



The Lost Road

J. R. R. Tolkien

Edited and Completed by G. M. Dantes

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To my friends from the Tea with Tolkien book discussion book. I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed putting it together.

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Editor's Note

“[In February 1968 C. S.] Lewis said to me one day: ‘Tollers, there is too little of what we really like in stories. I am afraid we shall have to try and write some ourselves.’ We agreed that he should try space-travel, and I should try time-travel. His result is well known. My effort, after a few promising chapters, ran dry: it was too long a way round to what I really wanted to make, a new version of the Atlantis legend.”

~ Tolkien Letter 294 to Charlotte and Denis Plimmer

This is a famous challenge between Tolkien and Lewis. C. S. Lewis wrote his space trilogy and Tolkien never finished his time-travel book. This greatly disappointed me. So I began this work because I wanted to see this endeavor of Tolkien’s completed as it may be.

Though I should begin first by answering a question that many avid Tolkien fans (consciously or unconsciously) are already asking themselves at the realization of seeing this task that I decided to undertake. This question is quite simply: if Tolkien couldn’t or didn’t care to finish this, then why does this guy think he can finish it?

It is a very fair and humbling question for me to consider and one that I wish to address. In short I think Tolkien didn’t finished it for several reasons, which I will detail below.

The first reason why it wasn’t published was because the story wasn’t a super attractive one at the time Tolkien

considered publishing it. “The Lost Road, was shown to Allen & Unwin in November 1937, and was returned by them with the comment that it did not seem likely, even if it was finished, to be a commercial success.” (Footnote 3 in Tolkien Letter No. 24) It was a true statement at the time, but that was addressed to a young Tolkien who hadn’t yet published the *Hobbit* or the *Lord of the Rings*. For people who love the *Lord of the Rings* and yearn for more of it, *The Lost Road* is a doorway to the distant mythical past of Middle Earth.

Concerning the book being a ‘long way to the Atlantean Myth’ that Tolkien created, that is certainly true about the story. It is indeed a story within a story within a story. Why not just tell the myth story and cut out the other two stories? That was what Christopher Tolkien did when he published his father’s works in *The Silmarillion*.

This was a decent compromise that Tolkien’s son made, but doing so also removed the magic and wonder from what I would consider one of the best time travel theories ever conceived of in literature. I cannot under-emphasize this point enough. In fact, it’s the main reason that I’m taking on this task. I have never seen a time traveling story be so organically connected to language, biology, and the world of dreams. It was a masterful concept in the making. The problem was not with its genius; the problem I believe was with its complexity.

It was this difficulty with the complexity of his own lore that prevented Tolkien from publishing *The Lost Road*, as well as any of the lore in Middle Earth. In the 1992 Tolkien

Centennial documentary, Christopher Tolkien says that he felt the task of finishing *The Silmarillion* had become too large for his father, too daunting:

“And I think the whole thing simply became too large, too complex to have so precise – to attempt to propose a precise metaphysical explanation of it. It was perhaps a task for a younger man; the flame began to die down, and he hadn’t the energy left that would be needed for such a huge transformation.

“Some people who knew him well ... said that he didn’t really want to finish *The Silmarillion*, suggesting even that at some level he felt that to finish *The Silmarillion* would be finishing his life. I personally don’t think that at all. I don’t think there’s any real evidence for it. I think he deeply wanted to finish it but couldn’t: Too large, too large a task, too tired.”

I agree with his son that Tolkien wanted to finish his works, but there were too many questions that he needed to answer first.

What we really need is a younger Tolkien to finish *The Lost Road*. And having begun the attempt, I can see why! There are so many philosophical concepts and plot threads to keep in tension in this story alone. You have the plot threads of Elendil, Isildur, Ealfwine, Eadwine, Alboin, Audoin, the Palantir, Sauron, the One Ring, Ar Pharzon, the straight road, the Voyage of Amandil, the White Tree, the history of the Elves, the history of Numenor and Gondor, and the Fall of Numenor Itself.

This does not include all the philosophical concepts that needed to be teased out: language substratum, the grandfather paradox and other temporal paradoxes that must be avoided or explained, the tension between freewill and external influence, interaction between beings across time and space, and the Christian idea that humans are embodied creatures and not spirits.

After surveying this, I can see why Tolkien abandoned this book and in his old age didn't finish it. It's honestly an exhausting task for me, though I do enjoy the challenge and the labor of it. So, while ideally a young Tolkien would complete this in its perfection, I believe that I can tie together a very imperfect version of this story – though one that is canonically accurate and whole enough for people to enjoy and delight in. That's my goal at least and I hope I can succeed in it.

For those who wish to know, I should explain what resources I pulled from. In the first half of the book, I pulled largely from *A History of Middle Earth, Vol. 5: The Lost Road and Other Writings*. For the second half of the book, when our characters 'arrive' in Numenor, I drew largely from the *Silmarillion* and occasionally I drew from other sources in the legendarium.

I have preserved Tolkien's writing as best as I could and expanded on it or clarified it where it seemed that the text clearly needed refining since it was a rough draft. Much of the first half of the book is from Tolkien's own words. Though I have fleshed out certain plot gaps to allow the

story to flow as I would have expected a finished copy to flow.

In the second half of the book, I fleshed out the Numenorian chapters from *The Silmarillion*. And all of the 'Interlude' scenes I added in order to give a place for Audoin and Alboin to speak to one another about their experiences. This was necessary to tie the book together into a unified whole. I also did my best to weave in themes that would show up in *The Lord of the Rings* and in the *Silmarillion*.

Overall, this was definitely one of the most difficult books that I have ever written. Largely because it involved getting into the mind of the great mind of J.R.R. Tolkien. Largely I already had on the mind of Tolkien and I often busied myself in understanding the complex beauty of Middle Earth. But this task involved being critically aware of every story in Middle Earth that referenced the story of Numenor. Unfortunately for my sake, these references were many. Though for your sake, I hope that becomes a good thing when it is finished, as there are many loose threads to be woven from this single event.

Enjoy the road less traveled!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S.M. Denton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "M".

Chapter 1: Dreaming by the Sea

“This Atlantean legend or myth or dim memory of some ancient history has always troubled me. In sleep I had the dreadful dream of the ineluctable Wave, either coming out of the quiet sea, or coming in towering over the green inlands. It still occurs occasionally, though now exorcized by writing about it. It always ends by surrender, and I awake gasping out of deep water.”

~ Tolkien’s Letter 257 to Christopher Bretherton

“Alboin! Alboin!”

There was no answer. There was no one in the playroom. It was getting dark. In an hour he would have to light the candles in the house to see his lecture notes. But what of Alboin?

“Alboin!”

Oswin Errol stood at the door and called into the small high garden at the back of his house. At length a young voice answered, sounding distant and like the answer of someone asleep or just awakened.

