

could rival Boromir, heir of Denethor, Captain of the White Tower; and of like mind was Boromir. Yet it proved otherwise at the test. But of all that befell these three in the War of the Ring much is said elsewhere. And after the War the days of the Ruling Stewards came to an end; for the heir of Isildur and Anárion returned and the kingship was renewed, and the standard of the White Tree flew once more from the Tower of Ecthelion.'

(v)

HERE FOLLOWS A PART OF THE TALE  
OF ARAGORN AND ARWEN

'Arador was the grandfather of the King. His son Arathorn sought in marriage Gilraen the Fair, daughter of Dirhael, who was himself a descendant of Aranarth. To this marriage Dirhael was opposed; for Gilraen was young and had not reached the age at which the women of the Dúnedain were accustomed to marry.

"Moreover," he said, "Arathorn is a stern man of full age, and will be chieftain sooner than men looked for; yet my heart forebodes that he will be short-lived."

'But Ivorwen, his wife, who was also foresighted, answered: "The more need of haste! The days are darkening before the storm, and great things are to come. If these two wed now, hope may be born for our people; but if they delay, it will not come while this age lasts."

'And it happened that when Arathorn and Gilraen had been married only one year, Arador was taken by hill-trolls in the Coldfells north of Rivendell and was slain; and Arathorn became Chieftain of the Dúnedain. The next year Gilraen bore him a son, and he was called Aragorn. But Aragorn was only two years old when Arathorn went riding against the Orcs with the sons of Elrond, and he was slain by an orc-arrow that pierced his eye; and so he proved indeed short-lived for one of his race, being but sixty years old when he fell.

'Then Aragorn, being now the Heir of Isildur, was taken with his mother to dwell in the house of Elrond; and Elrond took the place of his father and came to love him as a son of his own. But he was called Estel, that is "Hope", and his true name and lineage were kept secret at the bidding of Elrond; for the Wise then knew that the Enemy was seeking to discover the Heir of Isildur, if any remained upon earth.

'But when Estel was only twenty years of age, it chanced that he returned to Rivendell after great deeds in the company of the sons of Elrond; and Elrond looked at him and was pleased, for he saw that he was fair and noble and was early come to manhood, though he would yet become greater in body and in mind. That day therefore Elrond called him by his true name, and told him who he was and whose son; and he delivered to him the heirlooms of his house.

"Here is the ring of Barahir," he said, "the token of our kinship from afar; and here also are the shards of Narsil. With these you may yet do great deeds; for I foretell that the span of your life shall be greater than the measure of Men, unless evil befalls you or you fail at the test. But the test will be hard and long. The Sceptre of Annúminas I withhold, for you have yet to earn it."

'The next day at the hour of sunset Aragorn walked alone in the woods, and his heart was high within him; and he sang, for he was full of hope and the world was fair. And suddenly even as he sang he saw a maiden walking on a greensward among the white stems of the birches; and he halted amazed, thinking that he had strayed into a dream, or else that he had received the gift of the Elf-minstrels, who can make the things of which they sing appear before the eyes of those that listen.

'For Aragorn had been singing a part of the Lay of Lúthien which tells of the meeting of Lúthien and Beren in the forest of Neldoreth. And behold! there Lúthien walked before his eyes in Rivendell, clad in a mantle of silver and blue, fair as the twilight in Elven-home; her dark hair strayed in a sudden wind, and her brows were bound with gems like stars.

'For a moment Aragorn gazed in silence, but fearing that she would pass away and never be seen again, he called to her crying, *Tinúviel, Tinúviel* even as Beren had done in the Elder Days long ago.

'Then the maiden turned to him and smiled, and she said: "Who are you? And why do you call me by that name?"

'And he answered: "Because I believed you to be indeed Lúthien Tinúviel, of whom I was singing. But if you are not she, then you walk in her likeness."

"So many have said," she answered gravely. "Yet her name is not mine. Though maybe my doom will be not unlike hers. But who are you?"

"Estel I was called," he said; "but I am Aragorn, Arathorn's son, Isildur's Heir, Lord of the Dúnedain"; yet even in the saying he felt that this high lineage, in which his heart had rejoiced, was now of little worth, and as nothing compared to her dignity and loveliness.

'But she laughed merrily and said: "Then we are akin from afar. For I am Arwen Elrond's daughter, and am named also Undómiel."

"Often is it seen," said Aragorn, "that in dangerous days men hide their chief treasure. Yet I marvel at Elrond and your brothers; for though I have dwelt in this house from childhood, I have heard no word of you. How comes it that we have never met before? Surely your father has not kept you locked in his hoard?"

