

An excerpt from "The Lay of Leithian: Canto IX" in *The Lays of Beleriand*

In Wizard's Isle still lay forgot,
enmeshed and tortured in that grot
cold, evil, doorless, without light,
and blank-eyed stared at endless night
two comrades. Now alone they were. 2570
The others lived no more, but bare
their broken bones would lie and tell
how ten had served their master well.

To Felagund then Beren said:
"Twere little loss if I were dead, 2575
and I am minded all to tell,
and thus, perchance, from this dark hell
thy life to loose. I set thee free
with blowing far and crying dim
and barking hounds that were with him.
from thine old oath, for more for me
hast thou endured than e'er was earned.' 2580

'A! Beren, Beren hast not learned
that promises of Morgoth's folk
are frail as breath. From this dark yoke
of pain shall neither ever go,
whether he learn our names or no, 2585
with Thu's consent. Nay more, I think
yet deeper of torment we should drink,
knew he that son of Barahir
and Felagund were captive here,
and even worse if he should know 2590
the dreadful errand we did go.'

A devil's laugh they ringing heard
within their pit. 'True, true the word
I hear you speak,' a voice then said.
"Twere little loss if he were dead, 2595
the outlaw mortal. But the king,
the Elf undying, many a thing
no man could suffer may endure.

Perchance, when what these walls immure
of dreadful anguish thy folk learn, 2600
their king to ransom they will yearn
with gold and gem and high hearts cowed;
or maybe Celegorm the proud
will deem a rival's prison cheap,
and crown and gold himself will keep. 2605
Perchance, the errand I shall know,
ere all is done, that ye did go.
The wolf is hungry, the hour is nigh;
no more need Beren wait to die.'

The slow time passed. Then in the gloom 2610
two eyes there glowed. He saw his doom,
Beren, silent, as his bonds he strained
beyond his mortal might enchained.
Lo! sudden there was rending sound
of chains that parted and unwound, 2615
of meshes broken. Forth there leaped
upon the wolvish thing that crept
in shadow faithful Felagund,
careless of fang or venom'd wound.
There in the dark they wrestled slow, 2620
remorseless, snarling, to and fro,
teeth in flesh, gripe on throat,
fingers locked in shaggy coat,
spurning Beren who there lying
heard the werewolf gasping, dying. 2625
Then a voice he heard: 'Farewell!
On earth I need no longer dwell,
friend and comrade, Beren bold.
My heart is burst, my limbs are cold.
Here all my power I have spent 2630
to break my bonds, and dreadful rent
of poisoned teeth is in my breast.
I now must go to my long rest
neath Timbrenting in timeless halls
where drink the Gods, where the light falls 2635
upon the shining sea.' Thus died the king,
as elvish singers yet do sing.