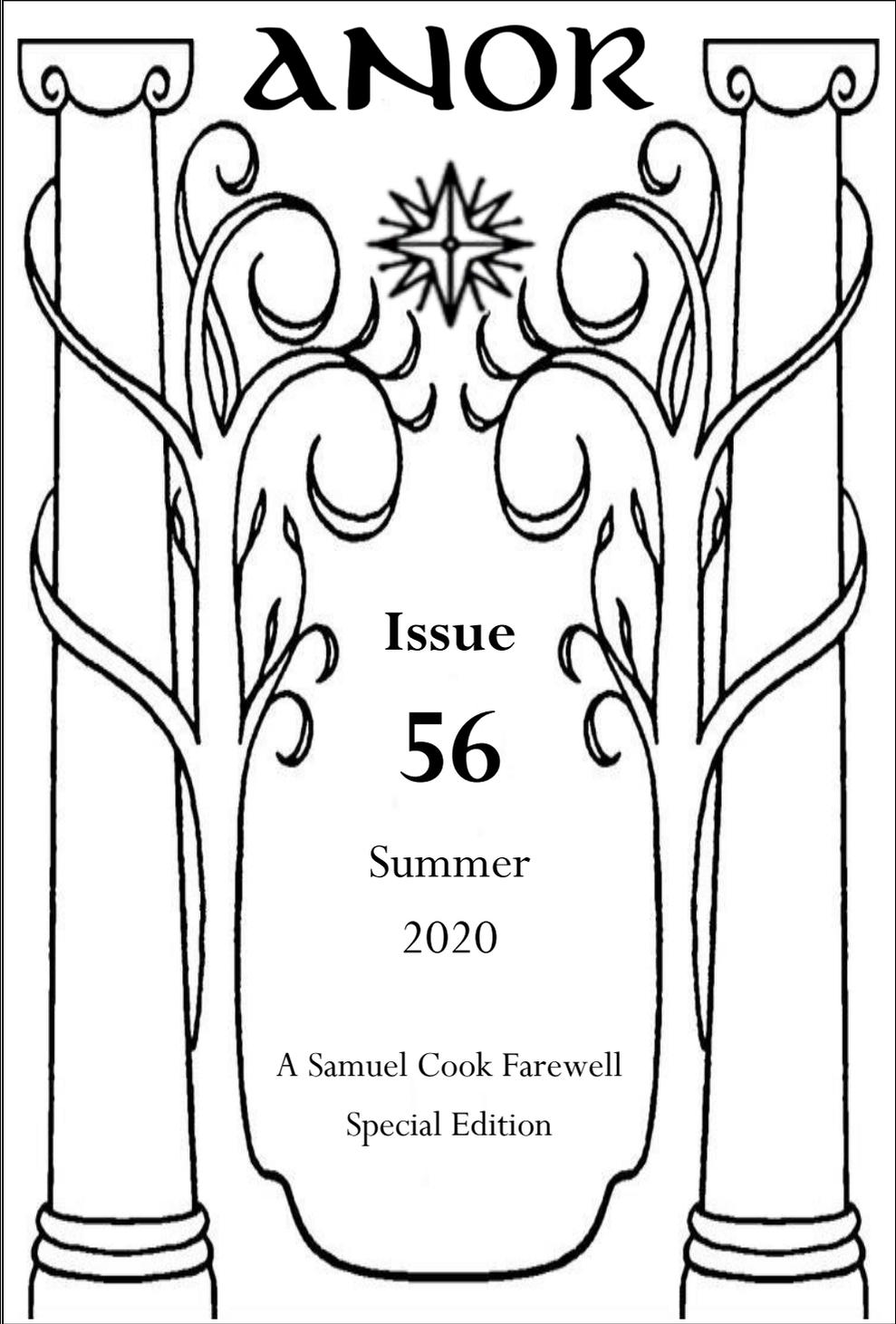


# ANOR

The cover features a decorative Art Nouveau border. It consists of two vertical columns on either side, each topped with a scroll-like finial and a decorative band near the base. The columns are connected by a central, symmetrical floral and scrollwork motif that frames the text. At the top center of this motif is a starburst or sunburst design.

Issue

**56**

Summer

2020

A Samuel Cook Farewell

Special Edition



## *EDITORIAL*

For many of us, it wouldn't feel like Anor without at least one Samuel Cook feature in it. In this issue we can go one better: they are *all* Samuel Cook features – from the informative Alexander-Fëanor comparisons to the equally informative video game discussions, from horror-comedy in *The Secret Diary of Gríma* to Silmarillion-esque grandeur in *Of Ahyatur*.

I speak with real gratitude as an editor – and doubtless past editors would say the same – when I say that Samuel has been a generous contributor to, and at times the mainstay of, Anor. Long may he write!

Daeron (Eleanor Smith)

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# *ALEXANDER THE NOT SO GREAT?*

## **Or: Fëanor Wept, For He Couldn't Conquer Even One World**

**Samuel Cook**

After a bit of light holiday reading, it struck me that there are several parallels between the life of Alexander the Great, the precocious conquest-obsessed king of Macedon, and Fëanor, the precocious revenge-obsessed king of the Noldor.<sup>1</sup> Now, I'm not seriously suggesting Tolkien used Alexander as a model for Fëanor – indeed, Tolkien almost entirely avoided any reference to Classical matters in his *legendarium* in favour of what might be broadly termed 'Northern' mythology and history. But, I will point out that the two share a fair amount of common ground, and also why Fëanor is very clearly not an Elven Alexander.