“Yes?”

“Where are you?”

“Here!”

“Where is ‘here’?”

“Here: up on the wall, father.”

Oswin sprang down the steps from the door into the garden, and walked along the flower-bordered path. It led after a turn to a low stone wall, screened from the house by a hedge. Beyond the stone wall there was a brief space of turf, and then a cliff-edge, beyond which outstretched, and now shimmering in a calm evening, the western sea. The crashing of the distant waves drowned his own voice. Upon the wall Oswin found his son, a boy about twelve years old, lying gazing out to sea with his chin in his hands.

"So, there you are!" he said. "You take a deal of calling. Didn't you hear me?"

"Not before the time when I answered," said Alboin.

"Well, you must be deaf or dreaming," said his father. "Dreaming, it looks like. It is getting very near bed-time; so, if you want any story tonight, we shall have to begin at once."

"I am sorry, father, but I was thinking."

"What about?"

"Oh, lots of things mixed up: the sea, and the world, and Alboin."

"Alboin?"

"Yes. I wondered why Alboin. Why am I called Alboin? They often ask me "Why Alboin?" at school, and they call me All-bone. But I am not, am I?"

"You look rather bony, boy; but you are not all bone, I am glad to say. I am afraid I called you Alboin, and that is why you are called it. I am sorry: I never meant it to be a nuisance to you."

"But it is a real name, isn't it?" said Alboin eagerly. "I mean, it means something, and men have been called it? It isn't just invented?"

“Of course not. It is just as real and just as good as Oswin; and it belongs to the same family, you might say. But no one ever bothered me about Oswin. Though I often used to get called Oswald by mistake. I remember how it used to annoy me, though I can't think why. I was rather particular about my name.”

They remained talking on the wall overlooking the sea; and did not go back into the garden, or the house, until bedtime. Their talk, as often happened, drifted into storytelling; and Oswin told his son the tale of Alboin son of Audoin, the Lombard king; and of the great battle of the Lombards and the Gepids, remembered as terrible even in the grim sixth century; and of the kings Thurisind and Cunimund, and of Rosamunda.

“Not a good story for near bedtime,” he said, ending suddenly with Alboin's drinking from the jeweled skull of Cunimund.

“I don't like that Alboin much,” said the boy. “I like the Gepids better, and King Thurisind. I wish they had won. Why didn't you call me Thurisind or Thurismod?”

“Well, really mother had meant to call you Rosamund, only you turned up a boy. And she didn't live to help me choose another name, you know. So, I took one out of that story, because it seemed to fit. I mean, the name doesn't belong only to that story, it is much older. Would you rather have been called Elf-friend? For that's what the name means.”

“Nooo,” said Alboin doubtfully. “I like names to mean something, but not to say something.”

“Well, I might have called you Aelfwine, of course; that is the Old English form of it.”

“Aelfwine?” Alboin asked with deep curiosity as if he had heard it before.

“Yes! I might have called you that, not only after Aelfwine of Italy, but after all the Elf-friends of old; after Aelfwine, King Alfred's grandson, who fell in the great victory in 937, and Aelfwine who fell in the famous defeat at Maldon, and many other Englishmen and northerners in the long line of Elf-friends.

“But I gave you a latinized form. I think that is best. The old days of the North are gone beyond recall, except in so far as they have been worked into the shape of things as we know it, into Christendom. So, I took Alboin; for it is not Latin and not Northern, and that is the way of most names in the West, and also of the men that bear them. I might have chosen Albinus, for that is what they sometimes turned the name into; and it wouldn't have reminded your friends of bones. But it is too Latin, and means something in Latin. And you are not white or fair, boy, but dark. So, Alboin you are. And that is all there is to it, except bed.”

And they went in. But Alboin looked out of his window before getting into bed; and he could see the sea beyond the edge of the cliff. It was a late sunset, for it was summer. The sun sank slowly to the sea, and dipped red beyond the horizon. The light and color faded quickly from the water: a chilly wind came up out of the West, and over the sunset-rim great dark clouds sailed up, stretching huge wings southward and northward, threatening the land.

“They look like the eagles of the Lord of the West coming upon Numenor,” Alboin whispered aloud, and he wondered why.

Though it did not seem very strange to him. In those days he often made-up names. Looking on a familiar hill, he would see it suddenly standing in some other time and story: 'the green shoulders of Amon-ereb,' he would say. 'The waves are loud upon the shores of Belerian,' he said one day, when a storm was piling water at the foot of the cliff below the house. Some of these names were really made up, to please himself with their sound (or so he thought); but others seemed 'real,' as if they had not been spoken first by him. So, it was with Numenor.

"I like that," he said to himself. "I could think of a long story about the land of Numenor."

But as he lay in bed, he found that the story would not be thought. And soon he forgot the name; and other thoughts crowded in, partly due to his father's words, and partly to his own day-dreams before.

"Dark Alboin," he thought. "I wonder if there is any Latin in me. Not much, I think. I love the western shores, and the real sea - it is quite different from the Mediterranean, even in stories. I wish there was no other side to it. There were darkhaired people who were not Latins. Are the Portuguese Latins? What is Latin? I wonder what kind of people lived in Portugal and Spain and Ireland and Britain in old days, very old days, before the Romans, or the Carthaginians. Before anybody else. I wonder what the man thought who was the first to see the western sea.'

Then he fell asleep, and dreamed. But when he woke, largely the dream slipped beyond recall, and left no tale or picture behind, only the feeling that these had brought: the sort of feeling Alboin connected with long strange names.

Chapter 2: Aelfwine's Song

Alboin awoke with a start. No. His name was Aelfwine. Wasn't it? Yes, it was.

He had been dozing on a bench with his back to a pillar. The voices poured in on him like a torrent. He felt he had been dreaming; and for a moment the English speech about him sounded strange, though mostly it was the soft speech of western Wessex. Here and there were men of the Marches, and a few spoke oddly, using strange words after the manner of those among whom the Danes dwelt in the eastern lands.

He looked down the hall, looking for his son Eadwine. He had a son? His mind was still hazy as if half in a dream. He steadied himself.

Of course, he had a son. His was due on leave from the fleet, but had not yet come. There was a great crowd in the hall, for King Edward was here. The fleet was in the Severn sea, and the south shore was in arms. The jarls had been defeated far north at Irchenfield, but the Danish ships were still at large on the Welsh coast burning as they went; and the men of Somerset and Devon were on guard.

Aelfwine looked down the hall. The faces of the men, some old and careworn, some young and eager, were dim, not only because the torchlight was wavering and the candles on the high table were guttering. He looked beyond them.

There was a wind blowing, surging round the house; timbers creaked. The sound brought back old

longings to him that he had thought were long buried. He was born in the year the Danes wintered in Sheppey, and he had sailed many seas and heard many winds since then. The sound of the west wind and the fall of seas on the beaches had always been a challenging music to him. Especially in spring. But now it was autumn, and also he was growing old. And the seas were wide, beyond the power of man to cross - to unknown shores: wide and dangerous.