"No," she said, and looked up at the Mountains that rose in the east. "I have dwelt for a time in the land of my mother's kin, in far Lothlórien. I have but lately returned to visit my father again. It is many years since I walked in Imladris."

'Then Aragorn wondered, for she had seemed of no greater age than he, who had lived yet no more than a score of years in Middle-earth. But Arwen looked in his eyes and said: "Do not wonder! For the children of Elrond have the life of the Eldar."

'Then Aragorn was abashed, for he saw the elven-light in her eyes and the wisdom of many days; yet from that hour he loved Arwen Undómiel daughter of Elrond.

'In the days that followed Aragorn fell silent, and his mother perceived that some strange thing had befallen him; and at last he yielded to her questions and told her of the meeting in the twilight of the trees.

"My son," said Gilraen, "your aim is high, even for the descendant of



many kings. For this lady is the noblest and fairest that now walks the earth. And it is not fit that mortal should wed with the Elf-kin."

"Yet we have some part in that kinship," said Aragorn, "if the tale of my forefathers is true that I have learned."

"It is true," said Gilraen, "but that was long ago and in another age of this world, before our race was diminished. Therefore I am afraid; for without the good will of Master Elrond the Heirs of Isildur will soon come to an end. But I do not think that you will have the good will of Elrond in this matter."

"Then bitter will my days be, and I will walk in the wild alone," said Aragorn.

"That will indeed be your fate," said Gilraen; but though she had in a measure the foresight of her people, she said no more to him of her foreboding, nor did she speak to anyone of what her son had told her.

But Elrond saw many things and read many hearts. One day, therefore, before the fall of the year he called Aragorn to his chamber, and he said: "Aragorn, Arathorn's son, Lord of the Dúnedain, listen to me! A great doom awaits you, either to rise above the height of all your fathers since the days of Elendil, or to fall into darkness with all that is left of your kin. Many years of trial lie before you. You shall neither have wife, nor bind any woman to you in troth, until your time comes and you are found worthy of it."

Then Aragorn was troubled, and he said: "Can it be that my mother has spoken of this?"

"No indeed," said Elrond. "Your own eyes have betrayed you. But I do not speak of my daughter alone. You shall be betrothed to no man's child as yet. But as for Arwen the Fair, Lady of Imladris and of Lórien, Evenstar of her people, she is of lineage greater than yours, and she has lived in the world already so long that to her you are but as a yearling shoot beside a young birch of many summers. She is too far above you. And so, I think, it may well seem to her. But even if it were not so, and her heart turned towards you, I should still be grieved because of the doom that is laid on us."

"What is that doom?" said Aragorn.

"That so long as I abide here, she shall live with the youth of the Eldar," answered Elrond, "and when I depart, she shall go with me, if she so chooses."

"I see," said Aragorn, "that I have turned my eyes to a treasure no less dear than the treasure of Thingol that Beren once desired. Such is my fate." Then suddenly the foresight of his kindred came to him, and he said: "But lo! Master Elrond, the years of your abiding run short at last, and the choice must soon be laid on your children, to part either with you or with Middle-earth."

"Truly," said Elrond. "Soon, as we account it, though many years of Men must still pass. But there will be no choice before Arwen, my beloved, unless you, Aragorn, Arathorn's son, come between us and bring one of us, you or me, to a bitter parting beyond the end of the world. You do not know yet what you desire of me." He sighed, and after a while, looking gravely upon the young man, he said again: "The years will bring what they will."

We will speak no more of this until many have passed. The days darken, and much evil is to come."

'Then Aragorn took leave lovingly of Elrond; and the next day he said farewell to his mother, and to the house of Elrond, and to Arwen, and he went out into the wild. For nearly thirty years he laboured in the cause against Sauron; and he became a friend of Gandalf the Wise, from whom he gained much wisdom. With him he made many perilous journeys, but as the years wore on he went more often alone. His ways were hard and long, and he became somewhat grim to look upon, unless he chanced to smile; and yet he seemed to Men worthy of honour, as a king that is in exile, when he did not hide his true shape. For he went in many guises, and won renown under many names. He rode in the host of the Rohirrim, and fought for the Lord of Gondor by land and by sea; and then in the hour of victory he passed out of the knowledge of Men of the West, and went alone far into the East and deep into the South, exploring the hearts of Men, both evil and good, and uncovering the plots and devices of the servants of Sauron.

'Thus he became at last the most hardy of living Men, skilled in their crafts and lore, and was yet more than they; for he was elven-wise, and there was a light in his eyes that when they were kindled few could endure. His face was sad and stern because of the doom that was laid on him, and yet hope dwelt ever in the depths of his heart, from which mirth would arise at times like a spring from the rock.

