—Thingol doesn’t believe a man could be worthy of Lúthien’s love and refuses to allow Lúthien to decide that for herself. Lúthien’s easy way of working around her father’s orders for Beren to be brought in, however, indicates that she is skilled in both dealing with Thingol and eventually getting what she wants. Melian, too, is on her daughter’s side—she, like Lúthien, married outside her own race.



By expressing his desire for a Silmaril and becoming involved in its pursuit, Thingol falls victim to the doom of the Noldor and all its consequences—greed, betrayal, and loss. Though Melian doesn’t know the entirety of Beren’s fate, she recognizes Thingol’s error. Sending Beren after the Silmaril will lead to Thingol’s ruin (if Beren succeeds) and Lúthien’s despair (if Beren fails).



Despite the knowledge that he will die helping Beren, Finrod doesn’t hesitate to fulfill his oath to Barahir. As Barahir once saved his life, he will now protect Beren’s.



Finrod explains that the **Silmarils** are cursed with Fëanor's oath of hatred and anyone that tries to take them "moves a great power from slumber." Celegorm and Curufin, overcome by the curse of Mandos, insist that they'll take the Silmaril from Beren if he wins it, but Finrod is bound by his oath to help Beren rather than show loyalty to his cousins. Curufin's speech before Finrod's people frightens the elves so badly that they fall from the valor of their predecessors and refuse to go openly into war for the near future, resorting instead to stealth and trickery. Finrod gives his crown to Orodreth and departs with Beren and 10 companions.

Though the company disguises themselves as orcs, Sauron notices their speed and has them brought to him. Finrod and Sauron battle with songs of magic. Though Sauron strips them of their disguises and imprisons them, Finrod shields their thoughts so Sauron can't discover their goal. Meanwhile, Melian tells Lúthien about Beren's captivity. Lúthien plans to go and rescue him herself, but Daeron again reveals her plans to Thingol, who restrains her in a house in a tree. Lúthien uses her magic to grow her hair and weaves it into a cloak of **shadow** and a rope to climb down.

At the same time, Celegorm and Curufin are hunting with the chief of the wolfhounds, Huan, given to Celegorm by Oromë. Though Lúthien is nearly imperceptible in her cloak, Huan notices her and brings her to Celegorm, who falls in love with her and offers her help. When she reveals her intentions to rescue Beren, Celegorm betrays her and imprisons her in Nargothrond. He plans to allow Finrod to be killed, then force Thingol to let him marry Lúthien. However, Huan, who also loves Lúthien, returns her cloak to her, leads her out of Nargothrond, and carries her north.

Of their company of 12, only Beren and Finrod are still alive in Sauron's prison. Sauron sends a werewolf in to kill Beren, but Finrod breaks out of his chains and kills it with his own hands, redeeming his oath to Barahir. Wounded in the effort, he dies. At the same time, Lúthien arrives and begins to sing outside the tower. Beren hears and answers her before he faints.

The great power Finrod speaks of is twofold; when someone tries to take the Silmarils, the sons of Fëanor are moved to action, and the curse of the Noldor itself spreads, bringing betrayal and ruin. The two sons of Fëanor present certainly make their power known, threatening Finrod and Beren and using rhetoric (a skill inherited from Fëanor) to frighten the elves of Nargothrond from boldness into cowardice and isolation that lasts for years.



In this passage, Sauron reveals himself to be a skillful magician, able to defeat Finrod in combat, though not subtle enough to read his intentions. Beren and Finrod are stopped by Sauron's keen eye and Lúthien is again hindered by jealousy. Though Lúthien proves herself to be both clever and capable (far more powerful than Beren, as a magic-user trained by Melian), Thingol tries to prevent her from leaving to rescue Beren.



After escaping her father's captivity, Lúthien is quickly captured again, plagued by elves who claim to love her and wish to confine her. Celegorm and Curufin, in this episode and in their behavior towards Finrod, reveal their true natures. They don't simply want to fulfill their oaths and take the Silmarils—they are greedy and want to possess power and beauty, both of which Lúthien has. However, she also has her wits and her kindness, which provoke Huan to aid her in escaping.



As he predicted, Finrod dies in darkness to fulfill his oath, but saves Beren's life in the effort. The occurrence of someone searching for a captive by singing a song appears also in Fingon's rescue of Maedhros. In each case, the captive's response is a reunion that creates a harmony reminiscent of the Music of the Ainur.



Sauron recognizes Lúthien as the daughter of Melian and sends a wolf out to capture her to deliver her to Morgoth. Huan kills the first werewolf and defeats the werewolf Draugluin, whom Sauron sends out next. Sauron, who knows that Huan is fated to be killed by a werewolf, transforms into a werewolf and approaches them. Huan, terrified, leaps aside. Lúthien swoons in fear, but still manages to throw her cloak over Sauron's eyes and make him drowsy. Huan then leaps in to fight and pins Sauron by the throat. Lúthien promises to free him if he'll give her control of the tower. Sauron agrees, then flees Minas Tirith.

Lúthien tackles every obstacle she faces with grace and courage, despite her fear. With the help of Huan, she incapacitates Sauron—something very few people ever do and not even Finrod could manage. Sauron emerges from the tower and puts himself in a position to be overthrown because of his arrogance and greed. He longs to be the one to kill Huan and gain the accompanying glory, but he underestimates Lúthien, to his detriment.



Lúthien casts a spell to break the gates and the walls, freeing the captives. She and Huan find Beren mourning Finrod, whom they bury on a hill. Huan returns to Celegorm, and the people of Nargothrond mourn their king, leading Orodreth to banish Celegorm and Curufin. Beren wants to return Lúthien safely to Doriath and then return to his task, but she refuses to be parted from him again.

Beren, though brave and willing, lacks Lúthien's power and skill in magic, an extremely useful tool when attempting to steal a Silmaril. Though Beren might be able to complete the quest alone, history and their own experiences have proven that collaboration is more fruitful than isolation. Beren wants her to be safe, but Lúthien wants to help him and is capable of making her own choices about the danger she puts herself in.



Celegorm and Curufin see Beren and Lúthien, and Curufin snatches Lúthien onto his horse. Beren leaps up and shoves Curufin from the horse. Celegorm rides up to kill Beren with a spear, but Huan protects him, finally leaving Celegorm's service. Lúthien prevents Beren from killing Curufin, who curses Beren to a swift death. As the brothers leave, Curufin takes Celegorm's bow and shoots at Lúthien. Huan bites the first arrow, and Beren jumps in front of her to block the second.

Celegorm and Curufin, banished for their greed and malice, turn their anger on Beren and Lúthien. Their pride is wounded and their supposed allies (first Orodreth and now Huan) have turned against them. This brief battle is a reminder that, though Lúthien is powerful, the world outside of Doriath is a dangerous place. Threats come not only from Morgoth's servants but also from other elves.



After Lúthien heals him, Beren sneaks away in the night to return to his task, leaving her in Huan's care. When Beren has almost reached Angband, he sings the Song of Parting to say goodbye to Lúthien and the world. Lúthien hears him, however, and rides Huan again, following his trail. On the way, Huan acquires disguises, then they reunite with Beren, who tries to convince them again to return to Doriath.

Beren is still concerned for Lúthien's safety. He doesn't go so far as to try to lock her up, but he does leave her behind, even knowing that he will almost certainly die without her help. Once again, however, a song reunites them, and Lúthien joins him outside Angband.



Huan reveals to Beren that he can't protect Lúthien anymore, since her love ties her life to his. Huan also can't travel further with them. Beren disguises himself as the werewolf Draugluin, Lúthien disguises herself as Sauron's messenger, the vampire Thuringwethil, and they go to Angband together. They're stopped at the door, but some power of the Maiar overtakes Lúthien, who throws off her disguise and raises her hand to put the guard to sleep. As they enter Angband, Beren sits in disguise beneath Morgoth's throne, but Morgoth recognizes Lúthien, who, undaunted, introduces herself and offers to sing for him.

Beren has a few choices; if he doesn't want to give up the quest, he can go into Angband alone, leaving Lúthien to die of grief after he's killed, or they can go in together and have a fighting chance of success. Beren chooses the latter, and they enter Morgoth's fortress. Lúthien's disguise is gone and Morgoth notices her immediately, but she isn't cowed by him, even though he has the power to break the minds of elves with a glance.



Morgoth, distracted by his “evil lust” and his plan for a terrible and unnamed punishment for Lúthien, allows her to sing. She suddenly disappears and begins to sing a song so lovely that Morgoth’s court falls asleep and the **Silmarils** in his crown suddenly blaze and weigh down his head. Lúthien throws her cloak of **shadow** over Morgoth’s eyes, putting him to sleep, and he falls from his throne, his crown rolling away.

Beren cuts a **Silmaril** from the crown, then tries to take the other two as well. However, that isn’t the fate of the other Silmarils, and Beren’s knife breaks. A shard slices Morgoth’s cheek, making him groan and stir. Beren and Lúthien flee, but their way is blocked by Carcharoth, the wolf Morgoth placed to guard the door against Huan.

Beren holds up the **Silmaril** to ward him off as he charges them, but Carcharoth bites Beren’s hand off at the wrist, swallowing the Silmaril. Driven mad by the Silmaril, which burns him from the inside, Carcharoth flees Angband and kills everything in his path. Lúthien, exhausted, tries to heal Beren with her fading powers as Angband wakes up from her spell. The giant eagles, led by Thorondor, carry Beren and Lúthien through a thunderstorm back to Doriath.

Huan helps Lúthien heal Beren, who nearly dies from the poison in his wound. Doriath has been in mourning for Lúthien, and Daeron, who had once been the world’s greatest musician, leaves to wander Middle-earth in despair. Beren and Lúthien stay together in the woods for a time, then return to Thingol. At the same time, Carcharoth rages through the Girdle of Melian into Doriath, and Thingol’s men prepare to fight him.

Beren tells Thingol that his quest is fulfilled—a **Silmaril** is in his hand—and shows him his empty left hand and missing right hand. Finally, Thingol realizes that he can’t oppose fate and allows their relationship. As Carcharoth approaches Thingol’s fortress, Beren realizes his quest isn’t over and joins the group that sets out to hunt him. As they depart, Lúthien feels a “dark **shadow**” fall over her.

As Sauron did, Morgoth underestimates Lúthien, distracted by his own malicious plans for her. Though she freely offers to use the greatest magical power she possesses (her voice), Morgoth doesn’t notice that she’s planning on enchanting him. Lúthien does what all the Noldor combined couldn’t do; she walks into Angband and incapacitates Morgoth.



Beren’s attempt to take the other Silmarils is motivated less by greed than simple practicality—all of them are there, so why not take them? Still, the attempt to overreach his capabilities nearly gets Beren caught as Morgoth begins to wake.



After all of their efforts to retrieve the Silmaril, it is almost immediately taken from them. Beren and Lúthien are injured and wearied and, though they were successful in breaking into Angband, they have no Silmaril to show for it. Though they escape with their lives, it seems that the quest is at an end.



No one in Doriath expected Beren and Lúthien to survive the quest, let alone succeed in stealing a Silmaril. During the time they’re presumed dead, they linger in the forest as they did during the early months of their relationship. Rather than stay there, however, they return to Thingol to formally complete the quest. It can be inferred—by Beren’s entry into Doriath, and now by Carcharoth’s—that the Silmaril (or Beren’s fate to one day steal it) is what provides them with the ability to pass uninvited through the Girdle.



Though the Silmaril is not yet present in Doriath, Beren has fulfilled the task that Thingol set him and has a Silmaril in his hand. Beren and Lúthien are determined to be together against all odds—not even Morgoth stopped them, so Thingol can’t either. Still, there is more to the quest and Lúthien has a sense that their streak of successes can’t last.



Beren attacks Carcharoth with a spear, but Carcharoth knocks him down and bites his chest. Huan jumps on Carcharoth's back and kills him but is mortally wounded in the effort. He falls down beside Beren, also gravely wounded, and speaks for the third and final time, saying goodbye before he dies. Thingol's guards cut the **Silmaril** from Carcharoth's stomach and place it in Beren's living left hand. Beren revives, hands the Silmaril to Thingol, and announces that his quest is finished. Lúthien, who meets them in the woods, begs Beren to wait for her in Valinor, and he dies.

Beren's spirit waits in the halls of Mandos in Valinor, as Lúthien asked him. Lúthien's spirit leaves her body and travels to the Houses of the Dead where the spirits of the elves live. When she arrives, she kneels before Mandos and sings the most beautiful and sorrowful song that the world has ever heard about the grief of men and elves. Mandos pities her, though he never pitied anyone before and never does again. Mandos brings Beren to her and asks Manwë about the will of Ilúvatar.

Because of her labors, Lúthien is given the choice to live among the Valar forever without Beren (since the Valar don't have the power to prevent men from their ultimate fate of death) or to return to Middle-earth with Beren and become mortal. Lúthien's fate is joined with Beren's, even "beyond the confines of the world," and she decides to live a mortal life. She's the first elf to die and leave the world. In her descendants, the elves still see her beauty.