The faces of the men about him faded and the clamor of their voices was changed. He heard the crash of waves on the black cliffs and the sea-birds diving and crying; and snow and hail fell. Then the seas opened pale and wide; the sun shone on the land and the sound and smell of it fell far behind. He was alone going west towards the setting sun with fear and longing in his heart, drawn against his will. His dream was broken by calls for the minstrel.

“Let Aelfwine sing!” the men were crying.

The king had sent to bid him sing something. He lifted up his deep voice and chanted aloud, but as one speaking to himself alone:

Monad modes lust mid mereflode ford to feran,
paet ic feor heonan ofer hean holmas,
ofer hwaeles edel elpeodigra eard gesece.
Nis me to hearpan hyge ne to hring pege
ne to wife wyn ne to worulde hyht ne ymb
owiht elles nefne ymb yda gewealc.

“The desire of my spirit urges me to journey forth over the flowing sea, that far hence across the hills of water and the whale's country I may seek the land of strangers. No mind have I for harp, nor gift of ring, nor delight in women, nor joy in the world, nor concern with aught else save the rolling of the waves.”

Then he stopped suddenly. There was some laughter, and a few jeers, though many were silent, as if feeling that the words were not spoken to their ears - old and familiar as they were, words of the old poets whom most men had heard often.

“If he has no mind to the harp, he need expect no,” said one.

“Is there a mortal here who has a mind to speak?”

“We have had enough of the sea,” said another.

“A spell of Dane-hunting would cure most men's love of it!” cried another man.

“Let him go rolling on the waves,” said another.

“It is no great sail to the... Welsh country,” said one in a mocking tone. “Where folk are strange enough - and the Danes are there to talk to as well!”

“Peace!” said an old man sitting near the threshold. “Aelfwine has sailed more seas than you have heard of; and the Welsh tongue is not strange to him... His wife was of Cornwall. He has been to Ireland and the North, and some say far to the west of all living lands. Let him say what his mood bids.”

There was a short silence. It was broken when someone spied a ship from the horizon. It was the fleet! Eadwine was return.

“How goes the battle?” Aelfwine asked him, as they embrace in their armor.

“It goes poorly,” he growled. “The Danes are smarter than us. And they always press on. They go west, passing around Ireland. Meanwhile the English? We sit like Wealas waiting to be made into slaves!”

“Peace, son.”

“Peace? That is what brought us to this place,” he said with frustration but then calmed himself. “Forgive me, father. I am tired of this war with the Danes.”

“What of Ireland then? Any news from there to use to our advantage?”

“I hear only strange tales from the Irish. They speak of a land in the northwest filled with ice. But in the midst of the ocean it there is a place fit for men to dwell. They call it *Insula Deliciarum*. Paradise, father. There were holy hermits who found it. But when they were driven out by Norsemen.”

“My son, paradise is not of this world. There is one door that has been opened for us.”

“And yet, men have seen another way! The holy Brendan beheld it centuries ago - and many others. And they came back! Not that they wanted to but the winds drove them.”

“My son, paradise cannot be reached by ship. There are deeper waters between us than that of Garsecg. As it has been said by our fathers: *all roads are bent*. And see! Even those you spoke of came back in the end. There is no way by ship.

“I do not think that is true,” his son told him as he set his face to the sea. “And I hope it isn't. At any rate our

ancestors had won new lands by ship. What of the story of Scaef? Shall we not do as he did?"

Aelfwine tried to dissuade his son, but Eadwine's mind was set. And he recruited ten men to accompany him to find this Paradise. His father accompanied him. And the rumors of the place took them to Lundy. There they were pursued by Vikings and driven off that place into the wide ocean by the wind. But the storm of it grew great and the wind now opposed them. And Eadwine fell into a fever.

"Mountainous seas," he muttered. "The Straight Road. It is there! The water the island of Azores."

"What? What are you saying, my son?"

But it was no use. His son could not understand him. The storm raged around them.

And the storms continued in Aelfwine's dreams. But in a moment the storm was driven back. And as it were, the dark rain curtain was pulled from his eyes. And there he beheld glistening white shores. And a fair green country stretched beyond that. What his son spoke of was real! And more magnificent than he could have imagined.

But then it was all ripped from his sight as the boat shook and thrashed. It was not real. Was it? Shaking off the thought, he returned to his son's side.

"It is true!" he yells in the madness of his fever. "We need to go there. I know the way!"

"Restrain him!" his father ordered, and the men obeyed binding his son.

"It is there! I can hear it. I can see it."

"He's gone mad," a shipmate yelled over the storm.

It was tearing them apart. Aelfwine gave a deep sigh.

“This is our end. Lord, keep your servants and guide them on their way to You and to that shore that is yours.”

Immediately, they felt the floor fall underneath them. They levitated for seconds until they crashed to the deck.

“Land!” someone shouted.

“Thank the heaven!” he said. “That is our new heading. Turn about!”

And he was glad to see it. Though it was not the land that he beheld in his dream. That discovery would be for another journey, he supposed. Either in this world or in the next.

Chapter 3: Going to School

Alboin woke up and rubbed his head. He got up and gazed out at the sea. That dream seemed so real. Already he had forgotten much of it. He did remember something about a ship and a 'straight road.' The images faded, but he remembered many of the spoken words. And the song of it echoed through him. The song of Aelfwine. The friend of the elves. He wrote down what he could remember. It was hard to remember everything, but the solemn melody he could not forget and he hummed it throughout the day.

The summer slipped by much like a dream. And he went to school and went on learning Latin. Also, he learned Greek. And later, when he was about fifteen, he began to learn other languages, especially those of the North: Old English, Norse, Welsh, Irish. This was not much encouraged - even by his father, who was an historian. Latin and Greek, it seemed to be thought, were enough for anybody; and quite old-fashioned enough, when there were so many successful modern languages (spoken by millions of people); not to mention math and all the sciences. But Alboin liked the flavor of the older northern languages, quite as much as he liked some of the things written in them. He got to know a bit about linguistic history, of course; he found that you rather had it thrust on you anyway by the grammar-writers of 'unclassical' languages. Not that he objected: sound-changes were a hobby of his, at the age when other boys were learning about the insides of motor-cars. But, although he had some idea of what were

supposed to be the relationships of European languages, it did not seem to him quite all the story. The languages he liked had a definite flavor - and to some extent a similar flavor which they shared. It seemed, too, in some way related to the atmosphere of the legends and myths told in the languages.

The languages seemed to be all connected. He felt that they were alive and breathing. They were like a river flowing around him and through him connecting him to others from the distant past. When he discovered a new language, he felt like he could almost touch the river.