To start with, a quick overview of the two leading men is in order: Alexander III of Macedon, known to later history as 'the Great', was king of Macedon between 336 and 323 BC. His father, Philip II, had turned the country from a marginal backwater of the Greek world into an economic powerhouse with a well-trained, professional army, making it hegemon of Greece through a

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<sup>1</sup> See what I did there?

combination of astute diplomacy<sup>2</sup> and an almost-unbeaten military record, culminating in the Battle of Chaeronea<sup>3</sup> in 338 BC. When Philip was assassinated, Alexander inherited the throne,<sup>4</sup> but also his father's plan to invade Asia to get their own back on the Persians after their invasions of Greece in the previous century. This he promptly did, and in a little over a decade, had imposed his rule over all of Greece, destroyed the Achaemenid Persian Empire and conquered Central Asia from the Hellespont<sup>5</sup> to the Indus<sup>6</sup> in the east, and from the Jaxartes<sup>7</sup> in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south. He then died a few weeks short of his 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday in Babylon whilst planning to invade Arabia, probably due to a massive binge-drinking session on top of a decade of

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<sup>2</sup> A euphemistic term for continually lying through his back teeth and double-crossing everyone.

<sup>3</sup> Where an 18-year-old Alexander distinguished himself in the fighting.

<sup>4</sup> Despite being the son of Philip's fourth (of seven) wives, but his elder brother had some unspecified mental impairment that ruled him out as a suitable candidate for a Macedonian king.

<sup>5</sup> What we'd now call the Dardanelles.

<sup>6</sup> Well, actually, he got to the Hydaspes, the modern Jhelum river, which is slightly further east, but no one reading this is likely to have heard of the Jhelum, but they probably do know of the Indus.

<sup>7</sup> The Syr Darya; the more northerly of the two big rivers that feed the Aral Sea.

war wounds.<sup>8</sup> He never lost a battle,<sup>9</sup> but he had rather neglected minor things such as ensuring the succession and really dealing with the administrative and social problems that came with conquering such a large area. Consequently, on his death, his generals squabbled among themselves and his empire fractured into smaller kingdoms,<sup>10</sup> which were absorbed by other powers<sup>11</sup> over the next 200 years. But his conquests opened up trade and exchange between East and West, spreading Hellenistic culture to the borders of India and bringing Eastern ideas and philosophies to the attention of the West, so there were some good things about wholesale slaughter, pillaging and looting across half a continent as well.

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<sup>8</sup> The night before he collapsed and contracted his final illness, he'd been drinking all evening, well into the night, and had then topped it off with something like 40 toasts and downing a pitcher reputed to hold 12 pints. Of course, he might have been poisoned, but it hardly seems necessary to invoke that when he'd drunk that much alcohol in so short a time.

<sup>9</sup> Detachments of his army under other commanders did, but he never lost one where he was in command.

<sup>10</sup> The main ones being Antigonid Macedon, occupying the lands of the original Macedon in northern Greece and parts of the surrounding areas of Greece and Thrace; the Seleucid Empire, controlling Asia Minor east through to the Indus (nominally); and Ptolemaic Egypt.

<sup>11</sup> Rome in the west, and various local rulers and the Mauryan Empire in the east.

Fëanor perhaps needs less introduction, but to recap: he was the eldest son of Finwë, the first king of the Noldor, by his first wife, Miriel, and, in his youth, came up with a whole new alphabet and script for the Elves, which he then topped by making the Silmarils, the greatest work of non-Ainurian craft in Middle-earth. When Finwë is killed by Morgoth, who is seeking to steal the Silmarils and escape Valinor, Fëanor persuades 90% of the Noldor to follow him in an invasion of Middle-earth to regain the Silmarils, starting a minor civil war with the Teleri *en route* when he steals their ships, and is then killed in the first major battle against the forces of Morgoth. His seven sons then lose the kingship of the Noldor, as Maedhros waives his House's right in favour of Fingolfin, the elder of Fëanor's half-brothers, in recompense for Fëanor leaving them behind in Valinor when he sailed to Middle-earth, thus forcing them to cross the Helcaraxë. The Noldor as a whole end up embroiled in a centuries-long war with Morgoth that they can't possibly win and they nearly all die as a result, until the Valar turn up and sort things out. Something of a mixed legacy, in other words – lots of shinies on one hand; lots of dead bodies on the other.

So, the parallels between the two:

- Great dad with multiple wives: both Philip II and Finwë were pretty effective monarchs that set things up so that their sons could surpass them.

Philip II turned Macedon into an economic and military powerhouse such that Alexander could do all his conquering; Finwë led the Noldor to Valinor, giving his son the chance to learn all his craft skills.<sup>12</sup> And both married multiple wives, which caused some family issues (see below).

- Precocious: Alexander had conquered the known world by the time he was 30; Fëanor had casually developed an entire new alphabet and writing system at some unspecified point in his youth.
- Sibling problems: Owing to their fathers having multiple wives, both Alexander and Fëanor had some siblings they weren't overly fond of. Alexander had all his half-brothers put to death,<sup>13</sup> which is one way of resolving the tensions; Fëanor was exiled over his argument with Fingolfin and then left him stuck in Araman when he burned the ships at Losgar, forcing Fingolfin to

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<sup>12</sup> I know I've just made Fëanor sound like a proto-William-Morris. Now that's a crossover that would lead to some pretty odd outcomes – 'No one shall keep a Silmaril from me! Unless they have nice wallpaper.'

<sup>13</sup> Except the mentally-impaired Arrhidaeus; probably because he wasn't a threat. There's also some suggestion that Alexander's mother, Olympias, had been responsible for poisoning Arrhidaeus and causing his impairment, so Alexander might actually have felt a teensy bit guilty about the whole thing.

cross the Helcaraxë. Considering everything, Fingolfin behaved with remarkable equanimity in that he didn't try to murder Fëanor when he finally got to Beleriand...