'It came to pass that when Aragorn was nine and forty years of age he returned from perils on the dark confines of Mordor, where Sauron now dwelt again and was busy with evil. He was weary and he wished to go back to Rivendell and rest there for a while ere he journeyed into the far countries; and on his way he came to the borders of Lórien and was admitted to the hidden land by the Lady Galadriel.

'He did not know it, but Arwen Undómiel was also there, dwelling again for a time with the kin of her mother. She was little changed, for the mortal years had passed her by; yet her face was more grave, and her laughter now seldom was heard. But Aragorn was grown to full stature of body and mind, and Galadriel bade him cast aside his wayworn raiment, and she clothed him in silver and white, with a cloak of elven-grey and a bright gem on his brow. Then more than any king of Men he appeared, and seemed rather an Elf-lord from the Isles of the West. And thus it was that Arwen first beheld him again after their long parting; and as he came walking towards her under the trees of Caras Galadhon laden with flowers of gold, her choice was made and her doom appointed.

'Then for a season they wandered together in the glades of Lothlórien, until it was time for him to depart. And on the evening of Midsummer Aragorn, Arathorn's son, and Arwen daughter of Elrond went to the fair hill, Cerin Amroth, in the midst of the land, and they walked unshod on the undying grass with elanor and niphredil about their feet. And there upon that hill they looked east to the Shadow and west to the Twilight, and they plighted their troth and were glad.



'And Arwen said: "Dark is the Shadow, and yet my heart rejoices; for you, Estel, shall be among the great whose valour will destroy it."

'But Aragorn answered: "Alas! I cannot foresee it, and how it may come to pass is hidden from me. Yet with your hope I will hope. And the Shadow I utterly reject. But neither, lady, is the Twilight for me; for I am mortal, and if you will cleave to me, Evenstar, then the Twilight you must also renounce."

'And she stood then as still as a white tree, looking into the West, and at last she said: "I will cleave to you, Dúnadan, and turn from the Twilight. Yet there lies the land of my people and the long home of all my kin." She loved her father dearly.

'When Elrond learned the choice of his daughter, he was silent, though his heart was grieved and found the doom long feared none the easier to endure. But when Aragorn came again to Rivendell he called him to him, and he said:

"My son, years come when hope will fade, and beyond them little is clear to me. And now a shadow lies between us. Maybe, it has been appointed so, that by my loss the kingship of Men may be restored. Therefore, though I love you, I say to you: Arwen Undómíel shall not diminish her life's grace for less cause. She shall not be the bride of any Man less than the King of both Gondor and Arnor. To me then even our victory can bring only sorrow and parting – but to you hope of joy for a while. Alas, my son! I fear that to Arwen the Doom of Men may seem hard at the ending."

'So it stood afterwards between Elrond and Aragorn, and they spoke no more of this matter; but Aragorn went forth again to danger and toil. And while the world darkened and fear fell on Middle-earth, as the power of Sauron grew and the Barad-dûr rose ever taller and stronger, Arwen remained in Rivendell, and when Aragorn was abroad, from afar she watched over him in thought; and in hope she made for him a great and kingly standard, such as only one might display who claimed the lordship of the Númenóreans and the inheritance of Elendil.

'After a few years Gilraen took leave of Elrond and returned to her own people in Eriador, and lived alone; and she seldom saw her son again, for he spent many years in far countries. But on a time, when Aragorn had returned to the North, he came to her, and she said to him before he went:

"This is our last parting, Estel, my son. I am aged by care, even as one of lesser Men; and now that it draws near I cannot face the darkness of our time that gathers upon Middle-earth. I shall leave it soon."

'Aragorn tried to comfort her, saying: "Yet there may be a light beyond the darkness; and if so, I would have you see it and be glad."

'But she answered only with this *linnod*:

*Ónen i-Estel Edain, ú-chebin estel anim,*<sup>1</sup>

and Aragorn went away heavy of heart. Gilraen died before the next spring.

'Thus the years drew on to the War of the Ring; of which more is told elsewhere: how the means unforeseen was revealed whereby Sauron might

<sup>1</sup> 'I gave Hope to the Dúnedain, I have kept no hope for myself.'

be overthrown, and how hope beyond hope was fulfilled. And it came to pass that in the hour of defeat Aragorn came up from the sea and unfurled the standard of Arwen in the battle of the Fields of Pelennor, and in that day he was first hailed as king. And at last when all was done he entered into the inheritance of his fathers and received the crown of Gondor and sceptre of Arnor; and at Midsummer in the year of the Fall of Sauron he took the hand of Arwen Undómiel, and they were wedded in the city of the Kings.