CHAPTER 20. OF THE FIFTH BATTLE: NIRNAETH ARNOEDIAD

Beren and Lúthien return to Doriath, and Melian, realizing Lúthien is mortal, faces the heavy grief of their permanent separation beyond the end of the world. They then travel alone to Ossiriand, where history loses track of them. Dior, their son and Thingol's heir, is born there.

Maedhros, hearing about the deeds of Beren and Lúthien, realizes that Morgoth isn't invulnerable. Maedhros begins to gather a united force of elves to fight him, but Fëanor's oath and the curse of Mandos work against him. Orodreth, angry at the sons of Fëanor, won't send help. Only a small company from Nargothrond, led by Gwindor, joins the union. Thingol also refuses to join, since the sons of Fëanor want his **Silmaril**. The dwarves aid Maedhros, as do Fingon and the houses of men. Though the united armies drive back the orcs from northern Beleriand, Morgoth sends many spies among them.

Both Huan and Beren reach their fated ends while fighting Carcharoth. The quest is finally finished, with Thingol in possession of the Silmaril, but Beren's death means that he loses the reward of a life with Lúthien. They will be forever separated by death, since Beren's spirit will leave the world. Lúthien request for him not to leave and instead wait for her in Valinor, where the spirits of the elves go, is a request for him to defy fate itself.



Once again, Lúthien's song is the means of reuniting her with Beren. Elves understand loss and grief differently than men do, but Lúthien, who loves a mortal, joins the sorrow of both races in her song. Lúthien's songs previously contained powerful magic, but they also contain simple beauty, powerful enough in itself to make the ever-pragmatic Mandos feel pity.



Lúthien's fate is ultimately her own choice, and she chooses to stay with Beren even beyond death. Lúthien's death, though she chooses it, means her permanent separation from the elves. Still, she lives on in elven tradition through her story and through her descendants, who join the races of elves and men.



Melian, as a Maia, is bound to the world until the end of time and faces eternal separation from Lúthien. This separation begins not with Lúthien's death, but with her departure from Doriath and her disappearance from the elven world.



Maedhros attempts to unite Beleriand against Morgoth, since Beren and Lúthien have proven that he's fallible. Maedhros is thwarted, however, by the bitterness of some of the other elves towards the sons of Fëanor. Though a large portion of Beleriand joins the union, there are key pieces missing, and the effort is further divided by Morgoth's interference—lies, spies, and suspicion.



Maedhros plans for them to attack Angband with his armies advancing from the east and Fingon's from the west from Hithlum. On the day of the attack, Maedhros's forces are delayed by the treachery of a man named Ulfang, but Turgon leads Gondolin's army to join the siege. Morgoth knows the elves' plan and sends orcs towards Hithlum to draw Fingon's army out of the hills, but it holds its position.

Morgoth's captain rides up to Fingon's fortress with a prisoner—Gwindor's brother, Gelmir—and warns the army that he'll begin killing the prisoners in Angband as soon as he returns. He mutilates and kills Gelmir, leaving his body, and rides away. Gwindor leads the charge from the fortress and the army rides out after the orcs, killing them quickly and bursting through the gates of Angband. An ambush is waiting for them inside. All the first men through the gate except Gwindor are killed and the host of Fingon is driven into a retreat.

A battle begins on the fourth day that the elves call the battle of Unnumbered Tears. Most of the men of Brethil are killed, and the armies of Hithlum are surrounded until Turgon arrives with reinforcements. Maedhros and his army finally arrive to attack the enemy from the rear. At the same time, Morgoth sends all his creatures out from Angband, separating Maedhros and Finrod's armies. Ulfang's men turn on Maedhros's army, and other armies of men appear from the eastern hills to attack. Maedhros's army is scattered, though all the sons of Fëanor escape.

Gothmog attacks the western battlefront and drives Turgon and Húrin to the east. Fingon faces him alone until another Balrog attacks him from behind. Gothmog strikes Fingon's helmet with his axe, killing him.

Turgon and Húrin hold the pass of Sirion together until Húrin, believing he's about to die, urges Turgon to flee to Gondolin. Húrin covers Turgon's retreat. The final stand of Húrin's men is the most renowned deed of the early men. Húrin's brother Huor and all his men are picked off until only Húrin stands. He wields his axe with both hands, killing orcs and shouting, "**day** shall come again," a modified version of Fingon's earlier battle cry, until he's taken captive.

Even before the battle has begun, Maedhros's efforts are subverted by the interference of spies and traitors—both Morgoth's meddling and the curse of the Noldor at work. Morgoth's spies have informed him of the plan of the armies, and he seeks to ruin their dual ambush by delaying one group and goading the other into a premature fight.



Gelmir's death is only the first of many. By exploiting Gwindor's love for his brother and his desire for revenge, Morgoth is successful in drawing Fingon's army out of their defensive position and into an ambush. The battle is off to a bad start for Fingon's army as it becomes clear that Morgoth was prepared for them. By delaying Maedhros's army, Morgoth has isolated Fingon, making his army an easier target.



The arrival of Maedhros's army—and the surprising appearance of Turgon, who has finally decided to make the existence of Gondolin known to the world—turns the tide of the battle briefly in Beleriand's favor. Morgoth, however, has the advantage of the spies and traitors he planted in Maedhros's armies, and extra forces still in Angband that he sends out to divide the Union, preventing them from collaborating and crushing Morgoth's forces between them.



Morgoth's servants don't fight honorably—they fight to win at any cost, turning traitor and betraying the rules of single combat. With Fingon dead, the Noldor lose their High King and the battle loses one of its leaders.



The fact that Húrin's last stand is so revered by the elves reveals what qualities they value among men. Húrin is stubborn, selfless, and hopeful. His sacrifice means that Turgon's forces survive the battle with a chance to defeat Morgoth another day, even if he won't be there to see it happen.



Morgoth has successfully corrupted some groups of men and destroyed Fingon's kingdom. The forces of Maedhros's union are scattered or dead. Morgoth sends more men and orcs to harass the remaining allies. Many flee to the Havens, which Morgoth destroys the following year, killing or enslaving Círdan's people. A few escape by sea to an island, including Círdan and Gil-galad. Círdan sends ships to the west seeking aid, but none reach Valinor, and only one messenger, Voronwë of Gondolin, ever returns.

Morgoth is troubled by the idea that Turgon (now technically the High King of the Noldor) escaped him. When he seeks information from Húrin, Húrin mocks him. As punishment, Morgoth curses him and his descendants with sorrow, then curses him again with a spell that forces him to watch his children suffer. Still, Húrin doesn't ask for mercy or death. The orcs pile the bodies of the men and elves into a hill, and, eventually, grass grows over it—the only green place in Morgoth's land.

CHAPTER 21. OF TÚRIN TURAMBAR

Morwen, Húrin's wife, has a son, Túrin, the year that Beren and Lúthien meet. At the time of Húrin's capture, Túrin is eight years old and living in Dor-lómin with his mother, who is pregnant again. When other men, the Easterlings, are sent by Morgoth to invade, Morwen sends Túrin to Doriath with two servants.

Morwen gives birth to a daughter, Nienor, and that same year Thingol takes Túrin in and fosters him. Thingol invites Morwen to come to Doriath, but she refuses to leave her house. Túrin lives with Thingol for nine years, exchanging messages with his mother until Thingol's messengers stop returning from the north. He then puts on the Dragon-helm, an heirloom sent by his mother, and goes to battle to protect Doriath's borders with Beleg Strongbow.

When Túrin returns to Doriath three years later, an elf named Saeros (jealous of the honor Thingol gives him) mocks his appearance. The next day, Túrin forces Saeros to run naked through the woods, where Saeros falls into a chasm and dies. Mablung, one of the wardens of Doriath, urges Túrin to go to Thingol and ask for forgiveness, but Túrin flees, afraid he'll be imprisoned, and joins a band of outlaws. When Thingol hears of what happened, he pardons Túrin and still considers him a son. Beleg leaves Doriath to find Túrin and convince him to return.

After they lose the battle, Beleriand is profoundly divided. Scattered forces and settlements remain, plagued by Morgoth's creatures. Some, led by Círdan, flee Middle-earth entirely, seeking shelter on the sea. As Beleriand is internally separated, it also remains cut off from Valinor's aid by the enchantments the Valar placed on the coast.



Gondolin is the last untouched elven city, and Morgoth seeks to find and corrupt it. Húrin is not only undaunted while meeting Morgoth—he is openly scornful, and it earns him a dreadful curse. The curse is not self-fulfilling like the curse of the Noldor, however. Morgoth must carry it out or have his agents do so.



Túrin's misfortunes begin with his separation from his mother and unborn sister. By dividing the race of men and corrupting the Easterlings into his service, Morgoth is able to get a new foothold in Beleriand—he doesn't just have armies there now, but also settlements.



Morwen's unwillingness to leave her husband's house, though the land is overrun by men loyal to Morgoth, inadvertently contributes to the fulfillment of the curse, as does the loss of communication between her and Túrin. Though Morgoth carries out his curse by arranging for certain events to take place, it is also aided by the poor choices of Húrin's family.



As is true for Morwen, Túrin's own volatile nature and bad choices contribute to the fulfillment of his curse. He brings sorrow upon himself without Morgoth's direct interference because of his pride and anger—though Thingol now accepts men into Doriath and even loves Túrin as a son, Túrin won't return home and remains in his self-imposed exile.



Meanwhile, Túrin has renamed himself Neithan, the Wronged. While he's away from his camp, the other outlaws catch Beleg, assuming he's a spy. Túrin returns and releases him and then swears not to harm anyone but Morgoth's servants again. Despite the pardon, Túrin refuses to return to Doriath even to help defend it. Beleg returns to Thingol to relay the message and receives permission to stay with Túrin as his guard. Thingol gives him the sword Anglachel, made by Eöl. Melian warns him that it contains malice and won't "love the hand it serves," then gifts him *lembas*, the waybread of the elves.

Túrin's outlaws search for a safe place to stay. They meet three dwarves, shooting at one and capturing another named Mîm, who offers them hospitality in exchange for his life, then follow him to his home on Amon Rûdh. When they arrive, Mîm's son has died from the arrow-wound, and Turin offers to pay a ransom for his loss if he ever comes into a fortune. Túrin stays with Mîm and learns about Mîm's people, who, since their banishment from the dwarf-cities of the east, have diminished until only Mîm and his son remain. That winter, Beleg finds Túrin there, bringing the Dragon-helm and healing the sickly outlaws with *lembas*.

Mîm hates Beleg and broods with his son at the back of the house. Around that time, Morgoth's influence grows, and his armies take the land north of Doriath. Beleg and Túrin guard the land around Amon Rûdh and rumors about them spread. Leaderless men flock to the Two Captains and Túrin renames himself again—Gorthol, the Dread Helm. Mîm betrays the outlaws to a band of orcs, but asks that they spare Túrin, which the orcs agree to. The orcs kill many of Túrin's men and capture Túrin with a net.

Mîm enters his house again, realizes that Beleg isn't dead, and tries to stab him with his own sword. Beleg retrieves his sword and frightens Mîm away, promising vengeance. He heals slowly and travels north to rescue Túrin, though he has little hope of success. Passing through the treacherous woods of Taur-nu-Fuin, he meets Gwindor, who has escaped from one of Morgoth's labor camps. Gwindor has seen the orcs that took Túrin, and Beleg inspires Gwindor to join him on his quest.

They catch up with the orc company, camped for the night, and carry Túrin away while the orcs sleep. While Beleg tries to cut off Túrin's shackles, Anglachel slips and cuts Túrin's foot. Túrin wakes up abruptly, thinking he's still with the orcs, and uses Aglachel to kill Beleg. A flash of **lightning** reveals Beleg's face. The orcs wake up, and Gwindor tries to convince Túrin to flee, but he only sits beside Beleg's body during the storm.

This is the first of Túrin's name changes. He seems to believe that the names he takes on dictate who he is, and that by taking on a new name he can create for himself a new destiny. Still, he will not return to Doriath—Túrin has a self-destructive streak that especially aids Morgoth's endeavors to bring him to ruin. Beleg now bears a sword that Melian (whose foresight has proven accurate several times) thinks will betray him—a good indication that such a betrayal will come to pass.



Mîm appears suspiciously generous to the group of men who kill his son. What with the curse of the Noldor which foretells betrayal and Morgoth's curse which promises sorrow and misfortune, it's safe to assume that anything that can go wrong for Túrin will go wrong, especially in his relationships. Still, Beleg arrives, bringing Túrin healing, protection, and as much safety as can be found outside of Doriath.



Túrin and Beleg's partnership again proves the great strength of the collaboration between men and elves. Túrin's name change reveals a change in his perception of himself, or possibly in how he wishes to be perceived. He becomes the Dread Helm, defined by his skill in battle. As expected because of the two curses on Túrin, Mîm betrays him and his men to Morgoth's orcs.