"What is a substratum?" he asked his teacher one day in class, when they were speaking about language theory.

"In linguistics, a substratum is a language that influences another language while that second language supplants it."

"Hmm. So, the first language is kind of like a hidden language underneath the one already there? Always unknown and always influencing it."

The teacher laughed.

"I suppose you could say that. But it is nothing mystical. It's just a word to explain how a more well-known language could be influenced by a lesser-known language."

But that did not satisfy him. There was something underneath their language. He could almost taste it.

That day, when Alboin was nearly eighteen, he was sitting in the study with his father. It was autumn, and the end of summer holidays spent mostly in the open. Fires were coming back. It was the time in all the year when book-lore is most attractive (to those who really like it at all). They were talking 'language.' For Oswin encouraged his boy to

talk about anything he was interested in; although secretly his father had been wondering for some time whether Northern languages and legends were not taking up more of his son's time and energy than their practical value in a hard world justified.

"But I had better know what is going on, as far as any father can," Oswin Errol thought. "He'll go on anyway, if he really has a bent - and it had better not be bent inwards."

Alboin was trying to explain his feeling about 'language atmosphere'.

"You get echoes coming through, you know," the boy said, "In odd words here and there - often very common words in their own language, but quite unexplained by the etymologists; and in the general shape and sound of all the words, somehow; as if something was peeping through from deep under the surface."

"Of course, I am not a philologist," said his father. "But I never could see that there was much evidence in favor of ascribing language-changes to a substratum. Though I suppose underlying ingredients do have an influence, though it is not easy to define, on the final mixture in the case of peoples taken as a whole, different national talents and temperaments, and that sort of thing. But races, and cultures, are different from languages."

"Yes," said Alboin; "but very mixed up, all three together. And after all, language goes back by a continuous tradition into the past, just as much as the other two. I often think that if you knew the living faces of any man's ancestors, a long way back, you might find some queer things.

“You might find that he got his nose quite clearly from, say, his mother's great-grandfather; and yet that something about his nose, its expression or its set or whatever you like to call it, really came down from much further back, from, say, his father's great-great-great-grandfather or greater.

“Anyway, I like to go back - and not with race only, or culture only, or language; but with all three. I wish I could go back with the three that are mixed in us, father; just the plain Errols, with a little house in Cornwall in the summer. I wonder what one would see.”

“It depends how far you went back,” said the elder Errol. “If you went back beyond the Ice-ages, I imagine you would find nothing in these parts; or at any rate a pretty beastly and uncomely race, and a tooth-and-nail culture, and a disgusting language with no echoes for you, unless those of food-noises.”

“Would you?” said Alboin. “I wonder.”

“Anyway, you can't go back,” said his father. “Except within the limits prescribed to us mortals. You can go back in a sense by honest study, long and patient work. You had better go in for archaeology as well as philology: they ought to go well enough together, though they aren't joined very often.”

“Good idea,” said Alboin. “But you remember, long ago, you said I was not all-bone. Well, I want some mythology, as well. I want myths, not only bones and stones.”

“Well, you can have 'em! Take the whole lot on!” said his father laughing. “But in the meanwhile, you have a smaller job on hand. Your Latin needs improving (or so I am told), for school purposes. And scholarships are useful

in lots of ways, especially for folk like you and me who go in for antiquated subjects. Your first shot is this winter, remember."

His chance for gaining a scholarship was coming up soon. His father was right. He needed to focus on that. He sighed.

"I wish Latin prose was not so important," said Alboin. "I am really much better at verses."

"Don't go putting any bits of your Eressean, or Elf-latin, or whatever you call it, into your verses at Oxford. It might scan, but it wouldn't pass."

"Of course not!" said the boy, blushing; the matter was too private, even for private jokes. "And don't go blabbing about Eressean outside the partnership. Or I shall wish I had kept it quiet."

"Well, you did pretty well," his father admitted. "I don't suppose I should ever have heard about it, if you hadn't left your note-books in my study. Even so I don't know much about it. But, my dear lad, I shouldn't dream of blabbing, even if I did. Only don't waste too much time on it. I am afraid I am anxious about that scholarship, not only from the highest motives. Cash is not too abundant."

"Oh, I haven't done anything of that sort for a long while, at least hardly anything," said Alboin, hiding his notebook of Eressean.

He hardly wrote in that these days. Not compared to before.

"It isn't getting on too well, then?"

"Not lately. Too much else to do, I suppose. But I got a lot of jolly new words a few days ago," he told him, bringing out the notebook. "I am sure lomelinde' means nightingale,

for instance, and certainly lome is night (though not darkness). The verb is very sketchy still. But - "

He hesitated. Reticence (and uneasy conscience) were at war with his habit of what he called 'partnership with the pater', and his desire to unbosom the secret anyway.

"But," he continued. "The real difficulty is that another language is coming through, as well. It seems to be related but quite different, much more - more Northern. Alda was a tree (a word I got a long time ago); in the new language it is galadh, and orn. The Sun and Moon seem to have similar names in both: Anar and Isil beside Anor and Ithil. I like first one, then the other, in different moods. Beleriandic is really very attractive; but it complicates things."

"Good Lord!" said his father, "This is serious! I will respect unsolicited secrets. But do have a conscience as well as a heart, and - moods. Or get a Latin and Greek mood!"

Alboin closed his book. This was why the boy hesitated to speak to him.

"I do. I have had one for a week, and I have got it now; a Latin one luckily, and Virgil in particular. So here we part."

He got up, hiding his frustration as best as he could.

"I am going to do a bit of reading," his father told him. "I'll look in when I think you ought to go to bed."

Alboin closed the door on his father's snort.



Errol sighed. As a matter of fact, Errol did not really like the parting shot. The affection in it warmed and saddened him. A late marriage had left him now on the brink of

retirement from a schoolmaster's small pay to his smaller pension, just when Alboin was coming of University age.

And he was also (he had begun to feel, and this year to admit in his heart) a tired man. He had never been a strong man. He would have liked to accompany Alboin a great deal further on the road, as a younger father probably would have done; but he did not somehow think he would be going very far.

"Damn it," Errol said to himself, "a boy of that age ought not to be thinking such things, worrying whether his father is getting enough rest. Where's my book?"

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Alboin in the old play-room, turned into junior study, looked out into the dark. He did not for a long time turn to books.

"I wish life was not so short," he thought. "Languages take such a time, and so do all the things one wants to know about. And the pater...he is looking tired. I want him for years. If he lived to be a hundred, I should be only about as old as he is now. And I should still want him. But he won't. I wish we could stop getting old. The pater could go on working and write that book he used to talk about, about Cornwall; and we could go on talking. He always plays up, even if he does not agree or understand.