'The Third Age ended thus in victory and hope; and yet grievous among the sorrows of that Age was the parting of Elrond and Arwen, for they were sundered by the Sea and by a doom beyond the end of the world. When the Great Ring was unmade and the Three were shorn of their power, then Elrond grew weary at last and forsook Middle-earth, never to return. But Arwen became as a mortal woman, and yet it was not her lot to die until all that she had gained was lost.

'As Queen of Elves and Men she dwelt with Aragorn for six-score years in great glory and bliss; yet at last he felt the approach of old age and knew that the span of his life-days was drawing to an end, long though it had been. Then Aragorn said to Arwen:

"At last, Lady Evenstar, fairest in this world, and most beloved, my world is fading. Lo! we have gathered, and we have spent, and now the time of payment draws near."

'Arwen knew well what he intended, and long had foreseen it; nonetheless she was overborne by her grief. "Would you then, lord, before your time leave your people that live by your word?" she said.

"Not before my time," he answered. "For if I will not go now, then I must soon go perforce. And Eldarion our son is a man full-ripe for kingship."

'Then going to the House of the Kings in the Silent Street, Aragorn laid him down on the long bed that had been prepared for him. There he said farewell to Eldarion, and gave into his hands the winged crown of Gondor and the sceptre of Arnor; and then all left him save Arwen, and she stood alone by his bed. And for all her wisdom and lineage she could not forbear to plead with him to stay yet for a while. She was not yet weary of her days, and thus she tasted the bitterness of the mortality that she had taken upon her.

"Lady Undómiel," said Aragorn, "the hour is indeed hard, yet it was made even in that day when we met under the white birches in the garden of Elrond where none now walk. And on the hill of Cerin Amroth when we forsook both the Shadow and the Twilight this doom we accepted. Take counsel with yourself, beloved, and ask whether you would indeed have me wait until I wither and fall from my high seat unmanned and witless. Nay, lady, I am the last of the Númenóreans and the latest King of the Elder Days; and to me has been given not only a span thrice that of Men of Middle-earth, but also the grace to go at my will, and give back the gift. Now, therefore, I will sleep.

"I speak no comfort to you, for there is no comfort for such pain within the circles of the world. The uttermost choice is before you: to repent and go to the Havens and bear away into the West the memory of our days



together that shall there be evergreen but never more than memory; or else to abide the Doom of Men."

"Nay, dear lord," she said, "that choice is long over. There is now no ship that would bear me hence, and I must indeed abide the Doom of Men, whether I will or I nill: the loss and the silence. But I say to you, King of the Númenóreans, not till now have I understood the tale of your people and their fall. As wicked fools I scorned them, but I pity them at last. For if this is indeed, as the Eldar say, the gift of the One to Men, it is bitter to receive."

"So it seems," he said. "But let us not be overthrown at the final test, who of old renounced the Shadow and the Ring. In sorrow we must go, but not in despair. Behold! we are not bound for ever to the circles of the world, and beyond them is more than memory. Farewell!"

"Estel, Estel!" she cried, and with that even as he took her hand and kissed it, he fell into sleep. Then a great beauty was revealed in him, so that all who after came there looked on him in wonder; for they saw that the grace of his youth, and the valour of his manhood, and the wisdom and majesty of his age were blended together. And long there he lay, an image of the splendour of the Kings of Men in glory undimmed before the breaking of the world.

But Arwen went forth from the House, and the light of her eyes was quenched, and it seemed to her people that she had become cold and grey as nightfall in winter that comes without a star. Then she said farewell to Eldarion, and to her daughters, and to all whom she had loved; and she went out from the city of Minas Tirith and passed away to the land of Lórien, and dwelt there alone under the fading trees until winter came. Galadriel had passed away and Celeborn also was gone, and the land was silent.

There at last when the mallorn-leaves were falling, but spring had not yet come,<sup>1</sup> she laid herself to rest upon Cerin Amroth; and there is her green grave, until the world is changed, and all the days of her life are utterly forgotten by men that come after, and elanor and niphredil bloom no more east of the Sea.

Here ends this tale, as it has come to us from the South; and with the passing of Evenstar no more is said in this book of the days of old.

## II

### THE HOUSE OF EORL

Eorl the Young was lord of the Men of Éothéod. That land lay near the sources of Anduin, between the furthest ranges of the Misty Mountains and the northernmost parts of Mirkwood. The Éothéod had moved to those regions in the days of King Eärnil II from lands in the vales of Anduin between the Carrock and the Gladden, and they were in origin close akin to the Beornings and the men of the west-eaves of the forest. The forefathers of Eorl claimed descent from kings of Rhovanion, whose realm lay beyond

<sup>1</sup> p. 335.