Mîm's attempt to turn Beleg's sword against him seems to satisfy Melian's warning that the sword will betray Beleg. Injured, betrayed by Mîm, and nearly betrayed by his own sword, Beleg still presses on to reunite with Túrin. Though divided from his allies, he quickly gains a new one. On the way, he meets Gwindor, the elf who led the charge of Fingon's army during the fifth battle of the Wars of Beleriand.



Though Beleg avoids Anglachel's first betrayal, he can't avoid the second, and Melian's prophecy comes to pass. Túrin's unfortunate fate leads to the death of another innocent. Because of Morgoth's orcs, Anglachel's betrayal, and Túrin's own fear and confusion, Túrin accidentally kills his closest friend and protector.



The orcs depart after the storm, and Gwindor helps Túrin bury Beleg. Túrin doesn't speak until Gwindor leads him to a spring sacred to Ulmo, where he drinks and composes a song for Beleg. Gwindor gives Túrin Anglachel, and the two travel to Nargothrond, where Túrin thrives under a false name. He reforges Anglachel, naming it Gurthang, and later becomes known as Mormegil, the Black Sword.

Though Finduilas, Orodreth's daughter, had once loved Gwindor, she now falls in love with Túrin, who doesn't notice her affection. Gwindor encourages her to follow her heart but warns her that Túrin has a dark fate and reveals his true identity to her. Finduilas realizes that Túrin will never love her and Túrin confronts Gwindor about revealing his name and calling his "doom" upon him. Gwindor replies that his doom is in himself, not in his name.

When Orodreth hears Túrin's identity, Túrin convinces him to return to open battle against Morgoth and drives the orcs out of the land. Túrin advises Orodreth to build a bridge over the defensive Narog river so that their weapons can be delivered faster. Gwindor, who speaks against Túrin to the king, falls out of favor. A message arrives at Nargothrond from Círdan that Ulmo warns of an imminent orc attack and advises that they stay in their fortress to wait it out. At the same time, Morwen and Nienor flee to Doriath.

Túrin refuses to listen to Ulmo's warning and instead leads Nargothrond's forces out to fight Morgoth's army. The orc armies, aided by Glaurung, are too strong. Orodreth is killed and Túrin carries Gwindor, gravely wounded, from the battlefield into the woods. Though Gwindor loves Túrin, he regrets meeting him. He advises Túrin to leave him and save Finduilas, since she's the only thing standing between him and his doom. The bridge Túrin built over the River Narog to transport weapons is used against him by the orc army to sack Nargothrond.

Túrin arrives and meets Glaurung in front of the doors of Nargothrond. Túrin withstands his fire, thanks to his Dragonhelm, but falls under Glaurung's binding spell. Glaurung taunts him about his mother and sister living in poverty in Dor-lómin. Túrin suddenly sees himself as Glaurung portrays him—a traitor and deserter of his family—and stands frozen as the orcs take the women and children of Nargothrond captive. Finduilas, among them, calls out to Túrin, but Glaurung doesn't release him until she's gone.

Though Túrin's life in Nargothrond is prosperous, he is still haunted by guilt and regret. Mourning Beleg, Túrin takes on yet another name, representing himself as the Black Sword, the very weapon that he used to kill his friend.



Túrin feels that, by changing his name, he can alter his fate—that if he is not Túrin, son of Húrin, Morgoth's curse might not be able to find him. This, as Gwindor knows, is not the case. Túrin's fate is his to accept or struggle against, no matter what name he takes. By changing his name so frequently, he forgets to instead alter the behaviors and tendencies that lead him to misfortune. Túrin's belief in the power of his new names is arrogance, as is his refusal to listen to Gwindor's advice.



In Nargothrond, Túrin applies himself, to the best of his ability, to being useful and productive, urging the elves from the fear and hesitancy instilled in them by Curufin. However, just because his efforts are well-intended doesn't mean they have the desired results. Túrin, like all the men of the three great Houses, is caught up in the doom of the Noldor—his efforts are often subverted.



Túrin is again too overconfident in his own fortification of Nargothrond to listen to good advice—even the advice of a Vala. His great efforts (such as the creation of the bridge) are turned against him and used by the enemy. While dying, Gwindor attempts to guide Túrin away from the fate Morgoth plans for him—he can alter it with actions, not with names. One single choice (saving Finduilas) is enough to change the course of Túrin's life, if Túrin will finally heed Gwindor.



By showing Túrin a twisted vision of himself, Glaurung gives credence to all Túrin's fear and self-loathing. Part of what leads Túrin again and again to misfortune is his inability to forgive himself for his past mistakes and accept help and kindness. In addition, Morwen and Nienor are no longer in Dor-lómin, indicating that Glaurung is lying to Túrin about them for some purpose beyond attacking his character.



Túrin attacks Glaurung, who jumps back and offers Túrin his freedom to go and find Morwen and Nienor, telling him there won't be time to save them if he stops to rescue Finduilas. Still confused by Glaurung's spell, Túrin believes him and travels north, unaware that Glaurung was sent by Morgoth to keep him away from Finduilas. Glaurung breaks Túrin's bridge and sleeps on the treasure in Nargothrond.

Despite Gwindor's warning, Túrin again makes the wrong choice, trusting the insults of his enemy (Glaurung) over the aid of his friend (Gwindor). Glaurung is now revealed not only as a servant of Morgoth but also as the enactor of the curse on Túrin. By following the trap laid for him by Glaurung, Túrin is walking towards his own doom.



When Túrin arrives at Dor-lómin, he learns from Morwen's servant that she and Nienor went to Doriath. Realizing Glaurung tricked him, Túrin becomes enraged and kills several Easterlings, causing trouble for the remnants of the house of Hador, before escaping south again. He decides to leave his mother and sister in Doriath where they're safe behind Melian's Girdle and search for Finduilas.

Glaurung has, first, fed into Túrin's fears about his family and his own character and, second, prevented him from rescuing Finduilas, the action which could have saved him from whatever fate Morgoth has planned. Since Glaurung has succeeded in driving Túrin to Dor-lómin, it seems unlikely now that Túrin will be able to avoid his fate.



Túrin meets the men of Brethil who fought the orc company that took Finduilas. A man named Dorlas reveals that the orcs killed their prisoners rather than allow them to escape. Finduilas died asking the men of Brethil to tell Mormegil (Túrin's alias) where she was. When Túrin cries over her grave, the men of Brethil realize he's Mormegil and take him in, despite their leader Brandir's feeling of foreboding. Túrin takes a new name, Turambar, meaning Master of Doom, and wields a bow rather than his sword.

According to Gwindor's warning, with Finduilas dead, Túrin has missed his chance to save himself from his fate. Still, Túrin rarely listens to advice or warnings. Rather than accepting his fate or, again, attempting to alter his behavior, he changes his name once more. Turambar is the most arrogant of his aliases; it declares that Túrin has complete control of his life and that he rejects Morgoth's influence.



Some survivors of the sacking of Nargothrond travel to Doriath and reveal that Mormegil is actually Túrin. Rumor says that he was either killed or is still a captive of Glaurung. Morwen leaves Doriath to find Túrin and Nienor secretly follows her. Though Thingol sends guards after them, they both refuse to return. Thingol's guards, led by Mablung, follow them to Nargothrond, where Glaurung sees them and raises a mist over the river. Morwen is lost, and no news about her ever returns to Doriath. Nienor stumbles upon Glaurung, who casts a spell of forgetfulness on her, then returns to Nargothrond.

Morwen and Nienor are lured to Nargothrond by the possibility of finding Túrin, despite the efforts of others (like Thingol and Mablung) to dissuade them from the path. It seems that only the objects of the curse themselves can take action to change their fates—just as Gwindor couldn't change Túrin, Mablung can't control Morwen and Nienor. As a result, they come within the reach of Glaurung, the instigator of Morgoth's curse.



Mablung finds Nienor, who won't speak and doesn't seem to hear him, and leads her away. Near Doriath, they're attacked by an orc-band, and Nienor flees from both the orcs and her elf guards. Mablung returns to tell Thingol and Melian what happened, then leaves Doriath again to search for Morwen and Nienor.

A combination of bad luck, Morgoth's planning, and individual choices bring about the curse on Húrin's family. Though the orc attack was almost certainly planned by Morgoth, it is Nienor's terror and confusion (like Túrin's during the murder of Beleg) that drives her away.



Nienor, who doesn't remember her own name or "the name of any other thing," wanders into Brethil and throws herself onto Finduilas's grave when frightened by a storm. Túrin finds her there and takes her in. She's comforted by his presence and refuses to be parted from him but, unable to understand his speech, becomes troubled when he tries to question her. Túrin names her Níniel, Tear-maiden. Brandir heals her illness, and the women of Brethil teach her language, though she never remembers anything from the time before Túrin found her.

Brandir falls in love with Níniel, but she loves Túrin. Brandir reveals Túrin's identity to her, and though she doesn't recognize the name, it gives her a bad feeling. Because of it, she rejects Túrin the first time he proposes to her but accepts him three years later. When Glaurung sends orcs into Brethil again, Túrin takes up his sword and leads his men to defeat them. The following year, Níniel becomes pregnant and grows "wan and sad." Túrin promises her that he won't go to battle unless the people of Brethil are directly attacked.

Shortly after, Glaurung appears on the borders of Brethil, and Túrin makes a plan to defeat him with trickery. Túrin leaves with Dorlas and Hunthor (a relative of Brandir's), and Níniel leads a crowd of people to follow them. Brandir tries to dissuade them, but they refuse to listen. He renounces his lordship and tries to follow Níniel to protect her, though, lame from childhood, he falls behind. Glaurung lies on the other side of a gorge, and Túrin plans to climb down, cross the river, and climb up the other side. Though Dorlas turns back, Túrin and Hunthor cross the river safely.

Glaurung wakes up and begins to crawl over the gorge while Túrin is still below, and Hunthor is killed by a falling stone. Túrin climbs the gorge alone and stabs Glaurung's soft belly with Gurthang. Glaurung throws himself across the chasm, wrenching Gurthang from Túrin's grip. Túrin crosses the river again and climbs back up to retrieve his sword, then mocks Glaurung. When he pulls the sword from Glaurung's belly, the blood burns him, and Glaurung stares at him with malice. Túrin faints.

Níniel, waiting near Nen Girith, hears Glaurung screaming and, followed by Brandir, runs to find Túrin, who's still unconscious and appears to be dead. As Níniel cries and tends to his burned hand, Glaurung stirs for the last time. He congratulates her on finding her brother—faithless and treacherous—and tells her that she carries "the worst of all his deeds." As Glaurung dies, he removes his spell from her, allowing her to remember her life as Nienor.

Níniel has lost Nienor's memories, and Túrin has never seen his sister in person. When they meet, they have no way of recognizing each other besides Níniel's vague sense of comfort and familiarity. Though the reunion (even unknown as it is) seems a happy and fortunate one, the knowledge that Morgoth arranged it indicates that there is something worse in store for the siblings now that they're together.



Morgoth's plan is finally revealed, at least in part; because of his interference, Túrin and Níniel fall in love. For once, Morgoth doesn't create evil through division, but by reuniting the lost siblings. Though Níniel's intuition (and Brandir's sense of foreboding) warns her against it and later indicates that something is amiss, she marries Túrin. Túrin's best intentions go awry—so has his marriage from the start and so, likely, will his resolution not to fight unless he must.



As soon as Glaurung arrives in the area, Túrin abandons his promise to Níniel not to fight until attacked. It seems reasonable—Glaurung is a threat to them, whether or not he will imminently attack—but a broken vow rarely leads to good in The Silmarillion. Brandir becomes one of the many onlookers to the curse who attempt to intervene but are unable to dissuade the stubborn children of Húrin from their paths.



Against all odds, and despite the loss of his two companions, Túrin's plan succeeds. He singlehandedly sneaks up from the gorge and slays the dragon. But Glaurung is not dead yet, and the curse is not complete. Glaurung's very presence, his poison, even his injury and death causes harm.



Glaurung's last act is to enact the final piece of the curse: revealing Nienor's identity. Glaurung again slanders Túrin (defining him by all his worst mistakes, many of which were beyond his control) as he did at Nargothrond. Glaurung is skilled in twisting the truth—making Túrin's sins and Nienor's fate sound as cruel and hopeless as possible.



Nienor cries that Túrin Turambar, the Master of Doom, is now “mastered” by his doom. Brandir, who heard what the dragon said, runs towards her, but she flees and throws herself into the gorge. As Brandir walks back to Nen Girith, he finds Dorlas in the woods and kills him—the only blood he ever spills. The crowd at Nen Girith ask where Níniel is, and he explains that she, Túrin, and Glaurung are all dead. He also reveals Níniel and Túrin’s identities as brother and sister, and the people weep.