"Bother Eressean! I wish he hadn't mentioned it. I am sure I shall dream tonight; and it is so exciting. The Latin-mood will go. He is very decent about it, even though he thinks I am making it all up. If I were, I would stop it to

please him. But it comes! And I simply can't let it slip when it does. Then there is Beleriandic."

He sighed. Away west the moon rode in ragged clouds. The sea glimmered palely out of the gloom, wide, flat, going on to the edge of the world.

"Confound you, dreams!" said Alboin. "Lay off, and let me do a little patient work at least until December. A scholarship would brace the pater."

He found his father asleep in his chair at half past ten. They went up to bed together. Alboin got into bed and slept with no shadow of a dream. The Latin-mood was in full blast after breakfast; and the weather allied itself with virtue and sent torrential rain.

## Chapter 4: *Words with the Pater*

Long afterwards Alboin remembered that evening, that had marked the strange, sudden, cessation of the Dreams. He had got a scholarship the following year and had 'braced the pater'. That is what he came to call quite frequently now the support that he would give his father who was getting more weary by the day.

Alboin had behaved himself moderately well at the university - not too many side-issues (at least not what he called too many); though neither the Latin nor the Greek mood had remained at all steadily to sustain him through *Honour Mods* examinations. They would come back though.

The languages had returned, of course, as soon as the exams were over. He had switched over, all the same, to history, and had again 'braced the pater' with a *Firstclass* award.

And the pater had needed bracing. Retirement proved quite different from a holiday: he had seemed just to slip slowly out of teaching. He had hung on just long enough to see Alboin into his first job: an assistant lectureship in a university college.

Rather disconcertingly the dreams had begun again just before he began teaching, and were extraordinarily strong in the following vacation - the last he and his father had spent together in Cornwall. But at that time the Dreams had taken a new turn, for a while. He remembered one of the last conversations of the old

pleasant sort he had been able to have with the old man. It came back clearly to him now.

"How's the Eressean Elf-latin, boy?" his father asked, smiling, plainly intending a joke, as one may playfully refer to youthful follies long atoned for.

"Oddly enough," he answered, "That hasn't been coming through lately. I have got a lot of different stuff. Some is beyond me, still. Some might be Celtic, of a sort. Some seems like a very old form of Germanic; pre-runic, or I'll eat my cap and gown."

The old man smiled, almost raised a laugh.

"Safer ground, boy, safer ground for an historian. But you'll get into trouble, if you let your cats out of the bag among the philologists - unless, of course, they back up the authorities."

"As a matter of fact, I rather think they do," he said.

"Tell me a bit, if you can without your notebooks," his father slyly said.

"Westra lage wegas rehtas, nu isti sa wraithas."

He quoted that, because it had stuck in his mind, though he did not understand it. Of course, the mere sense was fairly plain: a straight road lay westward, now it is bent. Straight road? Now what did that mean? He remembered waking up, and feeling it was somehow very significant.

"Actually, I got a bit of plain Anglo-Saxon last night," he went on.

He thought Anglo-Saxon would please his father; it was a real historical language, of which the old man had once known a fair amount. Also, the bit was very fresh in his mind, and was the longest and most connected he

had yet had. Only that very morning he had woken up late, after a dreamful night, and had found himself saying the lines. He jotted them down at once, or they might have vanished (as usual) by breakfast-time, even though they were in a language he knew. Now waking memory had them secure.

*'Thus cwaeth Aelfwine Widlast:  
Fela bith on Westwegum werum uncuthra  
wundra and wihta, wlitescene land,  
eardgeard elfa, and esa bliss.  
Lyt aenig wat hwylc his longath sie  
tham the eftsithes eldo getwaefeth.'*

His father looked up and smiled at the name Aelfwine. He translated the lines for him; probably it was not necessary, but the old man had forgotten many other things he had once known much better than Anglo-Saxon.

*"Thus said AElfwine the far-travelled:  
There is many a thing in the West-regions  
unknown to men, marvels and strange beings,  
a land fair and lovely, the homeland of the Elves, and the  
bliss of the Gods.  
Little doth any man know what longing is his  
whom old age cutteth off from return."*

He suddenly regretted translating the last two lines. His father looked up with an odd expression.

“The old know,” he said, assuming it referred to the longing for either youth or paradise. “But age does not cut us off from going away to the beyond, from - from *forthsith*. And of course, there is no *eftsith*: we can't go back to youth. You need not tell me that. But good for Aelfwine-Alboin. You could always do verses.”

Damn it - as if he would make up stuff like that, just to tell it to the old man, practically on his death-bed. His father had, in fact, died during the following winter. That's when the dreams returned more powerfully than ever.

## Chapter 5: Death of Aelfwine

Two days after landing in Erin,<sup>1</sup> Aelfwine's son Aedwine died of a fever, passing into the next life. Aelfwine was never the same after that day. Before their voyage he doubted the existence of the way to Paradise. But with the passing of his son and the vision of the gleaming white shores, Aelfwine became fixated on this what he called 'the straight road.' The road through the waters into paradise.

Always he sought rumors of it. And rarely did he hear of it. But he *did* hear of it. And he dreamed of it! Sometimes he would see glimpses of the straight road in his dreams, as a stream leading up into the heaven. Always and immediately, he set those sights to verse lest he forget them upon waking.

Thus, it was not until after many long years of dreaming and seeking wisdom from other mariners, that Aelfwine began searching for the straight road. And he found a crew who would also find it.

Thus, they began their journey. The way was rough and the winds strove often against them. But Aelfwine's mind was fixed and like an anchor it would not be moved. And in his longing, he fought against the winds that pressed against him.

Then in a moment, like the pulling back of a stormy rain curtain, he beheld again (as before in his dreams) white shores! And above them, there were high towers

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<sup>1</sup> Archaic name for Ireland

white as pearl in the midst of a fair green country. And above that in the heavens he beheld a ship sailing into the stars with a bright light shining from the brow of it.

And Aelfwine heard singing - the like of which he had never known before. And it echoed inside him and around him. Then partly out a need to remember this sight and partly out of the desire that it awoke in him, Aelfwine sang a song of longing now met.

#### THE SONG OF AELFWINE

Eressea! Eressea!

There elven-lights still gleaming lie  
On grass more green than in gardens here,  
On trees more tall that touch the sky  
With swinging leaves of silver clear.  
While world endures they will not die,  
Nor fade nor fall their timeless year,  
As morn unmeasured passes by  
O'er mead and mount and shining mere.  
When endless eve undimmed is near,  
O'er harp and chant in hidden choir  
A sudden voice up-soaring sheer  
In the wood awakes the wandering fire.

With wandering fire the woodlands fill:  
In glades for ever green it glows;  
In a dell there dreaming niphredil  
As star awakened gleaming grows,  
And ever-murmuring musics spill,  
For there the fount immortal flows:  
Its water white leaps down the hill,

By silver stairs it singing goes  
To the field of the unfading rose,  
Where breathing on the glowing briar  
The wind beyond the world's end blows  
To living flame the wandering fire.