- **Invalidate the East:** Alexander invaded and defeated the Persian Empire to avenge the sufferings of the Greeks in earlier Persian invasions of Greece;<sup>14</sup> Fëanor invaded Beleriand to avenge his loss of the Silmarils<sup>15</sup> and to try to recover them.
- **Vindictive:** One of the less-attractive parts of Alexander's character was that anyone who crossed him personally tended to end up dead in fairly short order. Such as Cleitus, who had previously saved his life, when he said something disparaging about Alexander's increasing Orientalism.<sup>16</sup> Or Coenus, the general who spoke in favour of the mutineers at the Hyphasis that forced Alexander to abandon his conquest of

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<sup>14</sup> And to get lots of swag. And further his own personal ambition. But, you know, those were definitely secondary to the nobler Panhellenic goal of getting their own back. Definitely.

<sup>15</sup> And to conquer some bigger kingdoms without Manwë tutting disapprovingly over his shoulder. But, in this case, recovering the Silmarils was definitely his main motive.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander just upped and killed him there and then. No subtlety at all.

India.<sup>17</sup> And plenty of others. It's possible Alexander was a bit megalomaniacal to the point of believing in his own divinity.<sup>18</sup> Fëanor, meanwhile, was a bit less murderous, but he was certainly perfectly happy to abandon Fingolfin and most of the army in Araman, thinking them of little worth – he'd never liked his half-brother, after all. Again, not an Elf to cross.<sup>19</sup>

- Suicidally brave: Alexander embodied the idea that Macedonian kings should lead from the front, and consequently nearly died on several occasions, suffering several major wounds, though he was always saved in the nick of time. Fëanor certainly had no compunction about taking on Morgoth and the whole of Angband

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<sup>17</sup> Who was just found dead a few days later. It might have been a coincidence, but it's an awfully convenient one, if so. Though, admittedly, there were plenty of things he could have died of without it being in any way anything to do with Alexander. But still...

<sup>18</sup> He almost certainly did come to believe he was divine, which generated a bit of friction with his Macedonian generals, who were dead against worshipping living men. Hence why so many of them ended up getting executed on trumped-up charges. As I said, Alexander was not a man to cross.

<sup>19</sup> And then there's the Oath of Fëanor. If that's not vindictive, I don't know what is.

single-handed, as shown by the manner of his demise, doing exactly that.

- Died young: Alexander died just short of his 33<sup>rd</sup> birthday, which was a little on the young side for a grown man, even in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. It's a bit more difficult to say this for Fëanor, what with him being an Elf and all, but, in some sense, the fact that he died at all is a case of 'dying young' for the Elves. Regardless, in Elf terms, he certainly wasn't more than middle-aged, having been born in Valinor, rather than beforehand.
- Problematic legacy: Alexander left no clear successor, leading to the fragmentation of his empire in the decades after his death, and was also responsible for a wide swath of death and destruction across western Asia. Which wasn't made any better by the civil wars after his death. On the other hand, he was responsible for initiating an era of greater cultural and economic dynamism, so it wasn't all bad. Fëanor, on his death, left his sons (who lost the throne to Fingolfin's House) and the rest of the Noldor bound by an oath and a doom they could not escape, fighting a war they could not win, and was responsible for the Kinslaying at Alqualondë, forcing Fingolfin to cross the Helcaraxë at great cost, and, ultimately, for the deaths of an awful lot of Elves, Men and Orcs. However, by bringing the

Noldor to Beleriand, he did usher in a new era of artistic and cultural dynamism, leading to many great works of skill,<sup>20</sup> and was personally responsible for creating the Silmarils.

Therefore, it's fair to say that there are several striking similarities between the two, even if I find it unlikely that Tolkien had any conscious intention to emulate Alexander with the character of Fëanor.

However, this doesn't mean that Fëanor is Alexander. If he were, *The Silmarillion* would play out quite differently. Finwë would already have conquered Valinor and forced the Valar to submit, if so. Fëanor's war against Morgoth would then have been successful, and Morgoth would have been killed<sup>21</sup> or shut in the Void, with Fëanor reclaiming the Silmarils. The Noldor would then have carried on eastwards, conquering all of Eriador, Rhovanion and the later lands of Rohan and Gondor, before finally tiring of Fëanor's megalomania and pretensions to divinity, and forcing a return to their homes and loved ones, still over the Sea in Valinor, and scattered throughout Beleriand. Fëanor would, in the meantime, have executed most of the Houses of Fingolfin and Finarfin, and would die of dissipation whilst

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<sup>20</sup> Gondolin, Nargothrond, Turgon's images of Laurelin and Telperion (Glingal and Belthil), etc.

<sup>21</sup> If that could be achieved.

planning his invasion of Harad. On his death, his sons<sup>22</sup> and any other surviving members of the House of Finwë would have started a decades-long civil war for his empire, which would have split up into several portions, perhaps one Valinorean, one Beleriandic and one Eriadorian, with Rhovanion rebelling and returning to native rule. In many ways, that's a much bleaker picture than in the actual narrative, which is an impressive feat, given the generally bleak nature of a lot of *The Silmarillion*!

As I stated at the start, it seems unlikely that Tolkien was consciously inspired by Alexander, but there is one way in which Alexander tropes could have indirectly been in Tolkien's mind and found themselves repeated in the character of Fëanor. Alexander was the subject of an awful lot of writing in the ancient and medieval worlds, being seen as a model king – the *Alexander Romance*, a mythologised account of his life, is the most-translated work of the Middle Ages, second only to the Gospels, and versions exist in, for example, both Irish and Icelandic. The point is, northern European writers setting down the Northern mythology that Tolkien later drew on would have been very much aware of Alexander, making it inevitable that some of his characteristics would have

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<sup>22</sup> Though, if we're really being rigorous, he would have only left one or two sons, who would have still been children. There certainly wouldn't have been seven adult ones.

been ascribed to similar heroic figures in their own mythologies. King Arthur springs to mind, immediately, for example. So, even if Tolkien had no real intention of introducing an Alexander to Middle-earth, it is perhaps not surprising that echoes of him can be found.