Nienor now also recognizes that Túrin’s many names can’t save him. Their fate has already found them, and Nienor sees no way to live with it. Brandir’s helplessness to save her turns to violence—had Dorlas stayed with Túrin and helped to kill Glaurung before Nienor arrived, they all might have lived their lives peacefully, never knowing Níniel’s true identity.



Túrin wakes up, confused about his bandaged hand, and arrives at Nen Girith, asking where Níniel is. Brandir tells Túrin that she’s dead. Dorlas’s wife calls Brandir crazed, and Túrin is cruel to him, assuming he’s “begrudging” his relationship with Níniel. Brandir repeats Glaurung’s last words, revealing Níniel as Nienor again and calling Túrin a curse on his family. Túrin accuses Brandir of leading Níniel to her death and spreading Glaurung’s lies, then curses and kills him.

Túrin often allows his pride and temper to control him. That is the case now, when Túrin, self-proclaimed master of fate, refuses to believe Brandir’s story of Nienor’s realization and death. Rather than accept that the curse has found him at last, he unjustly accuses and murders Brandir.



As Túrin cries on Finduilas’s grave, unsure of what to do, he meets Mablung with a company of elves who came to help kill Glaurung. Túrin begs for news of his family in Doriath. Mablung explains that Morwen was lost and Nienor lost her memory before running away, and Túrin realizes that Glaurung was telling the truth. Túrin curses Doriath and flees from the elves. At the gorge, Túrin takes out Gurthang and asks if it will kill him swiftly. The sword answers that it will gladly kill him to forget Beleg and Brandir, who were unjustly killed. Túrin sets the sword on the ground and throws himself onto it.

Túrin has spent much of his life running from Doriath and from Morgoth’s curse. Both catch up to him at once as Mablung arrives from Doriath with the news of his mother and sister, confirming Brandir’s story. Now that Túrin has failed to avoid the curse, he chooses to die. By falling on the sword that killed Beleg, he is finally allowed the atonement for his sins that he so wanted. Gurthang, reformed from Anglachel, is still willing to betray its wielder.



Mablung and the elves arrive and learn the reason for Nienor’s death, and Mablung mourns that his arrival caused Túrin’s suicide. When they lift Túrin up to bury him, they find Gurthang broken. The elves sing a lament for the children of Húrin and carve Túrin and Nienor’s names into a stone on his burial mound, though they never find Nienor’s body.

Mablung is an unwilling participant in Morgoth’s curse on the children of Húrin. He attempted to keep Nienor safe, but ultimately delivers the last blow that drives Túrin to suicide. Túrin and Nienor, separated for most of their lives, are remembered together on their tombstone and by the elves, though their bodies rest apart.



CHAPTER 22. OF THE RUIN OF DORIATH

Though Húrin’s children are dead, Morgoth’s revenge on Húrin isn’t over. He frees Húrin after 28 years and allows him to leave Angband. He wanders near Gondolin, where the great eagles spot him, and Thorondor tells Turgon that he’s nearby. Turgon assumes that Húrin has finally surrendered and become Morgoth’s servant, then later changes his mind and sends the eagles back out to look for him, but Húrin is already gone. Húrin, at a nearby mountain, shouts aimlessly to Turgon and is overheard by spies, revealing Gondolin’s general region to Morgoth.

Morgoth’s curse is not yet finished and likely won’t be until Húrin and Morwen (whose fate is still unknown) are dead. Turgon is one of the Noldor and subject to their curse—he is always wary of betrayal, especially now that Gondolin is one of the last remaining elven cities. However, his reluctance to trust Húrin is what allows Morgoth to discover Gondolin’s location. Had Turgon sent Thorondor to bring Húrin quietly into the city, Morgoth’s spies might not have seen.



Húrin, believing he hears Morwen's voice, travels to Brethil and visits the gravestone of his children. Morwen, now old and tired, is there waiting for him. They sit together, holding hands, and Morwen dies in the night. Húrin buries her and carves her name on the other side of the stone.

Driven by fate and his desire for revenge, Húrin travels on to the ruins of Nargothrond, where he meets the dwarf Mîm who took possession of the treasure inside once Glaurung left. When Mîm challenges him, Húrin reveals who he is and that he knows that Mîm betrayed Túrin. Though Mîm begs for his life, Húrin kills him and takes one object from Nargothrond: the Nauglamír, the Necklace of the Dwarves, made for Finrod.

Finally, Húrin goes to Doriath and throws the Nauglamír at Thingol's feet, calling it his "fee" for caring for his wife and children. Thingol forgives Húrin for his bitterness, and Melian explains to him the visions Morgoth showed him aren't the whole truth—Húrin's family was loved and cared for while they were in Doriath. Realizing the truth, Húrin picks the Nauglamír up and hands it to Thingol as a genuine gift and a "memorial" for himself. He understands that his fate is fulfilled and Morgoth's revenge is complete, but now he is finally free from him. He leaves and isn't seen again; it's said that he throws himself into the sea.

Thingol decides that the Nauglamír should be remade and set with the **Silmaril**, which he thinks about incessantly and wants to carry with him. When the work is finished, the dwarf craftsmen argue that they have more of a claim to the necklace than he does, since their people made it. Thingol realizes that they want the Silmaril and demands that they leave Doriath, but the dwarves, enraged, band together and kill him. The dwarves flee with the Silmaril, but guards pursue and kill them, then return the Silmaril to Melian. Two of the dwarves escape to their people in Nogrod and accuse Thingol of trying to cheat and kill them. Nogrod sends an army towards Doriath, seeking revenge.

Melian knows that Thingol's death will be followed by the doom of Doriath. Though she's a Maia, she took on the form of an elf for Thingol, and after his death a "change" comes over her. Her power fades from the land, leaving Doriath vulnerable to attack without the protection of the Girdle. She instructs Mablung to contact Beren and Lúthien, then disappears from Middle-earth back to Valinor. The dwarf army invades Doriath, kills Mablung, and steals the **Silmaril**.

Morwen's part in Morgoth's curse is to discover the graves of her children and die not knowing how they died. If she suffered more than that during her wanderings, the elven narrator doesn't know.



The narrator claims that fate drives Húrin, and perhaps it does—Húrin is influenced by years of Morgoth's torment and the burden of his children's fates. His choices, though his own, are impaired, and his direction is determined by the lives of his children. He goes to take revenge on those who wronged Túrin.



Melian reveals an unknown aspect of Morgoth's curse on Húrin—not only did he show Húrin visions of his children suffering, but he changed the truth and made their fates seem even worse than they were, hoping to turn Húrin against Thingol. Now Húrin is the last of his family left—with Melian's revelation of Morgoth's interference, Húrin's madness is healed and the curse is ended. The elves don't know what happens to him after, but it's likely that he joins his family in death.



Greed—especially for the Silmarils—spreads. Thingol becomes obsessed with his Silmaril, as Fëanor was and many of his sons still are. Thingol is right to guess that the dwarves want the Silmaril, but he provokes their violence with his pride and vitriol. Now that one of the Silmarils is out of Angband and back within reach of the people of Beleriand, the bloodshed begins again, starting with the deaths of Thingol and the dwarves and escalating to a war between Nogrod and Doriath.



Thingol's death signifies Doriath's fated destruction. The narrator is unclear whether Melian intentionally withdraws her power from the Girdle or whether, in her grief, she is incapable of upholding the enchantment. Either way, Doriath's defenses die with Thingol, and Melian leaves Middle-earth, abandoning Doriath to destruction.



At that time, Beren and Lúthien still live in Tol Galen in Ossiriand. Their son Dior is married to Nimloth, a relative of Celeborn, and their children are named Eluréd, Elurín and Elwing. The news of the dwarf army reaches Beren, who leads Dior and a group of elves to ambush them as they leave Doriath. The dwarves who survive the initial attack are driven into the forest by the Shepherds of the Trees and not seen again. Beren kills the Lord of Nogrod and carries the **Silmaril** back to Lúthien.

It's said that Lúthien wearing the **Silmaril** is the greatest beauty ever seen outside of Valinor and that Tol Galen becomes fair and fruitful with it there. Dior travels to Menegroth with his wife and children to rule the Sindar. Later, a lord of the elves in Ossiriand brings Dior a coffer containing the Silmaril, indicating that Beren and Lúthien have died and gone somewhere beyond the world. The wise believe that the Silmaril led to their early deaths, since Lúthien's beauty as she wore it was "too bright for mortal lands."

Rumor spreads among the elves of Beleriand that Dior now wears the **Silmaril**, and the sons of Fëanor plan to attack Doriath and reclaim it, though they didn't dare to take it when Lúthien wore it. During the attack, Dior kills Celegorm, and Curufin and Caranthir both die. Dior and Nimloth are killed, and their two sons are taken by Celegorm's servants and left to die in the forest. Afterwards, Maedhros tries to save Eluréd and Elurín, but he can't find them. Doriath is destroyed, though some of the Sindar escape with Elwing and the Silmaril.

CHAPTER 23. OF TUOR AND THE FALL OF GONDOLIN

Rían is only married to Huor for two months before his death during the Battle of Unnumbered Tears. She leaves their son Tuor to be fostered by the elves of Mithrim shortly before her own death. In his youth, Tuor is kidnapped by orcs and enslaved before his eventual escape, then lives as an outlaw. At that time, Ulmo chooses Tuor to carry out his plans. Tuor travels through a tunnel built by Turgon's people towards the sea, unnoticed by Morgoth.

Thingol didn't even possess the Silmaril for one mortal lifetime before it was stolen—Beren and Lúthien are still alive and residing peacefully, away from the conflict of the elven realms. Though Beren's quest is long over, he finds himself yet again fighting for possession of the Silmaril. Like the last time, he doesn't seek to keep it for himself, but takes it for Lúthien.



Though the Silmarils provoke greed and violence, Lúthien's possession of the Silmaril is a reminder that the jewels themselves are blessed, created by holy light. The Silmaril's hastening of Lúthien's death is not necessarily the curse that it appears to be—death, even for mortals, isn't something to be feared, but merely a transition. By her early death, she and Beren are called beyond the world to the unknown place where the souls of mortals meet Ilúvatar.



The narrator gives no reason why the sons of Fëanor didn't attack Lúthien, but it can be inferred that they were hindered by something like respect—Lúthien becomes legendary while she still lives, and the sons of Fëanor must have been wary of attacking the elf who could enchant Morgoth. They have no such qualms about destroying Doriath, though they still fail to recover the Silmaril.



Though the rest of the Valar have closed themselves off in Valinor, Ulmo remains actively involved in the lives of elves and men, offering warnings and, occasionally, directly intervening through an intermediary like Tuor. Tuor is also fated, according to Ulmo, to bring hope to elves and men, though exactly how he'll do so remains to be seen.



Reaching Nevrast, Tuor falls in love with the sea. He finds Turgon's abandoned home and takes the sword and armor that Ulmo commanded Turgon to leave for him before departing for Gondolin. In a storm, Ulmo urges Tuor to find Gondolin and gives him a cloak to **shadow** him from his enemies. In the morning, Tuor meets Voronwë, an elf of Gondolin sent unsuccessfully as a messenger to Valinor, who was rescued from the storm by Ulmo. They travel together to Gondolin, where Tuor uses his sword and armor to prove that Ulmo sent him.

Tuor meets with Turgon and delivers Ulmo's warning that the curse of Mandos is almost complete. Ulmo urges him to abandon Gondolin and travel to the sea. Turgon remembers Ulmo's words in Nevrast that the Noldor's "true hope" comes from the sea, but he's become proud, and when Maeglin speaks against Tuor, he decides to reject Ulmo's counsel. However, because of the warning of the curse, he begins to fear treason and closes the door to the city. After the eagles bring news of the death of Dior, he swears to never ally himself with the sons of Fëanor.

Tuor remains in Gondolin and falls in love with Idril, and Turgon allows them to marry. Maeglin hates Tuor, since he wants to marry Idril and become king after Turgon. The next year, Tuor and Idril have a son, Eärendil, who has **light** in his face and loves the sea like his father. Meanwhile, Morgoth searches the mountains for Gondolin, since Húrin accidentally betrayed its region. Idril has a sense of foreboding and prepares a secret escape route from the city.

While outside the city against Turgon's orders, Maeglin is captured by orcs and tortured into revealing Gondolin's location and weaknesses to Morgoth. Morgoth promises to give Maeglin kingship of Gondolin and Idril as a wife, then sends him back to Gondolin to avoid suspicion. When Eärendil is seven, Morgoth attacks Gondolin at night during a festival. Tuor tries to rescue Idril during the attack, but Maeglin grabs both her and Eärendil. Tuor fights him and throws him from the walls of the city. Gothmog is killed in the square of the king.

Tuor and Idril lead the survivors of Gondolin away through Idril's secret path. As they climb through the mountains, they're ambushed by orcs. Glorfindel, the lord of one of the noble houses of Gondolin, fights the Balrog that's with them, and both fall from the mountain. Tuor and the survivors follow the River Sirion to the sea and join Elwing and the refugees from Doriath. With Turgon's death, Gil-galad is named High King of the Noldor. Círdan's mariners also join the people of Doriath and Gondolin there to build ships.

