

An excerpt from "Of Beren and Lúthien" in *The Silmarillion*

But Daeron the minstrel also loved Lúthien, and he espied her meetings with Beren, and betrayed them to Thingol. Then the King was filled with anger, for Lúthien he loved above all things, setting her above all the princes of the Elves; whereas mortal Men he did not even take into his service. Therefore he spoke in grief and amazement to Lúthien; but she would reveal nothing, until he swore an oath to her that he would neither slay Beren nor imprison him. But he sent his servants to lay hands on him and lead him to Menegroth as a malefactor; and Lúthien forestalling them led Beren herself before the throne of Thingol, as if he were an honoured guest.

Then Thingol looked upon Beren in scorn and anger; but Melian was silent. 'Who are you', said the King, 'that come hither as a thief, and unbidden dare to approach my throne?'

But Beren being filled with dread, for the splendour of Menegroth and the majesty of Thingol were very great, answered nothing. Therefore Lúthien spoke, and said: 'He is Beren son of Barahir, lord of Men, mighty foe of Morgoth, the tale of whose deeds is become a song even among the Elves.'

'Let Beren speak!' said Thingol. 'What would you here, unhappy mortal, and for what cause have you left your own land to enter this, which is forbidden to such as you? Can you show reason why my power should not be laid on you in heavy punishment for you insolence and folly?'

Then Beren looking up beheld the eyes of Lúthien, and his glance went also to the face of Melian and it seemed to him that words were put into his mouth. Fear left him, and the pride of the eldest house of Men returned to him; and he said: 'My fate, O King, led me hither, through perils such as few even of the Elves would dare. And here I have found what I sought not indeed, but finding I would possess for ever. For it is above all gold and silver, and beyond all jewels. Neither rock, nor steel, nor the fires of Morgoth, nor all the powers of the Elf-kingdoms, shall keep from me the treasure that I desire. For Lúthien your daughter is the fairest of all the Children of the World.'

Then silence fell upon the hall, for those that stood there were astounded and afraid, and they thought that Beren would be slain. But Thingol spoke slowly, saying: 'Death you have earned with these words; and death you should find suddenly, had I not sworn an oath in haste; of which I repent, baseborn mortal, who in the realm of Morgoth has learnt to creep in secret as his spies and thralls.'

Then Beren answered: 'Death you can give me earned or unearned; but the names I will not take from you of baseborn, nor spy, nor thrall. By the ring of Felagund, that he gave to Barahir my father on the battle field of the North, my house has not earned such names from any Elf, be he king or no.'

His words were proud, and all eyes looked upon the ring; for he held it now aloft, and the green jewels gleamed there that the Noldor had devised in Valinor. For this ring was like to twin serpents, whose eyes were emeralds, and their heads met beneath a crown of golden flowers, that the one upheld and the other devoured; that was the badge of Finarfin and his house; Then Melian leaned to Thingol's side, and in whispered counsel bade him forgo his wrath. 'For not by you,' she said, 'shall Beren be slain; and far and free does his fate led him in the end, yet it is wound with yours. Take heed!'

But Thingol looked in silence upon Lúthien; and he thought in his heart: 'Unhappy Men, children of little lords and brief kings, shall such as these lay hands on you, and yet live?' Then breaking the silence he said: 'I see the ring, son of Barahir, and I perceive that you are proud, and deem yourself mighty. But a father's deeds, even had his service been rendered to me, avail not to win the daughter of Thingol and Melian. See now! I too desire a treasure that is withheld. For rock and steel and the fires of Morgoth keep the jewel that I would possess against all the powers of the Elf-kingdoms. Yet I hear you say that bonds such as these do not daunt you. Go your way therefore! Bring to me in your hand a Silmaril from Morgoth's crown; and then, if she will, Lúthien may set her hand in yours. Then you shall have my jewel; and though the fate of Arda lie within the Silmarils, yet you shall hold me generous.'

Thus he wrought the doom of Doriath, and was ensnared within the curse of Mandos. And those that heard these words perceived that Thingol would save his oath, and yet send Beren to his death; for they know that not all the power of the Noldor, before the Siege was broken, had availed even to see from afar the shining Silmarils of Fëanor. For they were set in the Iron Crown, and treasured in Angband above all wealth; and Balrogs were about them, and countless swords, and strong bars, and unassailable walls, and the dark majesty of Morgoth.

But Beren laughed. 'For little price,' he said, 'do Elven-kings sell their daughters: for gems, and things made by craft. But if this be your will, Thingol, I will perform it. And when we meet again my hand shall hold a Silmaril from the Iron Crown; for you have not looked the last upon Beren son of Barahir.' Then he looked in the eyes of Melian, who spoke not; and he bade farewell to Lúthien Tinúviel, and bowing before Thingol and Melian he put aside the guards about him, and departed from Menegroth alone.

Then at last Melian spoke, and she said to Thingol: 'O King, you have devised cunning counsel. But if my eyes have not lost their sight, it is ill for you, whether Beren fail in his errand, or achieve it. For you have doom either your daughter, or yourself. And now is Doriath drawn within the fate of a mightier realm.' But Thingol answered: 'I sell not to Elves or Men those whom I love and cherish above all treasure. And if there were hope or fear that Beren should come ever back alive to Menegroth, he should not have looked again upon the light of heaven, though I had sworn it.'

But Lúthien was silent, and from that hour she sang not again in Doriath. A brooding silence fell upon the woods, and the shadows lengthened in the kingdom of Thingol.