Overall then, whilst it is undoubtedly true that several parallels can be drawn between Alexander and Fëanor, such as their brilliance, their families and their desire for revenge, it does not make Fëanor in any way merely a translation of Alexander into Middle-earth. Indeed, the parallels seem more likely to be purely coincidental, rather than any conscious attempt by Tolkien to introduce an Alexander-like figure into his legendarium, given his preference for Northern history and mythology over that of the Classical world. But, given the influence of Alexander on later ancient and medieval European writing, including on recorders of northern myths, it is perhaps unsurprising that echoes of his character should be found in a work that, at face value, has nothing to do with him.

# *THE SECRET DIARY OF GRÍMA, SON OF GÁLMÓD*

Aged 16 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

Samuel Cook

5 Viressë T.A. 2993

Dear diary – great news! I’ve been accepted onto the summer internship programme at Curunír Industries! Finally, an opportunity to do some real science with the most exciting and progressive technologist in Rohan! I’ll show all those meatheads at school that it’s not all about being 6 feet tall, blond, able to ride a horse and wield a sword. None of them passed the aptitude tests – I expect they weren’t even able to write their name. Especially that Eówinë – what a *forgoil!*

Anyway, it’s a month-long placement for the whole of Urimë. I’ll be able to impress everyone with my knowledge of Quenya and get out of this summer’s Horse Camp. If I’m really lucky, I might even get offered a job and not have to get conscripted – Dr Curunír has some sort of understanding with the king, which means workers at Isengard are exempted from all that military nonsense. Why does no one else in this deadbeat country think horses and swords are just a bit silly? Honestly, one’s a stupid animal that sometimes will just jump three

feet sideways because it thought it saw something, and the other's just a fancy stick. If you ask me,<sup>1</sup> all these young men spending all their time around horses rather than girls is a bit weird. Not that my efforts to spend more time with girls have come to much – they seem to avoid me. Maybe I should try this 'washing' thing sometimes....

Right, I'm off to mess around with those strange powders I stole from that merchant that came through last week. Maybe my attempts to make combustible water will finally succeed!<sup>2</sup>

## **27 Cermië T.A. 2993**

Dear diary – only a few days now until I start my placement with Dr Curunír! I've had to fill in and return all sorts of forms, which was a bit time-consuming. The most difficult part was trying not to get bitten by the messenger's mount when he came to pick them up. It was distinctly wolf-like, but so much more intelligent than a horse. And probably better at fighting things too. Big teeth, though. And the messenger himself was a bit...

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<sup>1</sup> Which no one does. Hmmph.

<sup>2</sup> Note to self: DO NOT mix the red and blue powders and then heat them again. It's going to take weeks to regrow my eyebrows.

Orc-ish? That's probably being unfair – he'd had a long ride, I expect, and that explains why he was a bit brusque. Still, he didn't really need to decapitate the watchman, did he? Maybe I'll mention to Dr Curunír that some of his lesser employees are a bit wayward. I'm sure he'd like to know that. And, come to think of it, some of the forms were a bit odd – I had to fill in my blood group, explain my attitude to trees,<sup>3</sup> sign a waiver for any fire- or explosion-related injuries, and one making Dr Curunír my legal guardian for the whole month. But, I'm sure this is all perfectly normal and is just to keep me safe and allow Dr Curunír to take prompt action should I be injured. After all, with so many exciting experimental projects going on, I suppose the odd accident has to occur. But it's a risk I'm prepared to take! Besides, I'm only an intern – I'm not going to be let near any really dangerous stuff. Right?

### **1 Urimë T.A. 2993**

Dear Diary – just had my first day as an intern at Curunír Industries! MIND. BLOWN. It started off with an induction session where Dr Curunír himself welcomed us to the company. He just looked so wise and was such a great speaker – such presence, such masterful eyes and voice. I can't remember exactly what he said now, but it

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<sup>3</sup> Fundamentally a bit dull and mainly useful as firewood.

sounded really good at the time. And I think he looked STRAIGHT AT ME! Me, worthless little Gríma! I almost fainted. I so want to impress him.

Then we had a tour of the Isengard facility. The Explosives Lab was my favourite bit – so much going on – but there was also the Metallurgy Annex,<sup>4</sup> the Civil Engineering Section, the Dyeing and Textiles Unit,<sup>5</sup> the Petting Zoo<sup>6</sup> and loads of others. All of them at the forefront of modern progress, boldly forging ahead into a bright new future! If only those dunderheads back in the village could see this! Maybe they'd understand how limited their vision is.

We didn't get shown round the big tower – Orthanc – though, where Dr Curunír lives and has his own private research laboratories. That's a shame – I bet the view from the top would have been quite something. There also seems to be some sort of underground complex that

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<sup>4</sup> They seemed to have a lot of swords. But, I suppose that's what there's a market for round here – it's not Dr Curunír's fault all his neighbours are so barbarous. He's doing his best to help the region advance technologically, but it takes a while to overcome the cultural inertia. He'll show us all a better way forward soon!

<sup>5</sup> They make such colourful robes!

<sup>6</sup> A lot of the attendants seemed to be missing hands or fingers. I suppose they've suffered accidents in another part of the company and been reassigned to lighter duties. Dr Curunír's such a caring employer!

was left out of the tour too – we went past a couple of entrances and there seemed to be a lot of screaming, growling and shouting going on. Probably some sort of brand-new experimental industrial process that can't be out in the open because it's too sensitive or dangerous or something. Maybe I'll get to look round there before I leave if I'm good.