Before Turgon departed for Gondolin, Ulmo warned him that he would send a messenger from Nevrast when Gondolin was about to fall. Ulmo has chosen Tuor to be this messenger, meaning that the end of Gondolin is near. Based on the history of Beleriand, this new collaboration of elves and men will result in a Beleriand strengthened against Morgoth.



Turgon's dismissal of Ulmo's warning, driven by his pride in the beauty of the city and his confidence in its capabilities, will almost certainly end in disaster. Gondolin can't remain hidden forever—and even if it can, hiding won't solve the problems in Beleriand, but only trap them inside. Turgon's unwillingness to break free of the city and his resolution to never ally with the sons of Fëanor, even to fight Morgoth, is unproductive at best and ruinous at worst.



Idril's foresight is good—Morgoth knows Gondolin's location, and if he hasn't found it yet, he will soon. Her long-time dislike of Maeglin may also prove justified; he hasn't grown less spiteful in defeat. Unlike her father, content to sit and wait for disaster to strike, Idril quietly makes plans for the impending attack.



Ultimately, it isn't Maeglin's malice that dooms Gondolin, but his fear and greed. When offered the right incentive (power and Idril, the two things he most wants), he readily becomes the traitor Turgon fears and the doom of the Noldor predicts. But Maeglin's betrayal isn't as fruitful as he hoped—instead, he falls victim to his own curse, placed on him by Eöl and fulfilled when Tuor throws him from the walls.



Thanks to Idril's foresight, some of the people of Gondolin are saved. They join with the survivors of Doriath, also lately destroyed. The two last great elven kingdoms have fallen, but their remnants gather together, finding relative safety in unity and proximity to the sea.



Morgoth believes that he's finally triumphed over the Noldor and doesn't regret his lost **Silmaril**. If he knows about the elves gathering at the mouth of the Sirion, he doesn't attack.

In many ways, Morgoth has won the war. However, his pride makes him hasty to disregard the remaining elves and declare himself the victor.



At that time, Ulmo visits the other Valar and asks them to save the elves from Morgoth, but Manwë refuses. It's said that it wasn't time yet for their interference and that only someone speaking for both the elves and the men could compel the Valar to pity Middle-earth. It's also possible that Manwë can't act until the sons of Fëanor give up their claim on the **Silmarils**. When Tuor grows old, he builds a ship and sails away with Idril. Elven tradition believes that he arrived in Valinor and became one of the immortal Noldor.

Ulmo recognizes that the people of Beleriand are failing—their kingdoms have fallen, and they are too divided for a united attack against Morgoth. Only the Valar can save them now, but only a symbol of the unity between men and elves could provoke the Valar to act. Elven tradition can be as fanciful and contradictory as it can be brutal and pragmatic—though their lore believes Tuor reaches Valinor, other stories argue that no ships find their way to the west until the representative of both men and elves arrives to petition the Valar.



CHAPTER 24. OF THE VOYAGE OF EÄRENDIL AND THE WAR OF WRATH

Eärendil rules the elves living at the mouth of the Sirion and marries Elwing. They have two sons, Elrond and Elros, who are called Half-elves. Eärendil longs to both find his parents and beg the Valar to pity the men and elves of Middle-earth. With Círdan's help, he builds ships and explores the sea, though he doesn't find Valinor and eventually misses Elwing enough to return to Beleriand.

Eärendil, as the child of an elf and a man, has the power to represent and speak for both races. If he could find Valinor and petition the Valar, he might be the only person able to convince them to save Beleriand from Morgoth. His marriage to Elwing—a union between the heirs to the last elven realms, though now destroyed—unites the Noldor and the Sindar realms.



When Maedhros learns where Elwing was living, he initially leaves her alone, regretful of his actions in Doriath. Over time, though, his oath begins to torment him, and he sends messages demanding that she return the **Silmaril**. She refuses, and the remaining sons of Fëanor attack and destroy the exiles of Gondolin and Doriath. Círdan and Gil-galad arrive too late to help them. Amrod and Amras are killed in the battle, and Elwing throws herself into the sea with the Silmaril. Elros and Elrond are taken captive by Maedhros and Maglor.

Maedhros may regret the second Kinslaying when Elwing's two brothers were killed and Doriath destroyed, but not enough to forsake his oath entirely. The third Kinslaying results, leaving only two remaining sons of Fëanor: Maglor and Maedhros himself. Rather than give the Silmarils to her father's murderers, Elwing would evidently prefer to die, taking the Silmaril with her and making it impossible for them to fulfill their oath.



Ulmo carries Elwing out of the water and turns her into a bird with the **Silmaril** on her breast. She flies out to sea to find Eärendil and falls from the air into his arms, retaking her elven form. They fear for their sons, but Maglor takes care of Elros and Elrond, who grow to love him. Since there's no hope left in Middle-earth, Eärendil and Elwing sail again to find Valinor. The Silmaril's **light** brightens as they travel farther west—with its power, they pass through the Enchanted Isles and reach Valinor.

If there is no hope left in Middle-earth, Eärendil resolves to find hope elsewhere. Ultimately, Eärendil fulfills Ulmo's prediction about Tuor (that he would bring hope to elves and men—Eärendil, his son, is the hope that Tuor brings), and Ulmo ensures that he has the tools necessary to do so, sending Elwing and the Silmaril to him.



Eärendil is the first living man to set foot in Valinor. Elwing leaves the ship with him, afraid that they'll be separated forever if she doesn't go ashore, but waits on the beach as he searches for the Valar. He passes through the empty city of Tirion and nearly turns back towards the beach before Eönwë, Manwë's herald, calls him by name and takes him to the council of the Valar. He asks for pardon for the Noldor and mercy for elves and men, and the Valar grant his request.

After Eärendil leaves to look for Elwing, the Valar discuss whether Eärendil is permitted in the undying lands since he's part human and part Noldo. Manwë decides that Eärendil and Elwing won't be allowed to return to Middle-earth, but they and their sons will be allowed to choose either the fate of elves or the fate of men. The two of them are summoned back to the Valar and given their choice. Eärendil tells Elwing to choose for both of them, and Elwing chooses the fate of the elves, since Lúthien was an elf.

The Valar hallow Eärendil's ship Vingilot and send it beyond the rim of the world to sail in the "oceans of heaven." Eärendil sits at the helm with the **Silmaril** on his brow. It's visible in the sky in the mornings or evenings as he sails back to Valinor to visit Elwing, who dislikes the **dark** and cold but learns flight from the birds. When the people of Middle-earth first see Eärendil's **light**, they call it Gil-Estel, the Star of High Hope. Maedhros recognizes it as a Silmaril, and Maglor tells him to be grateful if it is—now it's safe from evil and visible for everyone to enjoy.

Morgoth doesn't expect the assault from the west, assuming that no one would dare to wage war on him again and that he had permanently estranged the Noldor from the Valar. The Valar and the Vanyar prepare for war, and a few of the Teleri sail with them for Elwing's sake, since she's a descendant of their own people. The battle of the west and the north is called the Great Battle or the War of Wrath. The remnants of the Three Houses of men fight alongside the Valar's armies, though other men fight for Morgoth. The Balrogs and most of the orc armies are destroyed.

Morgoth is afraid to appear in battle personally and sends out his last resort—winged dragons that suddenly drive the Valar back. Eärendil sails in with all the great birds led by Thorondor and battles the dragons in the sky. He kills the dragon Ancalagon and throws him down onto the towers of Thangorodrim, collapsing them. As the **sun** rises, the dragons are dead and the Valar are victorious.

Though Elwing is often apart from her husband when he sails, she fears a permanent separation that would divide their fates after death. Elven tradition was right—only a selfless representative who begs for mercy on behalf of both elves and men could convince the Valar to intervene in Middle-earth.



Eärendil should be doubly barred from Valinor as part of the race of men (who are not permitted) and one of the Noldor (who are banished). Eärendil's goal to reunite the two continents is successful, as is Elwing's endeavor to remain with her husband and not be separated from him either by the Valar or by death. Like Lúthien, for their love and courage they are allowed to choose their fates.



By bearing the Silmaril in the sky, Eärendil again brings hope to elves and men. He brings hope even to Maglor, who recognizes finally that the Silmarils should be shared, and their light should be accessible to everyone. They aren't meant to be hoarded and hidden away, despite what Fëanor thought. Nothing good has ever come from trying to conceal and possess them—only the consequences of the doom of the Noldor.



Morgoth's pride leads ultimately to his downfall. He has such faith in his own power and such confidence in the ability of his lies to permanently sever the Valar from Middle-earth that he doesn't conceive of the Valar's return as even possible. Finally, in spite of all the division Morgoth created, Valinor, Middle-earth, and all the races are united against him.



After his disastrous fight with Fingolfin, Morgoth never again appears personally in battle. Though he sends out all his armies and dark creatures, they're not enough to combat the power of the Valar, the armies of Beleriand, the eagles, and Eärendil. At the moment of the Valar's victory, the sun rises, fulfilling Fingon's rallying cry from the fifth battle: the day has come.



Morgoth flees into his mines and begs for mercy, but the Valar refuse. They cut his feet from under him and bind him in the same chains he wore during his imprisonment in Valinor. They use his crown to make a collar and give his two **Silmarils** to Eönwë to guard. Though Morgoth is powerless, the land is irrevocably changed by the war. The River Sirion no longer exists, and there is “confusion and great noise.”

Eönwë summons the elves of Beleriand to leave Middle-earth. Maedhros and Maglor refuse and, though they don't want to, prepare to fulfill their oath, asking Eönwë to return the **Silmarils**. Eönwë answers that their crimes have invalidated their claim to the Silmarils, which will go back to Valinor. Maedhros and Maglor must also go to Valinor and receive the judgement of the Valar if they want the Silmarils. Maglor wants to comply and find peace in Valinor, but Maedhros argues that if the Valar don't give them the Silmarils, they'll never fulfill their oath and will be lost to Everlasting **Darkness**.

Maglor concedes, and the brothers sneak into Eönwë's camp, kill several guards, and each grab a **Silmaril**. When the camp wakes up and prepares to fight, Eönwë doesn't allow anyone to kill Maedhros and Maglor. They escape, but the Silmaril burns Maedhros's hand, and he realizes that Eönwë is right—his claim to the Silmaril is void and his oath is pointless. In despair, he throws himself into a **fiery** chasm with the Silmaril. Maglor, unable to bear the pain of holding the Silmaril, throws it into the sea and wanders the beach forever, singing his regret. The Silmarils find their resting places in the air, in water, and in fire.

The elves of Beleriand settle on the Lonely Isle off the coast of Valinor. The Noldor are pardoned by the Valar and forgiven by the Teleri. Still, not all the elves are willing to leave Middle-earth. Círdan, Celeborn, Galadriel, Gil-galad, and Elrond remain. Though Elrond chooses the fate of the elves, his brother Elros chooses the fate of men, and through him elvish blood (and the blood of a Maia) enters the race of men.

Morgoth is banished beyond the world into the Timeless Void under constant guard, and Eärendil keeps watch over the sky. However, the lies that Morgoth placed in the hearts of elves and men can never be destroyed and constantly breed evil. The world's fall from beauty into **darkness** is the fate foretold in the Music of the Ainur, and if it will ever be restored, Varda and Manwë haven't revealed it.

Morgoth abused the Valar's forgiveness after his first imprisonment—he will not have their mercy this time. His power is gone, and he is a captive once again. Still, the world has been changed by his influence; he has altered the course of history, the lives of its people, and the very shape of the land.



The elves are invited once again to join the Valar and live with them in Valinor. Though Maglor would rather seek the mercy of the Valar and rejoin the other elves than continue the cycle of betrayal and bloodshed in their pursuit of the Silmarils, Maedhros believes that their oath is binding, and they are forced to keep it. Eönwë tries to convince them otherwise, but he can't force them to recognize their folly or avoid the curse of the Noldor.



The fates of Maglor and Maedhros reveal the ultimate result of greed: pain and loss. No single person gets to possess the Silmarils—all the fighting, death, and betrayal amounts to nothing. With the loss of the last two Silmarils, the curse of the Noldor is complete. Maglor and Maedhros have been betrayed for the final time, by the Silmarils for rejecting them and by themselves for allowing themselves to sink so far into evil that the Silmarils will no longer permit their touch.



The period after Morgoth's defeat is one of forgiveness and healing. Those who wish to reunite with the Valar and the elves of Valinor are permitted to do so. Those who wish to remain in Middle-earth among the lands they know, now safe from Morgoth, may stay, and will be welcome in Valinor later. The races of Ainur, men, and elves are bound together permanently in Elros's descendants.



Though Morgoth is physically banished from the world, the evil he created there lives on without him. In the Music of the Ainur, he corrupted the world, and while present there he corrupted its people. The tradition of the elves says that the world will be healed during the second Music of the Ainur, but not even the Valar have seen that far into the future—or, if they have, they haven't told the elves. The elves persist in their beliefs not because of proof, but because of faith.