The wandering fire with quickening flame  
Of living light illumines clear  
That land unknown by mortal name  
Beyond the shadow dark and drear  
And waters wild no ship may tame.  
No man may ever anchor near,  
To haven none his hope may aim  
Through starless night his way to steer.  
Uncounted leagues it lies from here:  
In wind on beaches blowing free  
Neath cliffs of carven crystal sheer  
The foam there flowers upon the Sea.

O Shore beyond the Shadowy Sea!  
O Land where still the Edhil are!  
O Haven where my heart would be!  
The waves still beat upon thy bar,  
The white birds wheel; there flowers the Tree!  
Again I glimpse them long afar  
When rising west of West I see  
Beyond the world the wayward Star,  
Than beacons bright in Gondobar  
More fair and keen, more clear and high.  
O Star that shadow may not mar,  
Nor ever darkness doom to die.

The beauty of that sight was almost too much to bear. For the song wounded and healed what had been so long torn by grief. And though the time there was brief, it remained in him a memory clear and unstained in his heart, neither fading nor growing stale. Though ever his heart longed thereafter to hear again that song and to see that sight.

Thus, after a brief time, Aelfwine was taken suddenly by a westerly wind. All their efforts to oppose the wind were futile. The vision faded from their eyes. And in hunger and exhaustion, they returned to Erin.

After that, Aelfwine was never again able to rest for long on land. He sailed the western seas until he disappeared. Most say he died at sea making one final voyage. But some say that after years of sailing he made it back to those White Shores – one last gift before he left this earth.

## *Chapter 6: Alboin and Audoin*

Alboin awoke the morning after his father's funeral with the dream fresh in his mind. And the song of it rang through him. He wrote down every word of it.

The grief of losing his father had released something inside him. For the dreams had returned and he had them often. Though rarely did he remember everything and he remembered words and songs easier than images. He supposed the task of it helped him with his grief. Knowing that there was a shore somewhere that his father might be, seemed to console him.

But life would have to continue as it would. On the whole he had been luckier than his father; in most ways, but not in one. He had reached a history professorship fairly early; but he had lost his wife, as his father had done, and when he was only twenty-eight, had been left with an only child, a boy, who he named Audoin.

He was a pretty good professor, as they go. Though he taught only in a small southern university southwest of London. He did not suppose he would get a move. But at any rate he wasn't tired of being a professor. And he didn't hate history, and even teaching it. It still seemed interesting and it certainly was fairly important.

He did his duty at least - or he hoped so. The boundaries between subjects were sometimes a bit vague. For, of course, he had gone on with the other things, legends and languages - rather odd for a history professor. Particularly the legend of a primordial deluge came often to his mind and the legend seemed to find its

way into the languages that he studied. And he would often find strange connections to Eressean.

And the Dreams. They came and went. And lately they had been getting more frequent, and more - absorbing. But still tantalizingly linguistic. No tale, no remembered pictures; only the feeling that he had seen things and heard things that he wanted to see, very much, and would give much to see and hear again - and these fragments of words, sentences, verses.

Eressean as he called it as a boy - though he could not remember why he had felt so sure that that was the proper name - was getting pretty complete. He had a lot of Beleriandic, too, and was beginning to understand it, and its relation to Eressean. And he had a lot of unclassifiable fragments, the meaning of which in many cases he did not know, through forgetting to jot it down while he knew it. Then there were odd bits in recognizable languages. Those might be explained away, of course.

But anyway, nothing could be done about them: not publication or anything of that sort. He had an odd feeling that they were not essential: only occasional lapses of forgetfulness which took a linguistic form owing to some peculiarity of his own mental make-up.

The real thing was the feeling the Dreams brought more and more insistently. And they seemed to take force from an alliance with the ordinary professional occupations of his mind.

Surveying the last thirty years, he felt he could say that his most permanent mood, though often overlaid or suppressed, had been since childhood the desire to go

back. To walk in Time, perhaps, as men walk on long roads; or to survey it, as men may see the world from a mountain, or the earth as a living map beneath an airship. But in any case, to see with eyes and to hear with ears: to see the lie of old and even forgotten lands, to behold ancient men walking, and hear their languages as they spoke them, in the days before the days, when tongues of forgotten lineage were heard in kingdoms long fallen by the shores of the Atlantic.

But nothing could be done about that desire, either. Long ago he used to be able to talk about it, a little and not too seriously, with his father. But for a long while he had had no one to talk to about that sort of thing. But now there was Audoin. He was growing up and had just turned thirteen.

He had called his boy Audoin, reversing the Lombardic order. It seemed to fit. It belonged anyway to the same name-family, and went with his own name. Audoin also linguistically came from Eadwine which he remembered from his dreams. And it was a tribute to the memory of his father - another reason for relinquishing Anglo-Saxon Eadwine, or even commonplace Edwin.

Audoin had turned out remarkably like Alboin, as far as his memory of young Alboin went, or his penetration of the exterior of young Audoin. At any rate he seemed interested in the same things, and asked the same questions; though with much less inclination to words and names, and more to things and descriptions. Unlike his father he could draw, but was not good at 'verses'!

Nonetheless he had, of course, eventually asked why he was called Audoin.

"It is latinized from Aedwine."

"Is that where Edwin comes from?"

"It is.

"I'm glad you did not call me that. There are too many Edwins that I know. But who is Aedwine?"

"He was a great warrior and the son of a renowned Mariner, who found Paradise by the sea."

"That is a good name then! What does it mean?"

"That is hard to answer. Since it means many things. '-oin' means friend. And Aud had many meanings: fortune, was it, or of fate, luck, wealth, or blessedness."

"I like Aud then," young Audoin had said. "If it means all that. A good beginning for a name. I wonder what Lombards looked like. Did they all have Long Beards?"

Alboin had scattered tales and legends all down Audoin's childhood and boyhood, like one laying a trail, though he was not clear what trail or where it led. Audoin was a voracious listener, as well as a similarly passionate reader. Alboin was very tempted to share his own odd linguistic secrets with the boy. They could at least have some pleasant private fun. But he could sympathize with his own father now - there was a limit to time. Boys have a lot to do.

Anyway, it was a happy thought to bond on Eressean but Audoin was now sixteen years old and must return to school. Once he decided to take a trip to his childhood house by the sea. The house seemed empty without his father. And before returning to the

university, he spent the evening on the old wall of his childhood staring out at the crashing waves. He would have sworn he heard in those rolling waves voices in Eressean. He smiled at the thought.