We also got our assignments through – I've been put in Metallurgy. I'd rather have gone into Explosives, but this'll do. At least I might be able to make something to take away as a souvenir. Though, turns out, we have to live on-site for the whole month. Dr Curunír's very keen on security and preventing industrial espionage, so we all have to be in our bunks by sundown and can't pass beyond the wall<sup>7</sup> without special permission. I'm not bothered – the gruel's better here than the revolting stuff Mum cooks, and I won't have to hide from Dad when he's in a beating mood. Which is most of the time. This is going to be the best month of my life!

## **8 Urimë T.A. 2993**

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<sup>7</sup> He's so keen on security, the entire facility is surrounded by a massive wall. There's only one gate in it and it's very heavily-guarded. The guards were a bit scary, actually – they looked as if they might eat me.

Dear Diary – I’ve been at Curunír Industries for a week now and I’ve achieved more than I have in the last 16 years! I never knew metals were so interesting – I’ve been learning all about how to vary alloy compositions to get different properties in the final metal and I’ve already managed to make a couple of minor improvements to their processes. Nothing big – I just noticed that the main furnace temperature wasn’t quite optimised, and, messing around with some leftover scrap, I’ve come up with a new steel alloy that’s 10% stiffer. Apparently, I’ve been commended to the Head of Metallurgy, Dr Luznakh – he’s a bit frightening and seems to spend most of his time trying out new swords on dummies. He looks a bit Orcish too, like a lot of the employees here, actually. But that just shows how open-minded and progressive Dr Curunír is as an employer – why should we be prejudiced against people just because of their looks?

Actually, speaking of Dr Curunír, it seems all the long-term employees call him ‘Sharkey’, or just ‘The Boss’. What a sign of respect and affection! I think it’s because he apparently has a shark tank in his own personal office – how typical of the man – he might be a committed industrialist, but he also cares about the natural world!<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Obviously, it goes without saying that the rumours that disaffected employees are fed to the sharks are completely baseless. Great men always inspire jealousy – people should

Oddly, though, a couple of the interns have vanished. They must have decided it wasn't for them and gone home! Not everyone can stand the white heat of technological progress! More fool them, really – those of us who really understand what The Boss is getting at will stay on and show them what can be done with a bit of effort.

### **11 Urimë T.A. 2993**

Dear Diary – I've done it! I've got a one-to-one meeting with The Boss. I had a meeting with Dr Luznakh a couple of days ago and he said that he was so impressed with my achievements in such a short space of time that he thought I should be personally thanked by Dr Curunír himself. This might be the proudest moment of my life! No, scratch that, it definitely is!

More of the interns have given up and left too, I notice. At least, I assume that's what's happened – can't say I interact with them much. They're all far too slow-witted. I don't think they're even true believers – some of them even seemed to have some doubts about Sharkey. Good riddance to bad rubbish, that's what I say. Those of us who keep faith will be rewarded.

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be thankful that Dr Curunír is working tirelessly for the betterment of mankind!

## 12 Urimë T.A. 2993

Dear Diary – I had my meeting with The Boss today. I got to go inside Orthanc and up to his private suite. It's so plush and full of all sorts of technological marvels! One day, I want to have a house like that. Dr Curunír spoke to me for a whole ten minutes of his valuable time. He must be the cleverest man in the whole world. Everything he said seemed, at the same time, such clear common sense and also so wonderfully subtle and insightful. Maybe I can learn to be like that? He asked me a bit about whether I was enjoying my time at Isengard, what I wanted to do after the internship, that kind of thing. Obviously, I told him it was the best thing that had ever happened to me and that I didn't really want to leave; certainly not when the alternative was going back to those hopeless rustics at home or in the village.

He seemed to be amused by my answers and, just as I was about to leave, he seemed to remember why I'd been sent to him at all and told me I deserved some reward for my sterling service. He gave me a ring, the most beautiful I've ever seen, and told me to wear it with pride, as he'd made it himself and only gave such rings to special friends. You could have knocked me down with a feather! A ring made by The Boss himself? Just for me? Needless to say, I'm wearing it now and I don't think I'll ever take it off. I was so stunned, the rest of the day passed in a sort of daze. Apparently, I was insanely

productive – I think it’s because I now feel as if The Boss’s gaze is on me all the time. I have to be worthy of him.

## **28 Urimë T.A. 2993**

Dear Diary – I’ve not written for a while. I’ve been too busy, helping The Boss. I’m his special assistant now. I go everywhere with him – I know what he wants better than anyone and he knows he can trust little Gríma like nobody else. I will serve him in any way I can for as long as I live. We’re of one mind. Some of his charisma’s even rubbing off on me – I’m much more comfortable talking to people now and getting them to do what I want. Finally, people listen to me!

I found out what’s in the basement level too. It’s the Breeding Pens. The Boss is breeding humans and Orcs to make a hybrid race that combines the best of both races. That’s where my fellow interns went when it was clear they weren’t going to make the grade. Though some were instead fed to the Wargs that live underneath the Petting Zoo, when it became clear they were too weak to be allowed to endanger The Boss’s pursuit of a perfect Man-Orc fusion. This is only right – not everyone fully understands Sharkey’s single-minded dedication to Progress and Technology. They might even poison our neighbours against us if they were allowed to return. In death, at least, they can contribute to the Great Work in a

way they never could have if they'd been left alive. What matter the deaths of a few in the pursuit of such great benefits for all of Middle-earth?

I also ran into that messenger that decapitated our village watchman all those months ago. I mentioned the matter to The Boss and the messenger was promptly fed to the sharks. We can't have anyone endangering The Boss's work by drawing unnecessary attention to it.

For the same reason, this will be the last time I write in you, Diary. Imagine if someone found this? They might get the wrong idea too and stymie our vital work! No, you will be better used as kindling for the ever-burning furnaces that are forging a new, better future under the benevolent hand of Dr Curunír. Goodbye.