AKALLABËTH

Though many men fall under the influence of Morgoth, the Edain aid the elves during the War of the Jewels. After Eärendil the Blessed brings the Valar to Middle-earth, the evil men that fought for Morgoth flee east and become the kings of the men wandering there. Some of Morgoth's monsters remain to torment the men and some of his servants still do his work in Middle-earth.

The elves that travel west with the Valar settle on the Isle of Eressëa and build a city called Avallónë. The three faithful houses of men are rewarded by the Valar, taught by Eönwë, and given longer life than other men. Ossë raises up a land near Valinor for them to live in. They sail from Middle-earth, following Eärendil's **star** to reach it, and call it Númenor. They rename themselves the Númenóreans, or the Dúnedain, and Elros is their first king.

While "**light** and wisdom" fade from Middle-earth because of Morgoth's servants, the Dúnedain thrive in friendship with the Valar and the elves. They build ships and enjoy sea-faring, but the Valar forbid them from sailing west out of sight of Númenor so they aren't tempted to find Valinor or covet immortality. At that time, the Valar remain visible and active in the world, and the elves of Tol Eressëa visit Númenor frequently, bringing them Celeborn, the White Tree descended from Telperion, as a gift. Because of the ban on traveling west, some of the Númenóreans sail east and return to Middle-earth to lead and teach the men there.

Under Númenor's guidance, Middle-earth heals and grows more righteous. But, as their power grows, the Númenóreans begin to want to go west and be immortal like the elves and the Valar. Manwë sends messengers to the Dúnedain to explain that Ilúvatar decided the fate of men and intended for it to be a gift. It isn't a worse fate than the fate of the elves, just different, and only the **shadow** of Morgoth makes men fear the uncertainty of death. The Valar warn them that it's impossible to change their fate.

The king, Tar-Atanamir, doesn't like the Valar's message and clings to life and kingship for as long as he can. The people of Númenor become divided—some grow proud and estranged from the Valar and elves, but others, the Elf-friends, still listen to the Valar's advice. Númenor declines in virtue but grows in power, and its people become obsessed with finding ways to extend their lives and building "great houses for their dead."

Once again, though Morgoth has been defeated and removed from the world, his influence and corruption remain. Many of Morgoth's servants escape the Valar's attack in the War of Wrath, and there will always be those willing to do evil in Arda, for their own gain or otherwise.



Despite the pollution of evil remaining in the world, the survivors of Beleriand thrive in a united world and in friendship with the Valar. The faithful elves and men are permitted new opportunities to rebuild after the destruction of their kingdoms in Beleriand—the elves close to the Valar, and men in the sea between the two continents.



The Valar may remain active in the world, but by removing most of the elves and the three Houses of men from Beleriand, they once again leave Middle-earth to descend into corruption. The Númenóreans, caught in the middle and not permitted to sail to the righteousness of Valinor, take it upon themselves to tend to Middle-earth, sailing there instead to spread their wisdom. The elves, with the freedom to sail wherever they choose, act as a link between Valinor and Númenor.



Now that the Silmarils are gone, men find new obsessions: death and how to avoid it. Morgoth ensured that men feared the unknown, and such fear is difficult to eradicate. It spreads quickly into the new kingdom of Númenor, and with fear comes greed. The elves and the Valar have what the Númenóreans want—immortality and no reason to fear death.



Morgoth's influence in the world is self-sustaining—it divides the Númenóreans and creates new problems for the Valar. Without Morgoth in Beleriand as an imminent threat to men, some people seek out the power and longevity that they previously had no opportunity to want.



The Númenoreans begin to build settlements on Middle-earth and become masters of the men there rather than teachers. The Elf-friends only come to Middle-earth to aid Gil-galad in his conflict with Sauron, who takes over the land of Mordor and seeks absolute power over Middle-earth. He hates and fears the Númenoreans and ensnares three Númenorean lords with the Nine Rings of power he gives to mortal men. When those men become the Ring-Wraiths, he uses them to attack the Númenorean settlements on the coast of Middle-earth.

The twentieth king of the house of Elros takes the name Adûnakhôr, meaning Lord of the West—stealing the title of the Valar. The twenty-third king forbids elven languages and leaves the White Tree untended. He forces the Elf-friends to move to Rómenna in the east to be watched, though they still sail to Middle-earth to speak to the elves of Gil-galad's kingdom. The Valar, angry with the kings of Númenor, stop offering them advice and protection, and the elves of Eressëa also stop visiting.

The lords of the royal house of Andúnië (descended from the line of Elros) are quietly loyal to the Valar and try to change their kings' minds about them. A king of Númenor marries a daughter of the house of Adúnië, and their older son takes an elvish name, Tar-Palantir, when he ascends the throne. He is kind to the Elf-friends, makes offerings to Ilúvatar, and tends the White Tree. His younger brother Gimilkhâd leads a group called the King's Men and opposes his brother. After the brothers die, Gimilkhâd's son Pharazôn marries Tar-Palantir's daughter Tar-Míriel against her will and becomes king, despite the fact that the marriage is illegal.

Pharazôn takes the name Ar-Pharazôn and learns that Sauron is attacking Númenor's settlements in Middle-earth. Gathering weapons and preparing for war, he decides to claim the title King of Men and make Sauron his servant. He sails his fleet to Middle-earth and sends out heralds demanding that Sauron swear to serve him.

Both crafty and unprepared for Númenor's power, Sauron bows to Ar-Pharazôn and swears loyalty. He seems reasonable to the other men, but Ar-Pharazôn doesn't believe his act and decides to bring Sauron to Númenor to live as a hostage. Sauron agrees, secretly pleased. Within three years, he uses "the cunning of his mind and mouth, and the strength of his hidden will" to become Ar-Pharazôn's closest advisor. His flattery endears him to everyone but Amandil, the lord of Andúnië. Many of the Elf-friends leave Númenor in fear, and their enemies call them rebels.

Though Númenor begins as a paragon of virtue, it declines into the corruption and power-seeking seen in the men that served Morgoth. Ironically, the Númenoreans begin to conquer the lands of Middle-earth exactly as Sauron (who follows in the footsteps of his master Morgoth) does. Númenor and Sauron become competitors for dominion over the western coast of Beleriand.



The kings of Númenor are not representative of the kingdom's entire population—the Elf-friends remain loyal to the Valar and are persecuted for it—but they exemplify the ways in which Númenor declines into irreverence, selfishness, and suspicion. History begins to repeat itself. The last time a group (the Noldor) rebelled against the Valar, years of war and suffering resulted.



Tar-Palantir changes policies in Númenor for the better, but he faces opposition from his own brother, whose followers nearly outnumber his own. Not even an Elf-friend on the throne is enough to change the hearts and minds of all of Númenor. It takes a united effort to create a real chance, and Númenor is too divided. With Tar-Palantir's death and Pharazôn's seizure of the throne, the island reverts to its previous irreverence and immorality.



It is the height of arrogance to think that Númenor is both stronger than and morally superior to Sauron, who seeks to conquer Middle-earth exactly as they do. The lives and memories of men are short—they've forgotten what Morgoth's rule was like and that Sauron was his most trusted servant.



In his pride, Ar-Pharazôn underestimates Sauron's malice and cunning. By feigning humility and calling himself a servant, Sauron is able to take control of Númenor, manipulating Ar-Pharazôn and using him as a figurehead. Still, the Elf-friends, in contact with the elves who lived through the Wars of Beleriand, remember Sauron's previous crimes and recognize his evil now.



Sauron teaches the Númenoreans to worship Morgoth as the Lord of **Darkness** and convinces them that Ilúvatar is only an invention of the Valar meant to control them. The Elf-friends, who remain faithful to Ilúvatar, are led by Amandil, a counselor of the king, and his son Elendil, whose sons are Isildur and Anárion. Sauron hates Amandil and convinces Ar-Pharazôn to dismiss him as a counselor, then begins to persuade Ar-Pharazôn to cut down the White Tree.

When Elendil and his sons hear a rumor about it, Isildur travels in disguise to Ar-Pharazôn's court and steals a fruit from the White Tree, then fights his way out again. He's gravely wounded in the fight but returns to Rómenna and gives the fruit to Amandil, who plants it in secret. A tree sprouts, and when the first leaf grows, Isildur's wounds heal. After the theft, Ar-Pharazôn cuts down the White Tree and Sauron uses it to fuel the altar of **fire** in a new temple where men make blood sacrifices to Melkor. They often use the Elf-friends as their victims.

Though the men of Númenor were blessed with health and long lives, they're now plagued by illness and madness. Through Sauron's influence they become violent and quick to anger, enslaving the men of Middle-earth and killing them on their altars. When Ar-Pharazôn grows old and fears his impending death, Sauron convinces him that he could become immortal if he takes Valinor from the tyrant Valar.

Amandil hears about Ar-Pharazôn's plan and tells Elendil that he'll try to sail secretly to Valinor to ask Manwë for mercy and aid. Elendil worries what will happen to the house of Andúnië if Ar-Pharazôn finds out what Amandil's doing, so they prepare ships to flee. Amandil instructs him not to interfere in the war and to find a place to lead the Elf-friends in their exile. Amandil sails west with three servants that night and is never heard from again; men won't be saved a second time by a petitioner of the Valar.

Elendil and the Elf-friends prepare to leave, filling their ships with supplies, treasures from Númenor, and the tree grown from the fruit of the White Tree. The climate of Númenor has changed, growing **dark** and stormy. Sometimes Manwë's giant eagles approach from the west, carrying **lightning** that strikes Melkor's temple, and Sauron spreads the rumor that they're part of a plot against the Númenoreans. Rather than recognizing the lightning as a sign of Melkor's evil, the men of Númenor see that Sauron is unharmed by the blast and call him a god.

By convincing the Númenoreans to worship Morgoth, Sauron attempts to divide them fundamentally not only from the Valar, but also from Ilúvatar. He seeks also to remove the Elf-friends, if not from Númenor entirely, then at least from Ar-Pharazôn's presence, where they might have the chance to influence his decisions and prevent Sauron from using him to destroy Númenor.



This new seedling from the White Tree is another descendant of the tree Yavanna gave to the elves of Tirion, modeled after Telperion. Though the old tree dies, a new one is born, holding the same significance for its people and mirroring the cycles of loss and renewal in the world at large. Though Sauron may succeed and Númenor may fall, the Elf-friends have hope of growing something new.



Ironically, the Númenoreans who fear death more than anything else die more quickly when they seek a way to avoid death than they did when they simply accepted death as the fate of men. Sauron exploits their fears, especially Ar-Pharazôn's, using them as an excuse to declare war on the Valar, creating chaos and violence between two of Sauron's great enemies.



Ar-Pharazôn's plan to attack the Valar is the final act that will divide the Elf-friends from the rest of Númenor forever. They won't involve themselves in the fight—they'll abandon the enemies of the Valar to their fates. Amandil, though, still has pity on Númenor, corrupted by Morgoth's residual influence and Sauron's control, and tries to beg for mercy for them. Eärendil is the only one to successfully petition the Valar and reunite them with the world, however, and Amandil won't manage it a second time.



As Morgoth's evil physically polluted the land around his fortress, the natural landscape of Númenor is changed as a result of the evil that lives there. The lightning proves that the people of Númenor are too corrupted to be saved. Even when given a sign from the Valar themselves, they twist it to fit their own narratives and persist in their blasphemy and greed.



Ar-Pharazôn's fleet rows towards Valinor, breaking the Valar's ban. The fleet surrounds Eresseä, and Ar-Pharazôn, reaching the coast of Aman, almost turns back. But, driven by his pride, he goes ashore, and his armies camp near Tirion for the night in the cleft of the mountains.

Ar-Pharazôn and his men are the first mortals besides Eärendil to set foot in Valinor, but they do so without the Valar's permission, planning not only to invade the land but to conquer it for themselves.



Meanwhile, Manwë calls on Ilúvatar, who uses his power to change the shape of the world. A chasm opens in the sea between Valinor and Númenor; the earth shakes and Númenor's fleets are sucked into the abyss. Ar-Pharazôn and his men, already in Valinor, are buried in falling rock. Ilúvatar sends the western seas further west and the empty eastern lands further east, drowning islands and raising new ones on the coasts of Middle-earth. Valinor and Tol Eressëa are removed from the reach of the men of Middle-earth into "the realm of hidden things."

This is the first time Ilúvatar has directly intervened in the world without using the Valar as intermediaries since the awakening of elves and men. The result of Númenor's arrogance is the most fundamental division the world has seen yet—the removal of the entire land of Valinor from the world. This separation, however, is only the physical realization of an already existing moral separation between men and the inhabitants of Valinor. The splitting of the world ends conflict between the two continents, though it means the world that remains loses the wisdom and guidance of the Valar and most of the elves.