His trip made him realize how much he had missed his own son. He was happy that Audoin would return home on the morrow. Examinations were nearly finished for this year for both of them. The examiner's side of the business was decidedly the stickiest he thought, though he supposed his younger self might have disagreed. In any case, he was nearly unstuck at last. They would be back off to the coast in a few days, together. It was the day before their trip that he awoke in the middle of the night recalling words and sounds as if echoing from inside a deep well. Something was different about this one.

## Chapter 7: *The Summons*

Night came and Alboin lay again in a room in a house by the sea: not the little house of his boyhood, but the same sea. It was a calm night, and the water lay like a vast plain of chipped and polished flint, petrified under the cold light of the Moon. The path of moonlight lay from the shore to the edge of sight. And again, the sea seemed to echo with the words of an ancient language. Though it felt like his imagination.

Sleep would not come to him, although he was eager for it. Not for rest - he was not tired; but because of last night's Dream.

He hoped to complete a fragment that had come through vividly that morning. He had it at hand in a note-book by his bed-side; not that he was likely to forget it once it was written down.

ar sauron tule nahamna... lantier turkildi  
and ? came ? ... they-fell ?

unuhuine ... tarkalion ohtakare valannar  
... under-Shadow ... ? war-made on-Powers ...

herunumen ilu terhante ... iluvataren ... eari  
Lord-of-West world broke ... of-Iluvatar ... seas

ullier kilyanna ... numenore ataltane  
... poured in-Chasm ... Numenor down-fell

Then there had seemed to be a long gap.

malle tera lende numenna ilya si maller  
road straight went Westward all now roads

raikar ..... turkildi romenna... nuruhuine mel-lumna  
bent ..... ? eastward ... Death-shadow us-is-heavy

...vahaya sin atalante.  
...far-away now ?

There were one or two new words here, of which he wanted to discover the meaning: it had escaped before he could write it down this morning. Probably they were names: tarkalion was almost certainly a king's name, for tar was common in royal names.

And there was that 'straight road' again. He knew that from his dreams of Ealfwine. It was curious how often he returned to the theme of a 'straight road'.

And what was atalante? It seemed to mean ruin or downfall, but also to be a name.

Alboin felt restless. He left his bed and went to the window. He stood there a long while looking out to sea; and as he stood a chill wind got up in the West. Slowly over the dark rim of sky and water's meeting clouds lifted huge heads, and loomed upwards, stretching out vast wings, south and north.

"They look like the eagles of the Lord of the West over Numenor," he whispered aloud, and started.

He had not purposed any words. For a moment he had felt the oncoming of a great disaster long foreseen.

Now memory stirred, but could not be grasped. He shivered. He went back to bed and lay wondering. Suddenly the old desire came over him – to go *back*. It had been growing again for a long time, but he had not felt it like this, a feeling as vivid as hunger or thirst, for years, not since he was about Audoin's age.

“I wish there was a ‘Time-machine’,” he said aloud. “But Time is not to be conquered by machines. And I should go back, not forward; and I think backwards would be more possible.”

The clouds overcame the sky, and the wind rose and blew; and in his ears, as he fell asleep at last, there was a roaring in the leaves of many trees, and a roaring of long waves upon the shore.

“The storm is coming upon Numenor!” he muttered and passed out of the waking world.

In a wide shadowy place, he heard a voice.

“Elendil!” it said to him. “Alboin, whither are you wandering?”

“Who are you?” he answered. “And where are you?”

A tall figure appeared, as if descending an unseen stair towards him. For a moment it flashed through his thought that the face, dimly seen, reminded him of his father.

“I am with you. I was of Numenor, the father of many fathers before you. I am Elendil, that is in Eressean ‘Elf-friend’, and many have been called so since. You may have your desire.”

“What desire?”

“To the lost road. The long-hidden and the half-spoken: to go back.”

“The lost road? Is that what Eadwine followed.”

“It is the sister road that he followed. For one road leads to the heavens and the other to the distant past.”

“To the past? But that cannot be, even if I wish it. It is against the law.”

“It is against the rule. Laws are commands upon the will and are binding. Rules are conditions; they may have exceptions.”

“But are there ever any exceptions?”

“Rules may be strict, yet they are the means, not the ends, of government. There are exceptions; for there is that which governs and is above the rules.

“Behold, it is by the chinks in the wall that light comes through, whereby men become aware of the light and therein perceive the wall and how it stands. The veil is woven, and each thread goes an appointed course, tracing a design; yet the tissue is not impenetrable, or the design would not be guessed; and if the design were not guessed, the veil would not be perceived, and all would dwell in darkness.

“But these are old parables, and I came not to speak such things. The world is not a machine that makes other machines after the fashion of Sauron. To each under the rule some unique fate is given, and he is excepted from that which is a rule to others. I ask if you would have your desire?”

“I would.”

“You ask not: how or upon what conditions.”

"I do not suppose I should understand how, and it does not seem to me necessary. We go forward, as a rule, but we do not know how. But what are the conditions?"

"That the road and the halts are prescribed. That you cannot return at your wish, but only (if at all) as it may be ordained. For you shall not be as one reading a book or looking in a mirror, but as one walking in living peril. Moreover, you shall not adventure yourself alone."

"Then you do not advise me to accept? You wish me to refuse out of fear?"

"I do not counsel, yes or no. I am not a counsellor. I am a messenger, a permitted voice. The wishing and the choosing are for you."

"But I do not understand the conditions, at least not the last. I ought to understand them all clearly."

"You must, if you choose to go back, take with you Herendil, that is in other tongue Audoin, your son; for you are the ears and he is the eyes. But you may not ask that he shall be protected from the consequences of your choice, save as your own will and courage may contrive."

"But I can ask him, if he is willing?"

"He would say yes, because he loves you and is bold; but that would not resolve your choice."

"And when can I, or we, go back?"

"When you have made your choice."

The figure ascended and receded. There was a roaring as of seas falling from a great height. Alboin could still hear the tumult far away, even after his waking eyes roamed round the room in the grey light of morning.

There was a westerly gale blowing. The curtains of the open window were drenched, and the room was full of wind. He sat silent at the breakfast-table. His eyes strayed continually to his son's face, watching his expressions. He wondered if Audoin ever had any Dreams. Nothing that left any memory, it would appear. Audoin seemed in a merry mood, and his own talk was enough for him, for a while. But at length he noticed his father's silence, unusual even at breakfast.

"You look glum, father," he said. "Is there some knotty problem on hand?"

"Yes - well no, not really," answered Alboin. "I think I was thinking, among other things, that it was a gloomy day, and not a good end to the holidays. What are you going to do?"

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed Audoin. "I thought you loved the wind. I do. Especially a good old West-wind. I am going along the shore."

"Anything on?"

"No, nothing special - just the wind."

"Well, what about the beastly wind?" said Alboin, unaccountably irritated.

The boy's face fell.

"I don't know," he said. "But I like to be in it, especially by the sea; and I thought you did."

There was a silence.