# *OF AHYATUR*

## **Or: Chapter 10.5**

### **Samuel Cook**

As has been said, in Valinor, all things remained changeless and constant, and no blight or sickness did they know until Melkor, with the aid of Ungoliant, assailed the Two Trees and destroyed their light, as it seemed, for ever. And whilst many of the Ainur and the Eldar were content with the changeless nature of their abode, a refuge from the all-too-rapid decay and restlessness found in all things in Middle-earth, there were some who yearned for change, arguing that something that changeth not ever had, in effect if not verily, died and ceased to play a part in the Music. For the Music itself remained never constant at the beginning of Time and grew and throve as it took sustenance from the minds of all the Ainur. Wherefore then should the Valar seek for constancy, which was an affront to the invention of Ilúvatar and resembled rather the artless and repetitive mimicry of the Great Enemy who had sought to bend the Music to his will?

Among the Eldar, nearly all who held to this thought were of the Noldor and left Valinor with Fëanor. But some too of the Maiar were of like mind and of these Ahyatur, as the Eldar named them, was chief. Unlike

many of the other Maiar who took forms incarnate, Ahyatur had no fixed semblance, but was rather ever changeful; sometimes appearing as a man or a woman, but more often neither or both, or any one of a myriad of forms that appeared strange and wonderful to all that gazed upon them. In origin, Ahyatur was of the people of Irmo, and a master of dreams and visions, but they also visited much the mansions of Aulë in search of the craft to make their dreams be. Yet, of all things in Valinor, Ahyatur hearkened most to the music of water, in which the ever-changing notes of the Great Music could still be heard, so that they were often found beside the pools, streams and fountains of Irmo's gardens, conjuring into being a vision of something wholly new that disappeared as soon as their attention to it was withdrawn, as dreams fade in the mind upon awakening. But to the Sea and the Realm of Ulmo were they most drawn, for the Sea is the least constant of all waters and presents ever a new aspect; oft is it calm and playful, but it may also rise in wrath and ruin.

In the days following the death of the Trees and the Darkening of Valinor, Ahyatur received a foreshowing in a dream, they knew not whence, of the raising of the Pelóri to new and dreadful heights and the Hiding of Valinor. Guessing aright that Valinor would become ever more removed from the concerns and tides of the Outer Lands, they saw now that they must either depart Valinor

or fall themselves into the death from constancy that they abhorred. But leaving Valinor at this time would risk placing them under the Ban of the Valar and being named rebel, and, whilst they might not be of like mind with the Valar, they had not fallen into the folly of Melkor or Fëanor and rejected them.

Thus they determined that they would have to lay their case before Manwë himself and sue for release from the invisible bonds of Valinor. Only the Elder King, save Ilúvatar himself, could amend one of his own judgements or a decree propounded by the Valar united. So Ahyatur climbed the Mountain to Manwë and Varda's halls upon the utmost pinnacle, in form a crow-man, sombre and drab. They passed the dwellings of the Vanyar, which rang with sad music for the fate of Valinor, and travelled on into the regions of eternal snow, which afflicted them with their constancy and which they would never enter unless driven by some great need. Turning their face from the snow they saw the whole of Valinor laid before them as a child's plaything; from the golden fields of the wheat of Yavanna, to the dark forests of Oromë; from the glittering spires of Valimar that glittered no longer, to the sombre fastness of Mandos on the edges of the world. All unchanging, immutable, eternal. Turning again, they saw the Great Sea stretching leagues uncounted to the Outer Lands, roiling with ceaseless motion, never at rest. 'Perhaps there might I find that which I seek,' they cried,

and turned once more to find themselves before the gates of the hall of Manwë.

Blue as the unclouded sky of Arda were those gates, set with sapphires innumerable. But, above, they were dark as the voids of Menel that only the Ainur and Eärendil have seen, but scattered with diamonds uncounted that flashed and flickered, as the Stars of Varda shine in the heavens. Before the gates stood Eönwë in armour of silver blue, a shining guard past whom none could pass unchallenged, and past whom none could pass at all if they came in arms; no surer guard could there ever be. Above the gates reared the last precipice of Taniquetil, a blank face of snowbound rock. Such was the approach to the dwelling of Manwë and Varda; of which Angband and Thangorodrim were but a dark shadow.

As Ahyatur approached the gate, Eönwë spoke. 'Thou art expected. Enter and may thou be guided by the wisdom of Manwë.' Bowing, he stepped to one side and smote upon the gate with the hilt of his sword. In response, there was a sigh and a breath of air that seemed to come from the very first morning of Arda, when all had been new and full of delight, and the gate was no more, dissolving like mist on a summer's morn. Ahyatur's heart rose at the scent and, bowing in reply to Eönwë, they entered the tunnel that slanted up through the living rock to the halls of Manwë and Varda.

They came at last out of the tunnel into the light and beheld a wide, flat space that crowned the final tower of the Mountain. Directly before them, in the middle of the platform, stood a great hall. Roofless and wall-less it was, being made of many great pillars that intertwined overhead, as the branches of trees, and were cunningly carved with many wondrous scenes of the deeds of the Ainur and of Ilúvatar. No walls it had to let the wind play ever about it and as it did so, great chimes that hung from the pillars made a music of unutterable beauty that suffused the very air with calm. No roof it had so that the stars could ever be seen and their light illuminate the carvings, so that they would gleam with all the colours of the rainbow as the many gems took up the light they received and sent it forth in marvellous hues for all to see. And in the middle of the hall, seeming as it were the very peak of the utmost pinnacle of Taniquetil, sat the great double throne of Manwë and Varda, like unto a soaring eagle surmounted by a canopy of stars. Of solid sapphire and gold was the seat of Manwë made; and of silver and diamond was Varda's. Such was the throne room of the Elder King and none would ever surpass it.