The foundations of Númenor are completely destroyed, and the land and everyone on it fall into the sea. A huge wave covers Númenor, sweeping Tar-Míriel away as she tries to climb Ilúvatar's sacred mountain. Whether or not Amandil ever reaches Valinor, Manwë hears his prayer and spares Elendil and his people on their nine ships, sheltering them from the abyss and the giant wave. They reach Middle-earth and found new kingdoms there, though their knowledge and craft are only an "echo" of what they were before Sauron came to Númenor.

Númenor is destroyed, and new nations grow from its remnants. Though the Elf-friends can't recreate Númenor as it was during the height of its righteousness, since much of its knowledge and philosophy is long gone, they can create new kingdoms in the image of that righteousness. The world is declining, marred by Morgoth's rebellion during the Music of the Ainur, and what has been lost can only be reclaimed in part until the world is remade.



Sauron sits in the temple and laughs when Ar-Pharazôn leaves to fight the Valar, when he hears the storm, and when he considers what he'll do next. As he laughs, the temple falls into the sea. Though he's robbed of his physical form and can't ever take another "fair" shape, his spirit escapes and returns to Mordor, where he makes himself a new hideous disguise.

As Morgoth did, Sauron assumes a beautiful physical form while feigning goodness and trying to seduce men into following him. The destruction of that form during the fall of Númenor leaves him unable to take on another form of beauty and forces his external appearance to reflect his evil and internal ugliness.



After Númenor's destruction, men call it Akallabêth the Downfallen, or Atalantë. Legend says that Númenor's sacred mountain rose again out of the sea, and many of the Dúnedain search for it, hoping to see Valinor from its top. The Dúnedain know Valinor departed from the world, but still believe they would be able to look into the past and see a vision of it from the top of the mountain. Mariners don't find it, however, and only discover new lands or sail completely around the earth back to where they began. They realize that "All roads are now bent"—the earth has become round.

Ilúvatar's altering of the world reveals that the world, up until this point, has been flat. The search for Númenor's mountain and the view of Valinor it would allegedly provide also indicates that men are aware of the significance of Valinor's loss. As they longed to reach it from Númenor, they later long to catch just a glimpse. The elven narrator also records some of the traditions and legends of men. There is no evidence to support the return of Valinor's mountain, but mariners have been searching for Valinor since the Wars of Beleriand, and evidently continue the tradition long after its disappearance.



However, the elves are still permitted to travel to Valinor and Tol Eressëa, leading men to believe that a Straight Road must still exist. They teach that “the old road and the path of the memory of the West” rises out of the world’s curvature like a bridge and breaks through the atmosphere to where the ancient elves live and the Valar still watch the earth. There are tales of lost sailors who accidentally discover the Straight Road and see the ancient west before they die.

Unlike Númenor’s mountain returning from the sea, there is real evidence for the myth of the Straight Road. Even if men never actually see it as the stories claim, there is a path out of the world that the elves use to reach Valinor, which exists as it used to—that is, flat. Valinor is still part of the world, but inaccessible to everyone caught in the new roundness of Arda. To reach it, the elves must return to the straight paths of the world before it was changed.



OF THE RINGS OF POWER AND THE THIRD AGE

Morgoth convinces Sauron to join his side in the early days of Arda. Once Melkor is overthrown by the Valar, however, Sauron repents to Eönwë. Some believe that he wasn’t lying and actually resolved to change his ways, if only because he feared the Valar. Eönwë tells Sauron to go to Valinor and hear Manwë’s judgement, but Sauron refuses to face the humiliation and hides in Middle-earth.

It’s Sauron’s pride which ultimately prevents him from returning to the Valar’s side, if he ever intended to repent of his wrongdoings at all. He can’t bear the indignity of punishment, so he instead follows in Morgoth’s footsteps and hides in Middle-earth until the Valar depart.



During the Great Battle, the land of Beleriand is changed and a gulf forms in Ossiriand in a region called Lindon. Gil-galad decides to remain in Middle-earth and rule that land, where Elrond also lives. The elves set sail from Lindon’s port (the Grey Havens) to travel the Straight Road to Valinor. Other elves cross the Blue Mountains and establish kingdoms among the Silvan elves. The elven kingdom of Eregion forms a friendship with the nearby dwarven mansion Moria. Celebrimbor, the estranged son of Curufin, lives there and becomes the greatest of its jewel-smiths. Middle-earth is peaceful, though “savage and desolate” where the people of Beleriand don’t settle.

The world is fundamentally altered by the Great Battle—Morgoth is overthrown and the land itself is altered. This new land provides new opportunities, and the elves begin to rebuild after the destruction of the Wars of Beleriand. Rather than accompanying the Valar back to Valinor, some of the elves choose to stay longer in Middle-earth and spread around the continent, establishing new kingdoms, spreading their knowledge, and forging alliances.



Though Sauron find men easier to corrupt, he still travels, trying to persuade elves to join him in every kingdom except Lindon. He begins spreading rumors that Gil-galad doesn’t want to enrich the rest of Middle-earth beyond Lindon. He takes the name Annatar, the Lord of Gifts, and is usually welcomed by the elves, especially in Eregion.

Sauron adopts many of the tactics Morgoth used to unsettle and weaken the Noldor while corrupting the people of Middle-earth. Rather than attacking, he feigns civility and walks among them, spreading lies and division and provoking greed.



In Eregion, Sauron teaches the craftsmen and smiths, who create Rings of Power under his guidance. He secretly makes One Ring to rule the others. Sauron puts a lot of his own “strength and will” into the One Ring to make it powerful enough to control the elven rings. While he wears it, he can see everything done with the lesser rings and control the thoughts of their bearers.

Like Fëanor’s Silmarils, in which he seemed to put some of his spirit, the One Ring contains much of Sauron’s power, tying him irrevocably to it. With the Ring, Sauron makes a powerful weapon of control but also, theoretically, a powerful weakness. If the destruction of the Silmarils would kill Fëanor, the destruction of the Ring would likely harm Sauron.



However, as soon as Sauron puts on the One Ring, the elves realize that he can see and control them, and they take off their own rings. When he finds out they discovered him, he goes to war with them to take the rings back. The elves flee with their three rings: Narya the ring of **fire**, Nenya the ring of water, and Vilya the ring of air. They're the most powerful of all the rings besides the One Ring, with the ability to prevent the aging and weariness of their bearer. The rings are given to wise elves and hidden, and Sauron fails to find them. They remain "unsullied," since Celebrimbor is their sole creator and Sauron never touches them.

At the same time, Elrond founds the stronghold Rivendell. The war between Sauron and the elves continues; Erebor is destroyed and Celebrimbor is killed. Sauron collects the remaining Rings of Power and gives nine to men and seven to dwarves. The dwarves are stubborn and difficult for Sauron to control, but eventually their greed and wrath benefits Sauron. Each dwarf king who bears a ring creates a hoard that is eventually plundered and devoured by dragons. Men are much easier for Sauron to control. The bearers of the nine rings obtain glory, wealth, and seemingly unending life, but they all fall under Sauron's control and become invisible to everyone but the bearer of the One Ring. They're the Nazgûl, or the Ringwraiths, Sauron's most dangerous servants.

Sauron plans to become the master of Middle-earth, destroy the elves, and cause the downfall of Númenor. He gathers all of Morgoth's old servants and rules through "force and fear." This is the beginning of the Black Years, when many elves are killed, and others flee Middle-earth. Gil-galad maintains control of Lindon with the help of the Númenoreans, but Sauron rules the east and south. Men build stone walls and revere Sauron as a king and god.

Eventually, Sauron is challenged by Númenor and leaves Middle-earth as their hostage. There, he spreads corruption and plots Númenor's downfall, but Ilúvatar's intervention forces him out of his physical form and back to Mordor. There, he learns that Gil-galad's kingdom has grown in his absence to encompass a large portion of the north and west of Middle-earth. Sauron withdraws his forces into Mordor and plans for war.

When trickery fails, Sauron resorts to violence. Once again, though Sauron intends the rings to be weapons for him to control the elves, they ultimately become tools that the elves use against him. Through the rings, Sauron's thoughtless power-seeking and desire for control are turned against him. The elven rings, in particular, though subject to the One Ring's control, are not inherently malicious or cursed by Sauron's influence—they are merely powerful (and dangerous) tools.



The rings Sauron gives to men and dwarves are corrupted by his influence, and each of the ring-bearers among men and dwarves eventually come to grief because of their ring. Since Morgoth's time and the fall of Númenor, it seems, men have become even less vigilant of the evils that threaten them and less resilient against Sauron's control. The nine men receive everything the Númenoreans wanted—power and extended life—but at the cost of their free will and their physical forms.



Sauron's plans are much like Morgoth's, but on a smaller scale—he'll conquer Middle-earth first, rather than all of Arda as Morgoth planned to. Many of Morgoth's servants survived the Wars of Beleriand and now, in Morgoth's absence, they flock to Sauron. The Valar keep to themselves in Valinor, the elves of Beleriand defend their lands, and Middle-earth looks much as it did under Morgoth's shadow.



The narrator briefly summarizes the occurrences surrounding the fall of Númenor before continuing on to the aftermath in Middle-earth. In Sauron's absence, the elves have regained control of a significant amount of land, meaning Sauron's next attack must be with force rather than by the slow spread of rumor and corruption.



At that time, Elendil, whose ship comes ashore in Lindon, leads his people east and establishes a kingdom in Eriador named Arnor, where he raises cities and towers. The ships of Isildur and Anárion are driven south to the mouth of the river Anduin, and they settle there and establish the kingdom of Gondor. The brothers build the city of Osgiliath and other towers—Minas Ithil, Isildur’s house, and Minas Anor, Anárion’s house—then rule together.

They plant the descendant of the White Tree at Minas Ithil and spread the Seven Stones (magical objects from Númenor that show visions of things far away) between Gondor and Arnor to protect the land and watch their enemies. Elendil often visits the seeing stone in Emyr Beraid—towers in Arnor that face the sea—and it’s believed that he would sometimes see Tol Eressëa, where the Master-stone is. The stones were a gift from the elves to Amandil and are called the Palantíri.

Years after the founding of Arnor and Gondor, Sauron creates a “terrible” new shape for himself and gathers his servants, preparing for war against elves and men. Many of the Númenoreans who moved to Middle-earth before the great wave still follow him. Sauron conquers Minas Ithil and destroys the new White Tree, but Isildur escapes down the Anduin with his wife and sons, carrying a seedling from the tree. He tries to find Elendil as Anárion defends Osgiliath.

Elendil and Gil-galad decide to unite against Sauron, forming a group called the Last Alliance, and travel east to Rivendell with an army of elves and men. From Rivendell they march to meet Sauron on Dagorland, the plains that stretch in front of the Black Gates of Mordor. All the living creatures of Middle-earth are divided on different sides of the battle except for the elves, which all fight for Gil-galad. Gil-galad and Elendil take the victory—since the orcs fear Gil-galad’s spear and Elendil’s sword Narsil—and enter Mordor to surround Sauron’s tower Barad-dûr.

The siege of Barad-dûr lasts seven years, and the Last Alliance suffers great losses, including the death of Anárion. Finally, Sauron leaves his tower and kills both Gil-galad and Elendil, whose sword breaks beneath him as he falls. However, Isildur cuts the One Ring from Sauron’s hand with the hilt-shard of Narsil. Beaten, Sauron abandons his physical form, and his spirit flees. He doesn’t take physical form again for many years.

Gondor and Arnor are the kingdoms that reestablish, in miniature, the might and righteousness of men after the fall of Númenor. Though the nations are founded separately, they are closely allied, ruled together by the three kings, and united under Elendil, the High King of all the Dúnedain.



The legacy of the White Tree lives on in Gondor, representing a new beginning after Númenor’s loss. Still, Elendil mourns the division of Middle-earth from Valinor and uses elven magic to catch a glimpse of it in the west. The narrator doesn’t indicate whose tradition (whether elves or men) believes Elendil actually saw Tol Eressëa and doesn’t know whether it’s really true.



The Elf-friends who found Gondor and Arnor are not the only Númenoreans to survive Númenor’s drowning. Some of them, living already in Middle-earth among the people they conquered, now turn against the Elf-friends again and fight for Sauron. Once more, the White Tree is destroyed, signifying the end to the brief period of peace, but, once more, a seedling is saved, and the White Tree will grow again.



Sauron, like Morgoth, fundamentally creates division—the war splits every race in Middle-earth except the elves, who form a united whole for the first time since their awakening (though many others of their race are divided from them in Valinor). The name of the Last Alliance is apt; men and elves unite against a threat to Middle-earth for one final time, though why it is the final time is not yet clear.



The victory of the Last Alliance comes at a great cost and requires the sacrifice of the kings of both men and elves. Ultimately, the war isn’t won through the strength of armies, but by a lucky cut with a broken sword. Cutting the One Ring from Sauron’s hand severs him from much of his power stored within it, leaving him unable to maintain a physical form.



