

Dagor Dagorath

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The Last Age

In the Last Age of Arda, Men carved dominion through cruelties not seen since the Akallabêth. Among them were Elves who, by fear, ambition, or despair, had fallen to the shadow of men's hearts. The Dwarves, bound to the forges of usurped authority, labored in darkness for masters they despised. Orcs still toiled beneath the hard cruelty of these new, petty lords, yet they were no longer the only servants of malice, only the most familiar.

Across the vast ruin that had once been Gondor, Mordor had fused its blight into one desolation, stretching unbroken into the withered reaches of Mirkwood and the cracked halls of Erebor, where warlords of Men brought forth a new craft of cold and calculated cruelty. Among them rose apostates who held power as virtue for its own sake, and unmaking as sanctity; their rites fulfilled yet never sated the hunger to consume the works of others. It was Men, above all, who seized and exalted this dark rule, wresting dominion from all others, turning every craft and kindred to their own exclusive use and giving form to the malice that had long lain latent in Arda's marred substance.

Elves, the last scattered singers of the Elder Days, languished in dazed domination or bound in devices of malignity, while some took refuge in secret hollows, their voices bent to dark rites or silenced by isolation and despair. Rivendell, once the stronghold of wisdom, lay a hollow vessel, its songs no longer sung. Dwarves, dragged from their secret deeps where they had endured long ages, were driven to forge under whip, hunger, and coercion, their craft turned to ends not their own. Moria stirred once more, its deep drums resounding from the black heart, doom older than the world of Men.

Yet not all was shadow. For the sake of Frodo and Bilbo, whose small courage once unmade the Great Ring, the Valar had set about a quiet ward upon the Shire. There, in a ~~green pocket of peace~~, life endured as it always had, a single unmoving star in a sky otherwise dimmed. And too, scattered across the broken lands were other small havens, hidden vales, forgotten by the world, where kindness flickered like embers waiting for a wind of renewal.

And still, far to the West beneath these same stars, Ulmo stirred in his deeps, his currents bearing faint telling of Arda's dwindling, the fell consequence of wills turned furthest from harmony. With him were Ossë and Uinen, their waves bearing witness to the true strain against the compounding

misunderstanding now risen unchecked among the Children. Alone among the Valar, Ulmo yet kept vigil over Arda's marred hearing, his tears falling for harms wrought not by shadow's hand alone but by the fear and desire Men had kindled within their own hearts.

Dark Discovery

In one of the great tribes of Men rose a tinkerer, goblin-hearted in his cunning and relentless craft, yet bearing the fire of Man's unchecked ambition. Through fevered dreams and whispers none could name, his mind had been seeded with covetous arcane designs: a thing of insatiable hunger, shaped by malice's shadow but ever unborn.

Under the Tinkerer's command, Dwarves were driven to delve far beyond their fathers' works, down toward Arda's trembling heart. They dug not for treasure nor craft, but to unearth the buried wounds where the Marring lay thickest.

The Dwarves found it first: a vault untouched for ages long forgotten. When they broke its seal, a silence fell that crushed breath and thought. A cold dread poured forth, and those first who entered froze where they stood. Others fled upward, choosing the lash or death rather than return.

Their broken accounts reached the Tinkerer in fragments: a chamber that swallowed sound, a cold that bit the spirit, and a darkness that stripped one bare. But the Elf heard more. In their quivering voices he recognized a presence he had hoped never to feel again, not the echo, but the memory of its absence. It was a diminished will, a privation, a remnant of the first discord sung in presence of the One, now lodged in a place of clotted malice. Long buried beneath ruin and time, that nameless nothingness had endured, cowardly slinking among the seams of corruption in the stone, carrying wounds of Utumno's fall like a fester that never healed.

So the Tinkerer descended, forcing the Elf as herald before him, down through narrowing shafts into the depths that was made ready for him. And when they reached the vault, the presence stirred.

It did not show itself. A voice, more an insight, rippled through the chamber, a thought easily mistaken for one's own: not command, but pervasive intent, faint as death's final rasp. Within the mind of the Elf, it murmured in the tongue of the Ainu, a language once of thunderous shaping now thinned to shadows and wisps.

The Elf, from remembered fear of whips no longer wielded, threw himself prostrate in terror, for he knew the nature of this echo, a malice that should long have faded. But the Tinkerer stood defiant, mistaking that weakened will, starved through lonely ages, for opportunity, as one mistakes the groan of a trap for an invitation.

Broken Heart of Arda

The vault became their workshop, though few entered it willingly. The Tinkerer commanded, the Dwarves labored, and the Elf - hollow-eyed and gaunt - sang the ancient strains he had learned in torment beneath Thangorodrim. Yet none of them truly led, for the presence in the dark guided all.

The Dwarves carved stone and shaped metal to the Tinkerer's dark design, working in terror as the vault's air grew ever colder, the warmth of the world were being bled from the living stone. Crystal veins were cut from the deep rock, obsidian ground and burnished til it shone like black water. The Elf traced vitiated sigils he had long feared to recall, his hands shaking as each stroke rent his fëa with remembered discord.