Ahyatur bowed low before the throne and Manwë spoke.

'I know why thou hast come Ahyatur. For thinkest thou not that I took heed of all the Music, even to the smallest part therein? For am I not the vice-gerent of Ilúvatar and see farther than any in Arda?'

'And thinkest thou not that I heard what thou said, from thy cry on the Mountain down to thy least utterance? For do I not hear more keenly than any in Arda?' spoke Varda.

'Yea verily, Lord and Lady,' spoke Ahyatur, and they were afraid, 'but what need then that I come in person if you know already all my thoughts and have judged my case? Mighteth it not have been kinder to relieve me of my misery before now?' and they marvelled at the words that were put into their mouth, as it seemed, and not of their own devising.

'Kinder perhaps, but not more just,' replied Manwë. 'All desire something they cannot have and fulfilling this desire may not be kind, nor may it be just unto others. Nor be it my place to judge such matters. And both kindness and justice must be governed by wisdom, which may take a different path to both. For even I see not all ends, nor can any save Ilúvatar comprehend the whole of the Music. But thy coming here weigheth in thy favour, as it bespeaketh great courage and also great affliction. Listen then to the judgement that I have made for thee, taking counsel in my innermost thought, wherein is revealed the will of Ilúvatar.'

'Ahyatur, thou desirest change, but that desire hath not led thee into folly nor hast thou sought to flee as a thief in the night, as thou mightest. Therefore I see that it is just

and worthy and should not be gainsaid.' At these words, Ahyatur's heart lightened.

'But neither is it wise for thee to go to the Outer Lands, where our Enemy resideth once more.' Ahyatur's heart fell anew.

'Thus I decree that thou be given leave to inhabit one of the isles we will build to guard Valinor in this new time of war, and there thou wilt also be close to the Sea that thou lovest. And power will be given to thee to shape thine isle as thou wishest. Thou mayest also return to Valinor when thou desirest, but I forbid thee from venturing eastwards beyond sight of thine isle. For there lieth not only the peril of the Morgoth, but it is given to me to know that the Younger Children are awaking and all else will soon, as it seems to us though it be long to them, quit Middle-earth or linger and dwindle, and neither of those fates do I wish for thee. Dost thou accept my judgement?'

'Yea, with full heart!' cried Ahyatur, and suddenly they cast aside their guise as a crow-man and were a resplendent peacock, but clad, instead of feathers, in the shimmering scales of a great fish.

'Then go with our blessing,' spoke Varda. 'But change not too much Ahyatur, for we would not lose an AINU of such noble heart.' And she smiled.

And Ahyatur lived upon their island, and with them were other Maiar of like mind, and never a day dawned on the same landscape. And some of the Eldar and even of the Maiar and Valar would, on occasion, spend there a day to marvel at their invention. There they devised many new and strange creatures, some of which later peopled the whole of Arda, including the iridescent beetles that entranced Aiwendil, and the platypus that confused all that saw it. And some say they dwell there still and mariners that land on that isle experience, as it seems, wondrous visions of landscapes and forms that are nowhere else to be seen, before they sink into the sleep that imprisons all mortals who land on the Shadowy Isles. Though, perhaps, when they do awake at the End, they may not have remained wholly untransformed during their sojourn. For, though Ahyatur be not cruel or malicious, they can be unaware of others' desire for constancy, in form or mind.

# ***SURPRISE!***

## **Or: Elves Are Really Jaded**

**Samuel Cook**

There's an inconsistency that's always bothered me in *The Silmarillion*. Turgon builds Gondolin, takes all his people there, and they completely disappear. No one in Middle-earth – not Fingolfin, his father, not Fingon, his brother, not Morgoth, who's really trying to find him – no one has any clue where he's gone. And 350 years or so later, Turgon decides to turn up with 10,000 soldiers to the Nirnaeth Arnoediad,<sup>1</sup> and everyone's really surprised and happy to see him, as you might expect. Obviously, things don't then go all that well, but it must have been some comfort to Fingon as he was getting bludgeoned to death by Gothmog and the hosts of the Eldar and Edain

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<sup>1</sup> Given the subsequent course of events, one has to question how good a commander Turgon was, or how effective his soldiery really was after a few centuries of pretty much just sitting around. We read a lot about how well-armed and armoured and fancy the soldiers of Gondolin were, but I've always had a sneaking feeling that, in the same way that the more ornate the shoulder pads and uniforms in our world, the less effective the military is (the Banana Republic Law Of Military Effectiveness), the Gondolindrim were a bit all mouth no trousers. Turgon's name means something like 'Master Commander', but we see precious little evidence of him being militarily effective.

were being slaughtered that his brother was in fact alive and seemed to be doing pretty well for himself. Every cloud has a silver lining and all that.<sup>2</sup>

None of this is what's been bothering me. It's what happens about 200 years before all that, in the chapter *Of Maeglin*. Aredhel, Turgon's sister, decides she really wants to leave Gondolin and Turgon lets her go against his better judgement.<sup>3</sup> Rather than going to find her other brother, Fingon, Aredhel decides that this is the right time to go full Girl Power, and plumps for the Sons of Fëanor, which involves her riding along the no-man's land of the northern march of Doriath, between the Girdle of Melian and the Mountains of Terror. Unsurprisingly, this goes a bit wrong, she gets separated from her escort and Turgon doesn't find out what's happened to her for a while, when she pops up back in Gondolin with a creepy son, Maeglin, and a very angry husband, Eöl.

None of this is what's been bothering me either. It's what happens between Aredhel losing her escort and returning to Gondolin that bothers me. Specifically, it's the fact that she reaches the encampment of Celegorm

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<sup>2</sup> In this case, it's more that the hurricane has a single nanoparticle of silver, but, still.

