

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

Upon all that plain the Elves of Nargothrond kept unceasing watch; and every hill upon its borders was crowned with hidden towers, and through all its woods and fields archers ranged secretly and with great craft. Their arrows were sure and deadly, and nothing crept there against their will. Therefore, ere Beren had come far upon his road, they were aware of him, and his death was nigh. But knowing his danger he held ever aloft the ring of Felagund; and though he saw no living thing, because of the stealth of the hunters, he felt that he was watched, and cried often aloud: 'I am Beren son of Barahir, friend of Felagund. Take me to the King!' Therefore the hunters slew him not, but assembling they waylaid him, and commanded him to halt. But seeing the ring they bowed before him, though he was in evil plight, wild and wayworn; and they led him northward and westward, going by night lest their paths should be revealed. For at that time there was no ford or bridge over the torrent of Narog before the gates of Nargothrond; but further to the north, where Ginglith joined Narog, the flood was less, and crossing there and turning again southward the Elves led Beren under the light of the moon to the dark gates of their hidden halls.

Thus Beren came before King Finrod Felagund; and Felagund knew him, needing no ring to remind him of the kin of Bëor and of Barahir. Behind closed doors they sat, and Beren told of the death of Barahir, and of all that had befallen him in Doriath; and he wept, recalling Lúthien and their joy together. But Felagund heard his tale in wonder and disquiet; and he knew that the oath he had sworn was come upon him for his death, as long before he had foretold to Galadriel. He spoke then to Beren in heaviness of heart. 'It is plain that Thingol desires your death; but it seems that this doom goes beyond his purpose, and that the Oath of Fëanor is again at work. For the Silmarils are cursed with an oath of hatred, and he that even names them in desire moves a great power from slumber; and the sons of Fëanor would lay all the Elf-kingdoms in ruin rather than suffer any other than themselves to win or possess a Silmaril, for the Oath drives them. And now Celegorm and Curufin are dwelling in my halls; and though I, Finarfin's son, am King, they have won a strong power in the realm, and lead many of their own people. They have shown friendship to me in every need, but I fear that they will show neither love nor mercy to you, if your quest be told. Yet my own oath holds; and thus we are all ensnared.'

Then King Felagund spoke before his people, recalling the deeds of Barahir, and his vow and he declared that it was laid upon him to aid the son of Barahir in his need, and he sought the help of his chieftains. Then Celegorm arose amid the throng, and drawing his sword he cried: 'Be he friend or foe, whether demon of Morgoth, of Elf, or child of

Men, or any other living thing in Arda, neither law, nor love, nor league of hell, nor might of the Valar, nor any power of wizardry, shall defend him from the pursuing hate of Fëanor's sons, if he take or find a Silmaril and keep it. For the Silmarils we alone claim, until the world ends.'

Many other words he spoke, as potent as were long before in Tirion the words of his father that first inflamed the Noldor to rebellion. And after Celegorm Curufin spoke, more softly but with no less power, conjuring in the minds of the Elves a vision of war and the ruin of Nargothrond. So great a fear did he set in their hearts that never after until the time of Túrin would any Elf of that realm go into open battle; but with stealth and ambush, with wizardry and venomous dart, they pursued all strangers, forgetting the bonds of kinship. Thus they fell from the valour and freedom of the Elves of old, and their land was darkened.

And now they murmured that Finarfin's son was not as a Vala to command them, and they turned their faces from him. But the curse of Mandos came upon the brothers, and dark thoughts arose in their hearts, thinking to send forth Felagund alone to his death, and to usurp, it might be, the throne of Nargothrond; for they were of the eldest line of the princes of the Noldor.

And Felagund seeing that he was forsaken took from his head the silver crown of Nargothrond and cast it at his feet, saying: 'Your oaths of faith to me you may break, but I must hold my bond. Yet if there be any on whom the shadow of our curse has not yet fallen, I should find at least a few to follow me, and should not go hence as a beggar that is thrust from the gates.' There were ten that stood by him; and the chief of them, who was named Edrahil, stooping lifted the crown and asked that it be given to a steward until Felagund's return. 'For you remain my king, and theirs,' he said, 'whatever betide.'

Then Felagund gave the crown of Nargothrond to Orodreth his brother to govern in his stead; and Celegorm and Curufin said nothing, but they smiled and went from the halls.

...

In the pits of Sauron Beren and Felagund lay, and all their companions were now dead; but Sauron purposed to keep Felagund to the last, for he perceived that he was a Noldo of great might and wisdom, and he deemed that in him lay the secret of their errand. But when the wolf came for Beren, Felagund put forth all his power, and burst his bonds;

and he wrestled with the werewolf, and slew it with his hands and teeth; yet he himself was wounded to the death. Then he spoke to Beren, saying: 'I go now to my long rest in the timeless halls beyond the seas and the Mountains of Aman. It will be long ere I am seen among the Noldor again; and it may be that we shall not meet a second time in death or life, for the fates of our kindreds are apart. Farewell!' He died then in the dark, in Tol-in-Gaurhoth, whose great tower he himself had built. Thus King Finrod Felagund, fairest and most beloved of the house of Finwë, redeemed his oath; but Beren mourned beside him in despair.