The Tinkerer bound it all, mortal ingenuity woven through ancient art. He gloried in the slow unveiling of his machinations, mistaking their unlight for mastery, while the Nameless bent his will ever further toward the deep. Piece by piece, the device took form: rings of obsidian, crystal shards held in impossible suspension, and roots of dark metal inthrusts the stone, alive with a low susurrations. The Elf sensed the discord as Eä twisted upon itself, straining into disharmony.

A heaviness gathered as the design neared unveiling. Those who had shaped the world felt it through their being: in Arda's groaning bones, seas' restless surge, growth's faltering pulse, stone's forgotten strength, and the high fires where stars' patterns wavered. From every quarter their unease drew them west, a slow convergence of wills unmarred.

Lens of Binding

The Lens was not a device in a mortal sense, nor a work of craft alone. It arose from the mingling of wills: the Tinkerer's restless ambition, the Elf's unwilling memory of ancient art, the Dwarves' forced craft, and the quiet stirring of something none of them could place. Yet its true source lay deeper still, in the corruption Morgoth had poured into the very substance of Arda, a residue of his intent whose resentful occupation clung in malign tenancy. The Lens was the first work of sub-creation to draw that residue into a singular focused form.

In the Elder Days, Morgoth's malice bled into Eä itself, staining its innermost substance so that all things bore his corruption's touch. Though cast beyond the Circles of the World, that power endured, scattered, directionless, a shadow coiled through stone and air and flesh. No craft of Elf or Man could summon him forth; yet the Lens gathered what lingered: drawing Morgoth's diffused discord into dread coherence.

This focusing bent Eä at its core. Harmony strained; the ordered world faltered. The fëar of the living felt the pull toward the Lens, not to unmaking, for no fëa may be unmade, but to bending. As their spirits wavered, their hröar grew frail; no substance endures the Marring's full weight. The Lens wrenched their essence from true alignment, heedless of kind, compelling closer to the gathered corruption.

Thus the Lens stood as a knot of discord, a point where the long-scattered corruption of Morgoth became briefly confined. It was not a portal, nor a summoning, nor a weapon of dominion, but the final concentration of a will that had marred the foundations of the world.

From the deep places the distortion bled outward, and its tension thrummed through every element of Arda. The seas lifted against their bounds, the earth gave forth a low unrest, and the airs trembled in their courses. One by one the Valar turned their thought toward the west, and in turn they drew toward Valmar. There they assembled beneath the high seat of Manwë, in still accord, each awaiting the turning of the balance. Yet he sat unmoving, his thought hearkening beyond hearing, for he would not move until a sign was given that would remove all doubt.

Culminating Discord

The Lens stirred like a simulacrum of awakening, not shaping the world but drawing it inward, its emptiness exerting a relentless pull upon the marred substance of Arda. The vault trembled as the corruption it gathered deepened, a rending groan rising. Mote by mote it grew. Warmth and will its hunger consumed. The world itself leaned ever toward the absence that now revealed its empty heart.

Its first touch fell upon the hröa. The Tinkerer felt his strength drawn from him, as though the marrow of his being were unspooled into the dark. The Elf shattered, a reeling cry as the emptiness reached through him, a twisting in the core where spirit clings to flesh. Stone resettled, dust silting from cracks. Yet the Lens's pull deepened, and the very matter of Arda yawed toward its hollow. Above, Dwarves and Men staggered as their bodies failed, hearts faltering, breath stolen, limbs collapsing under the unseen drain. Some died where they stood; others fell into the shafts long before their fëar slipped free. For the Lens did not seek to unmake, but to bind without distinction of kind.

As the bodies were felled, the fëar were drawn downward, caught like leaves in a tightening whirlpool. They drifted through stone as through water, lamenting and aware, unable to resist the pull of the gathered corruption. The cries of the sundered were not heard by ears, but by the world itself, a soft wailing woven into the trembling of the deep.

The Nameless drew forth, its design nearly wrought, the shadow of its malice growing with its arrogance and pride. In its rising it beheld itself magnified, and for a breath believed the design complete. But as the gathered malice of Morgoth redoubled upon itself, the Lens drank deeper. Inexorably the Nameless was drawn in and in that moment it knew its fate: that the will it had served would not preserve it, and that in the fulfillment of its purpose lay its own enslavement.

The vault drew tight around the deepening whir. The Tinkerer staggered, his fëa half-torn from its hröa, yet clinging even as the relentless pull dragged him inward, the Elf lay broken, spirit already spiraling into the Lens's dark geometry, and as the Nameless fell inward upon itself, its fëa flared, driving the Lens to its culmination.

Amidst those converged before the seat of Manwë, Varda did not speak, but her thought turned toward distant shores. Before them, in memory of light, arose the gleam of the Shire's ancient ward, steadfast through the lingering shadow. It shone not as dominion reclaimed, but as remembrance of what must not fall, the last undimmed witness of the One's harmony made mortal. In that moment, the choice was no longer distant nor deferred: the hour had come to guard what still endured.