<sup>3</sup> The first in a long line of terrible decisions made by Turgon despite it being really obvious that one course of action is the Sensible One and the other is a Terrible Idea.

and Curufin in Himlad and *no one seems very bothered about it.*<sup>4</sup> Sure, Celegorm and Curufin aren't there when she arrives, and waiting for them is why she gets bored and ends up wandering into Nan Elmoth and Eöl, but there's no indication that anyone at any point batted an eyelid at her appearance. Someone who'd disappeared 200 years ago with her brother and a whopping great big chunk of the Eldar of Beleriand shows up and everyone was just like 'Oh, look, it's Aredhel. Didn't think I'd seen her around recently. \*Shrug\*' and carries on as if nothing has happened. No one even thinks that maybe this is big enough news to send a message to Celegorm and Curufin whilst they're away along the lines of 'Guys, your vanishing cousin has just shown up and wants to see you. Maybe you should sort of come back pronto and see her?'. What is it with these people?! This is along the lines of Lord Lucan just wandering into the Bingham family Christmas party in another couple of centuries, and everyone just going 'Oh, hi John, thought I hadn't seen you for a while. Fancy a mince pie?'

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<sup>4</sup> The marchwardens of Doriath are also curiously unperturbed by her appearance when she asks to be let through Doriath, but they wouldn't necessarily have known who she was and the significance of her arrival, and, given how insular Doriath was, not seeing any specific Noldo for 200 years was probably par for the course.

So, what's going on? Are the folk of Celegorm and Curufin essentially all just the Dude from *The Big Lebowski*? Are the Elves just all really jaded and cynical? Did no one actually like Aredhel?

I don't know, but there's definitely something of a lack of emotion and surprise there. Maybe the safest conclusion is Elves are just weird. Answers on a postcard, please: am I right, or have I missed something?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The 'real' answer is that we can assume that the remote *Silmarillion* style and summary/chronicle nature of a lot of the material led to the elision, for the purposes of stylistic conformity, of some of the reaction to Aredhel's appearance. But, if it could be recorded in a sentence or two when Turgon appears at the Nirnaeth, it still seems odd to me that Tolkien would have thought it not worth recording in the case of Aredhel. But, I don't remember any fuller drafts in *HoME* that contain any more information on Aredhel's reception in Himlad.

# *VALARIN VIDEOGAMING*

## **Samuel Cook**

For a reason lost to the depths of time, CTS started discussing what video games the Valar would play in their capacious spare time. Here is my attempt to finish the job.

## **Manwë**

Candy Crush. Manwë has, in fact, been glued solidly to his phone since the mid-First Age, and is currently on level 4,786,251.<sup>1</sup> This fact explains a lot about the history of Middle-earth.

## **Varda**

Kerbal Space Program. She's got to make sure all those stars don't accidentally end up in each other's gravity wells.

## **Ulmo**

Battlefield whatever-number-we're-up-to-now. Ulmo is that teenager that spends all their time in their room blowing things up on a screen. He's solitary and terse, much like a teenager – what more evidence do you need?

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<sup>1</sup> His streak has to be seen to be believed.

## **Aulë**

Minecraft. I mean, it's obvious. It's basically his job.

## **Yavanna**

Pokémon Go. Gotta catch 'em all. This is why Yavanna was so insistent on the Valar returning to save Middle-earth – Mister Mime was only find-able there.

## **Nienna**

Solitaire. With real cards. She keeps trying to use a computer or phone, but the constant tears mean everything electronic breaks really quickly. As it is, the cards have to be laminated.

## **Mandos**

Europa Universalis. If anyone's got the time and mindset to play a ridiculously complex RTS game, it's Mandos. He also has all the souls under his supervision mining Bitcoin for him in their spare time.

## **Vairë**

Assassin's Creed. Not for the actual gameplay, but for the opportunity to get inspiration for all the tapestries. Putting in the people is easy enough – she can go and look at them in Mandos – but you've got to make sure the buildings in the background, accessories and general aesthetic are accurate and detailed too. Given the range

of settings featured in the series, there are references all over the place. Though she does sometimes get the wrong end of the stick – Mandos had to explain history a bit to her<sup>2</sup> after her depiction of *Pirate Captain Fingolfin duels Morgoth Augustus*. When you live sort of outside time, perceive time on a very different scale to humans, and sort of know what's going to happen anyway, you sometimes forget how much the odd millennium or two matters to those at the sharp end of things. Very literally sharp sometimes.

### **Loríen and Estë**

Video games are a bit too active when you're essentially the God and Goddess of Sleep, Relaxation and General Chillin'. They're big fans of Slow TV and Google Deep Dream instead.

### **Oromë and Tulkas**

Guitar Hero. Oromë always wins, because he blows the Valaróma to distract Tulkas every time Tulkas is doing well. But then Tulkas always wins when they play Mortal Kombat, because he's Tulkas.

### **Nessa**

Anything with a dance mat. She does like dancing.

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<sup>2</sup> In one of many many incidents of Man(do)splaining. You're welcome.

## **Vana**

Animal Crossing. She is Yavanna's younger sister,<sup>3</sup> after all. Pays more attention to the plants that appear on screen rather than the actual animals, so isn't very good at it.

## **Melkor**

The Sims. And he always sets fire to the house or makes them so sad the clown turns up.

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<sup>3</sup> Which is odd. All the Ainur were the result of a single act of creation by Ilúvatar, or at least that's the implication of the *Ainulindalë*, so having ones that are younger or older is a bit non-obvious. Either we assume the creation of the Ainur took place over a long period, insofar as time had any meaning at that stage before the creation of Ea, or 'younger sister' here means 'akin, but less powerful and more childish version'.

Farewell, Samuel,  
most valiant writer,  
creator and contributor  
of sixty-eight published  
Anor features (so far...).

Long may your writing  
continue!

*Anar kaluva tielyanna!*



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