With Sauron's defeat, the Third Age of the World begins. His servants are scattered, though not completely destroyed. Some men "turn from evil" and follow Elendil, while others continue to serve Sauron and hate the countries of the west. Sauron's tower is destroyed, and the Númenoreans set a guard on the land of Mordor, though no one lives there because the ash of Mount Doom makes it uninhabitable. After the Last Alliance disperses, there is never another host like it, since men and elves grow estranged.

The One Ring disappears. Isildur refuses to give it to Elrond and Círdan, who plan to throw it into the **fires** of Mount Doom to destroy it and consequently weaken Sauron. Isildur calls the Ring compensation for the loss of his father and brother. After planting the White Tree in Minas Anor and placing Meneldil, Anárion's son, in command of Gondor, Isildur travels north to rule Arnor. On the way, he's ambushed by a host of orcs, and most of his people, including his three eldest sons, are killed. His wife and youngest son, Valandil, are still safe in Rivendell.

Isildur escapes by putting on the One Ring and becoming invisible, but the orcs follow his smell until he jumps into the river to evade them. The Ring betrays him by slipping from his finger as he swims. Now visible, Isildur is shot by the orcs. Three of his people survive the ambush and bring the shards of Narsil to Valandil in Rivendell. Elrond foretells that the sword won't be reforged until the One Ring is found again and Sauron returns.

Valandil becomes the king of Arnor, but there aren't enough men and Númenoreans left after the war to maintain the cities Elendil built. In the time of the seventh king after Valandil, the men of Númenor become divided into groups and picked off by enemies until only a group of wanderers remain, forgotten everywhere except in Rivendell. Still, the line of Isildur continues and the shards of Narsil are passed down.

Gondor grows to resemble the height of Númenor, then eventually wanes, and the line of Meneldil dies out in a plague. Gondor abandons Minas Ithil and the forts on the border when evil creeps in from Mordor. The Ringwraiths take over Minas Ithil to prepare for Sauron's return and use it to wage war on Minas Anor, now renamed Minas Tirith, where the remnants of the Númenoreans protect the west.

The reasoning behind the Last Alliance's name is revealed—after Sauron's defeat, though a period of relative peace begins in Middle-earth, men and elves grow apart, with men in particular becoming suspicious of other races. This is the effect of Morgoth's lies still lingering in the world and driving people apart—another sign of the slow decline of the world into loss, division, and immorality.



The Ring has a will of its own and, as a creation of Sauron's power, does as he does—it provokes greed, suspicion, and malice in those around it. When Isildur falls victim to its control, his greed and his unwillingness to destroy the Ring mean that Sauron's power lives on in the world, and the threat of his return remains. Still, the White Tree is replanted, and the kingdoms of Middle-earth are rebuilt.



The Ring is loyal to no one but Sauron. After it betrays Isildur, it becomes lost to the world for some time, waiting to be returned to its creator. Elrond's foresight reveals that Sauron will return at some point to reclaim the Ring and finish his work of conquering Middle-earth. Until then, two great weapons—Narsil and the Ring—lie dormant.



Though the Last Alliance wins the war, there are enough casualties that there's no real way for Arnor to recover. Unable to maintain a unified kingdom, the Dúnedain become scattered and consequently vulnerable to attack. The remaining wanderers roam Middle-earth and won't be unified until a new king of Arnor arrives to lead them.



Though Arnor fades, Gondor prospers for a time. But even with the righteousness and power of Númenor behind it, it eventually fades and declines. Gondor's surveillance of Mordor goes lax, allowing the enemy to invade. Minas Ithil is corrupted and transformed from a defensive watchtower to the Ringwraith's lair.



Minas Tirith survives after the death of Eärnur, the last king of Gondor, who fights a Ringwraith in single combat and is captured. The Stewards rule Gondor in the absence of kings, and the Rohirrim arrive to live in Rohan and aid Minas Tirith in the war. In the north, there are ancient enemies of Sauron that the men of Gondor don't know much about, and the Ringwraiths don't leave their city after Eärnur's death.

After Gil-galad's death, Rivendell becomes "a refuge for the weary and oppressed." The heirs of Isildur stay there, since Elrond knows that someone with an important fate will be born into their line. The Grey Havens also remains a refuge for elves, ruled by Círdan. The elves never speak of their three Rings of Power, and few know where they're hidden. Vilya is with Elrond in Rivendell, Narya is with Galadriel in Lothlórien, and no one but Elrond, Galadriel, and Círdan know where Narya is.

After Sauron's fall, the rings are put to work to preserve Rivendell and Lothlórien from "the griefs of time." If Sauron ever finds the One Ring again, or if the One Ring is destroyed, the power of the elven rings will fail, and the lands will begin to fade. At that point, the power of the elves will diminish, and the Dominion of Men will begin in Middle-earth.

Since then, that has happened. The One Ring, the seven dwarven rings, and the nine rings of men are destroyed, and the three elven rings have left Middle-earth. Their departure ends the Third Age. The years before that time are the Fading Years, when elves, orcs, dragons, and dwarves still walk Middle-earth. As the Dominion of Men approaches, Sauron rises again in Mirkwood.

Though it was once called Greenwood the Great, the name of the forest is changed to Mirkwood when darkness and evil creatures creep in, though the king Thranduil and his people try to defend it. There, Sauron becomes known as the Sorcerer of Dol Guldur.

When Sauron appears in Mirkwood, the Istari (wizards) also appear in Middle-earth. Only Círdan, Elrond, and Galadriel know the wizards come from the West, but rumors later spread that they're sent by the Valar to fight Sauron and inspire men and elves to do the same. They take the appearance of old men, yet age slowly, and have "many powers of mind and hand." The first to arrive is Saruman, who speaks mostly to men. The next is Gandalf, a close counselor of Elrond and the elves. The next is Radagast, a friend of birds and beasts. Gandalf goes to Dol Guldur and frightens the Sorcerer away for a time, but he eventually returns.

Though Sauron's servants are perilously close to Gondor, there are still allies to be found in Middle-earth, in the Rohirrim and even the elves, though the two races have grown estranged.



Scattered wanderers (such as the nationless heirs of Isildur) find a place of safety and unity in Rivendell. Despite the estrangement between men and elves, the leaders of the elves maintain their connections with each other and watch over Middle-earth while safe in their discrete kingdoms. Elrond, in particular, awaits Sauron's return and the birth of Isildur's fated heir.



The three rings, intended by Sauron to entrap and control the elves, are used instead to preserve and protect their lands. Still, the elves' time in Middle-earth is coming to an end. When the power of the rings is gone, there will be no place in Middle-earth left for them.



This period of Middle-earth's history is marked by loss, as magic and memory begin to die away and leave the world. The narrator, who writes after the stories have come to pass, confirms that the elven realms have faded, and the elves have now left Middle-earth behind forever.



As Elrond feared and anticipated, since the Ring was not destroyed, Sauron regains enough power to return to Middle-earth. The land around him reveals his presence, becoming dark and twisted as Mordor did.



Though only a few of the elves know it for certain, popular tradition gets it right: the wizards are Maiar who have taken on the form of the Children of Ilúvatar and traveled to Middle-earth to aid in the fight against Sauron. The Valar, though they are separated from Middle-earth by the curvature of the world, haven't completely forsaken men and the remaining elves. As the Valar became Ilúvatar's intermediaries in Arda, the Istari come as the Valar's representatives.



At that time the White Council—made of Gandalf, Saruman, Galadriel, Elrond, Círdan, and the other elven lords—is founded, with Saruman as its leader. Galadriel wants Gandalf to lead it, but he refuses, since he doesn't want to have allegiance to anyone but the Valar. Gandalf goes to Dol Guldur again and confirms that Sauron has taken shape and returned to search for the One Ring. He advises that they take swift action, but Saruman decides they should wait and watch first, since he doesn't think the One Ring will ever be found. The Council is troubled, but they don't realize that Saruman wants the Ring for himself and already has spies looking for it.

Sauron's power grows in Dol Guldur and Gandalf again urges the White Council to act, since Sauron will have hope and amass power as long as the One Ring still exists, even if it's lost. This time, Saruman agrees, and they drive Sauron from Mirkwood. However, their attack is too late, since the Ringwraiths have already prepared for him to return to Mordor and rebuild Barad-dûr.

The One Ring is found again. It was taken from the Anduin long ago by "one of the small fisher-folk" that lived there and hidden under a mountain. It stays there until it's found by a traveler and carried into the land of the Halflings in western Eriador, whom the elves and men hadn't considered important until then. By chance, Gandalf learns of the Ring's whereabouts before Sauron does, but he doesn't know what to do with it, since it can't be used, can't be destroyed by the elves, and can't be hidden forever. Sauron learns its location soon and sends the Ringwraiths to take it.

The shards of Narsil are reforged in Rivendell and given to the heir of Isildur, Aragorn, who is very like Elendil. Saruman is overthrown in Isengard, and a great battle is fought outside of Minas Tirith, where the Wraith-king is killed. Aragorn leads the armies of the west, the Dúnedain, the lords of Gondor, the king of Rohan, and their allies to the Black Gates of Mordor. They face defeat—Sauron and his armies are too strong.

At that time, Gandalf is proven right, and help comes "from the hands of the weak when the Wise faltered." Frodo the Halfling travels to Mount Doom with his servant and throws the One Ring into its **fires**, destroying it. Sauron is defeated; his physical form is destroyed, and his spirit becomes powerless.

Even without the Ring, Sauron has managed to take on a physical form again, meaning his power is growing. Gandalf's behavior during the White Council proves his steadfast righteousness and his careful vigilance. He's right to urge swift action before Sauron becomes too powerful for them to fight alone. Saruman, however, has control of the Council and has already been corrupted by the idea of absolute power, another remainder of Morgoth's influence in Middle-earth.



Because of Saruman's greed and arrogance, the White Council is too late to stop Sauron from regaining power. Sauron's servants have been waiting for him, harassing Gondor and driving their scouts from Mordor. While there is even the slightest chance of victory, the forces of evil will never stop seeking power in the world.



The Ring's return is inevitable—it wants to be found and return to Sauron. Gandalf finds it somewhere no one else thinks to look—the Halflings keep primarily to themselves, and their land is largely cut off from the dealings of men and elves. Sauron learns of it soon enough, however. His recovery of the Ring (and his full power with it) would be catastrophic for Middle-earth, already ill-equipped to fight his armies.



Aragorn is the fated heir of Isildur that Elrond has been waiting for. The shards of Narsil, now reforged, are symbolic of the new alliance that gathers behind Aragorn to oppose Sauron. Though the elves don't send their armies, they aid the unified kingdoms of men from the sidelines. Without their military support, however, Aragorn's force isn't enough to defeat Sauron's armies.



Once again, it isn't the might of armies that defeats Sauron, but the bravery of one person—this time, a Halfling who is able to achieve what Isildur couldn't and destroy the Ring. Though Sauron can't be killed, he loses the ability to take on a physical form and interact at all with the physical world, rendering him completely harmless.



There is a new era of peace in Middle-earth as Aragorn is crowned king of Gondor and Arnor. The glory of the Dúnedain is restored, and the White Tree flowers again. While it lives, the kings of Gondor don't forget the past of the world.

The west achieves victory primarily due to Gandalf's planning, and he's revealed to be the bearer of Narya, the elven ring of fire. It was originally entrusted to Círdan, who gave it to Gandalf to protect him from weariness. Círdan plans to guard the Grey Havens until the last ship leaves for Valinor and Tol Eressëa. When the power of the elven rings fades after the One Ring's destruction, the world becomes "cold and grey" to the elves. The last of the Noldor leave Middle-earth forever. The bearers of the three elven rings follow them, sailing away from the Grey Havens in Círdan's ship until the Bent World falls away, and they arrive in the ancient west.

With Aragorn as king, Gondor and Arnor are united again. Though men's lives and memories are short, the White Tree (emblematic of growth and rebirth) will last beyond individual lifetimes and preserve Gondor's history for future generations.



The final separation of men and elves comes to pass. The elves, weary in the world now that their protected realms have faded, pass away to Valinor, an immortal land where they can find rest and respite. Their departure is a loss both for the elves themselves (who must leave the land where they first awoke) and Middle-earth, which loses their wisdom and beauty. With the end of the Third Age and the departure of the elves comes the Dominion of Men that Ilúvatar foretold, when time passes beyond what the Music of the Ainur conceived of and men are free to create their own fates. Still, the loss of the elves is another step in the decline of Arda towards an eventual end. And, though it will end, it will also be remade in the second Music of the Ainur, when men and elves will be reunited at last.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Devillier, Danielle. "The Silmarillion." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 24 Sep 2021. Web. 24 Sep 2021.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Devillier, Danielle. "The Silmarillion." LitCharts LLC, September 24, 2021. Retrieved September 24, 2021. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-silmarillion>.

To cite any of the quotes from *The Silmarillion* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Tolkien, J. R. R.. *The Silmarillion*. Mariner Books. 2014.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Tolkien, J. R. R.. *The Silmarillion*. New York: Mariner Books. 2014.