After a while Audoin began again, rather hesitatingly, "Do you remember the other day upon the cliffs near Predannack, when those odd clouds came up in the evening, and the wind began to blow?"

"Yes," said Alboin in an unencouraging tone.

“Well, you said when we got home that it seemed to remind you of something that the wind seemed to blow through you, like, like, a legend you couldn't catch. And you felt, back in the quiet, as if you had listened to a long tale, which left you excited, though it left absolutely no pictures at all.”

“Did I?” said Alboin. “I can remember feeling very cold, and being glad to get back to a fire.”

He immediately regretted it, and felt ashamed. For Audoin said no more; though he felt certain that the boy had been making an opening to say something more, something that was on his mind. But he could not help it. He could not talk of such things today. He felt cold. He wanted peace, not wind.

Soon after breakfast Audoin went out, announcing that he was off for a good tramp, and would not be back at any rate before tea-time. Alboin remained behind. All day last night's vision remained with him, something different from the common order of dreams.

Also, it was (for him) curiously unlinguistic - though plainly related, by the name Numenor, to his language dreams. He could not say whether he had conversed with Elendil in Eressean or English. He wandered about the house restlessly. Books would not be read, and pipes would not smoke. The day slipped out of his hand, running aimlessly to waste. He did not see his son, who did not even turn up for tea, as he had half promised to do. Dark seemed to come unduly early. In the late evening Alboin sat in his chair by the fire.

“I dread this choice,” he said to himself. He had no doubt that there was really a choice to be made. He

would have to choose, one way or another, however he represented it to himself. Even if he dismissed the Dream as what is called 'a mere dream', it would be a choice - a choice equivalent to no.

'But I cannot make up my mind to no,' he thought. 'I think, I am almost sure, Audoin would say yes. And he will know of my choice sooner or later. It is getting more and more difficult to hide my thoughts from him: we are too closely akin, in many ways besides blood, for secrets. The secret would become unbearable, if I tried to keep it. My desire would become doubled through feeling that I might have, and become intolerable. And Audoin would probably feel I had robbed him through funk.

'But it is dangerous, perilous in the extreme - or so I am warned. I don't mind for myself. But for Audoin. But is the peril any greater than fatherhood lets in? It is perilous to come into the world at any point in Time. Yet I feel the shadow of this peril more heavily. Why? Because it is an exception to the rules? Or am I experiencing a choice backwards: the peril of fatherhood repeated? Being a father twice to the same person would make one think. Perhaps I am already moving back. I don't know. I wonder. Fatherhood is a choice, and yet it is not wholly by a man's will. Perhaps this peril is my choice, and yet also outside my will. I don't know. It is getting very dark. How loud the wind is. There is storm over Numenor.'

Alboin slept in his chair. He was climbing steps, up, up on to a high mountain. He felt, and thought he could hear, Audoin following him, climbing behind him. He halted, for it seemed somehow that he was again in the

same place as on the previous night; though no figure could be seen.

“I have chosen,” he said. “I will go back with Herendil.”

Then he lay down, as if to rest. He could see the silhouette of his son as he faded into sleep.

“Good night!” Alboin murmured. “Sleep well, Herendil! We start when the summons comes.”

“You have chosen,” a voice said above him. “The summons is at hand.”

Then Alboin seemed to fall into a dark and a silence, deep and absolute. It was as if he had left the world completely, where all silence is on the edge of sound, and filled with echoes, and where all rest is but repose upon some greater motion. He had left the world and gone out. He was silent and at rest: a point. He was poised; but it was clear to him that he had only to will it, and he would move.

“Whither?” He perceived the question, but neither as a voice from outside, nor as one from within himself. “To whatever place is appointed. Where is Herendil?”

“Waiting. The motion is yours.”

“Let us move!”



Audoïn tramped on, keeping within sight of the sea as much as he could. He lunched at an inn, and then tramped on again, further than he had intended. He was enjoying the wind and the rain, yet he was filled with a

curious disquiet. There had been something odd about his father this morning.

"So disappointing," Auboin said to himself. "I particularly wanted to have a long tramp with him to-day. We talk better walking, and I really must have a chance of telling him about the dreams. I can talk about that sort of thing to my father, if we both get into the mood together. Not that he is usually at all difficult - seldom like to-day. He usually takes you as you mean it: joking or serious; doesn't mix the two, or laugh in the wrong places. I have never known him so frosty."

He tramped on.

"Dreams," he thought. "But not the usual sort, quite different: very vivid; and though never quite repeated, all gradually fitting into a story. But a sort of phantom story with no explanations. Just pictures, but not a sound, not a word. Ships coming to land. Towers on the shore. Battles, with swords glinting but silent. And there is that ominous picture: the great temple on the mountain, smoking like a volcano. And that awful vision of the chasm in the seas, a whole land slipping sideways, mountains rolling over; dark ships fleeing into the dark. I want to tell someone about it, and get some kind of sense into it. Father would help: we could make up a good yarn together out of it. If I knew even the name of the place, it would turn a nightmare into a story. Darkness began to fall long before he got back.

"I hope father will have had enough of himself and be chatty tonight," he thought. "The fireside is next best to a walk for discussing dreams."

It was already night as he came up the path, and saw a light in the sitting-room. He found his father sitting by the fire. The room seemed very still, and quiet - and too hot after a day in the open. Alboin sat, his head rested on one arm. His eyes were closed. He seemed asleep. He made no sign.

Audoin was creeping out of the room, heavy with disappointment. There was nothing for it but an early bed, and perhaps better luck tomorrow. As he reached the door, he thought he heard the chair creak, and then his father's voice (far away and rather strange in tone) murmuring something: it sounded like Herendil. He was used to odd words and names slipping out in a murmur from his father. Sometimes his father would spin a long tale round them. He turned back hopefully.

"Good night!" said Alboin. "Sleep well, Herendil! We start when the summons comes."

Then his head fell back against the chair.

"Dreaming," thought Audoin. "Good night, father!"

And he went out, and stepped into sudden darkness.

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In the depths of his sleep, Alboin heard someone call out to him.

"Alboin! Alboin!" his father's voice called. "Where are you?"

His father was looking for him. His father? Was his father alive?

“Here: up on the wall, father.”

Vague images of his childhood took shape in his mind. Then they faded and he called out for his son Audoin.

“Aedwine! Aedfwine!” he called. Wait! That wasn’t his son’s name. His name was Audoin. The darkness spun around him. “Where are you?”

“Here: up on the wall, father,” he heard, seeing the vague image of a wall and the boy. But it wasn’t Audoin’s voice. It was deeper, but also still that of a child.

“So, there you are!” he said to Aedwine. “You must be deaf or dreaming.”

Then he called out again and again. Each time he responded, “Where are you?” And each time he heard a different voice in his own mouth and a different voice responded back. Then finally the darkness broke and the world about him took shape.