Then Manwë's purpose gathered to a singular will. All doubt and hesitation fell away, and he rose in renewed accord, his course made clear beyond reckoning. In that hour the Valar once more took up the mantle of their stewardship against the perversion of Arda's substance. And so together, Ainur and Maiar, the lingering expression of the One's first Music, descended into the breaking of the world.

The True Dagor Dagorath

The last clash between Morgoth and the Valar was no battle of forms, but a raw struggle in the deep places of thought, where the Music's primordial harmony met its pervasive discord, the Ainulindalë's strife reverberating through history now closing at both ends.

The faithful, arrayed in solemn unity within the deeps of thought, loosed their ancient Music before the Lens. High and low among the Powers, from mightiest throne to humblest tide, every voice was drawn into the great straining harmony. Yet the Lens answered only with privation; its unquenchable emptiness slackened its pull as the song of the primordial Theme rose in defiance of that fell convergence. But the strength of that ancient malice was not so lightly diminished, and already the lesser among the faithful felt their tones waver, their steadfastness thinning beneath the weight of the discord.

From that metaphysical fray, Arda's marred substance gave dire witness as physical ramification. The sun dimmed to a sullen red, its ancient fire guttering low as if the heights themselves yielded to the void-pull. Seas receded from every shore, baring glistening ocean floors like flesh stripped from bone beneath the dimming vault. Winds fell utterly still, cloaking the world in liminal silence. In that surreal hush, hill and hollow joined unwitting chorus, every marred fiber dragged toward the Lens's coiled abyss.

Lesser Maiar faltered first. Their themes unraveled into gasping confusion as their fëar were drawn, irresistibly, toward the corrupted design. The great Valar song turned not to conquest but to anguished anchorage. In sacrificial dispersion their unified Music splintered into fragile preservation, noble yet doomed. Each sustaining note spent in mooring thinned the greater harmony, for every voice turned to preservation left the command unsounded; and thus even the mightiest within Eä found they could neither guard nor renew against the gathered discord.

Then came the sound: a note high as the peaks of the mountains and deep as the abyssal sea. It rang through every heart, pain and hope entwined: pain at the discord's final cry, hope at the One's

mercy heard within it. And all knew it for what it was: the voice of Ilúvatar, the first sound since the beginning of the Music.

Silence

At the note's end, silence fell absolute; and with it, the burden of the Marring was lifted from the world. Morgoth was resolved.

First Notes of a Second Music

The lifting of the Marring did not bring instant harmony. The Lens loomed still in the shattered deeps, its warped geometry stilled, gathering no discord, feeding on no malice, though fëar remained entangled within its silent workings. Yet the weight of Morgoth's discord was gone, the Children of Ilúvatar awoke into a world reshaped yet familiar. Freed from the long shadow, they found themselves disoriented, habits of fear, domination, and despair lingering like echoes in a newly quiet hall. The wounds of Ages did not vanish; they simply ceased to deepen.

Among Men, confusion reigned. Some felt the sudden absence of the old dread as a kind of vertigo, clinging to power structures that no longer had metaphysical fuel. Warlords, stripped of the shadow that once magnified their will, grasped desperately at authority. Others, long oppressed, struggled to trust that the world was truly changed. The Gift of Men shone unclouded again, yet many did not know how to live without the fear that had shaped their choices for generations.

The Elves, released from the slow suffocation of accumulated sorrow, found their fëar suddenly unburdened. But clarity did not erase memory. Those who had been enslaved or twisted by despair needed time to rediscover themselves. Some wandered in quiet wonder, relearning joy; others recoiled from the light, unsure how to step into a world no longer bent beneath them.

The Dwarves emerged from bondage with a fierce, bewildered pride. Their craft, once forced into dark service, yearned toward creation rather than endurance. Yet they too bore scars-of hunger, of humiliation, of the deep places where they had labored under the lash. Their healing would come through making, but even that required guidance and patience.

Even the Orcs, long shaped by domination and distortion, stood at a strange threshold. Some faded swiftly, their being too bound to the old discord to endure its absence. Others, dimly aware of a freedom they had never known, hesitated on the edge of becoming-what, none could yet say.

In this fragile dawn, conflict arose not from a Dark Power but from the Children themselves, struggling to understand a world no longer ruled by malice. To meet this moment, the Ainur stepped forth-not as distant rulers nor veiled wanderers, but as companions in the work of renewal. The greater among them tended to the land and the deep fabric of the world; the lesser walked

beside Elves, Men, Dwarves, and others, offering counsel, clarity, and hope. They sought to persuade rather than command, to heal rather than judge, yet they did not shrink from strength when gentler paths failed.

Thus began the Second Music, tentative notes weaving through the silence, not a swift restoration, but a patient remaking born of choice and companionship. Though echoes of the Marring lingered in memory and wound, Arda's fabric slowly straightened under Eru's unseen harmony, the world's deep wound beginning to close, not in perfection, but in hope renewed.

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