

NOT ALL THE BIRDS ARE TO BE TRUSTED

They took counsel and said, "Give it to the Windlord, brave and true. He can bear this burden for us, to the uttermost end." But it was a long journey, into peril, with the Winged Terror beating always at his back, and no companions for his flight.

Long have we guarded our borders, but how can men guard against the sky? First the grey mist feathered out from the East, and then great clouds of them came, shrouding the lands below. The shelling starts as if heaven itself has turned upon us, and everywhere inhuman eyes are bright and ever-watchful...



A LEAF FROM THE TREE

Here is a collection of short pieces based on the works of JRR Tolkien that I have written over the last 20 years. Almost all of them are **drabbles**, that is, stories of exactly 100 words. One isn't.

I've written many stories and drabbles and poems based on the works of Tolkien, and you can find more on the Archive Of Our Own, under my pen-name:

ALTARIEL

THE WINDOW ON THE WEST

Trials beneath the trees; tests of the heart in the garden of Gondor.

We fumble side-by-side in the darkness; our motives are obscure. We struggle to sidestep traps and snares. Dark visions have come between us – a grey boat's passing down the river to the sea. Bright visions rise up before us – a great rush of water; a city of light bejewelled; our noontide. Glimpses of lost glory and lost lore. Temptations in the twilight hour.

The chance is taken. Faith is kept; light and wisdom linger in the West.

Break bread together. Hold fast together. It will be enough.



A LEAF FROM THE TREE

A TINY TOLKIEN ZINE BY
ALTARIEL

AINULINDALĒ

And so we sang, in unison, for we were instruments.
I raised my voice, and made the music I was made to make;
Soared, raged, cried;
Others heard, and gave me their accord—
Were silenced.

And so, what had we sung?
Crash of iron, breath of air, echo of water
Call of darkness.
Instruments, we made the music we were made to make,
And we are bound to it.

And so we sang.
Mountains raised, I flattened them;
Smooth green fields, I sharpened them;
Point counterpoint.
And so we sing,
And this is Arda, nor am
I out of it.

Mine.

THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS

Now the shadow-veil lay on the Stonewain Valley.
Now came the Wild Men, cunning Woses,
Woodcraft-wise, wary of horsemen.
Hard news they bore of a host-blocked road;
In the mountains beyond, Mundburg was burning.

Long was the lane lost to thorn and to thicket.
Long since the Sea-kings carved those stones.
Yet goat-footed Ghân, faithful friend and orc-hater,
Led horse and horseman, scout and spear,
Under gloomgrey trees where the trail was grown
over.
Pale light brought fresh wind and the plain way
forward.

Grave thanks were given. Thus Thengel's son
Rode forth to the out-walls and feared no darkness.

LITTLE GREEN MAN

The Elves, they said, had woken them, but he had moved amongst them at the first drop of rain. He had seen them born. He heard the whisper when the first blow fell; smelt the first kindling and knew what it forebode. He felt the anger pulse and throb and quicken.

Dawn is spreading out across the forest. The leaves are new and green, and the blackbird's eyes are bright and restless. Down in a dark place, the willow creaks. Three ages of the sun have passed and more, and still he watches. Oldest and fatherless. Heart of the wood.



CONSIDER PHLEBAS

After the battle,
After the blood and the iron,
After the fall and the defeat
After the confession (and the absolution),
Comes the voyage home.

The river took me.
Little wooden coffin-boat let slip;
Jetsam bobbing on the water.

Farewell, friends! Farewell, arms!
My time is past.
The water holds me now and soon the sea.
Dreams of sunlit lands wash over me
And this world of war recedes.

I am blessed and beloved.
I am at peace at last.
I am going soon; I am leaving.
I am passing down the river.
I am passing through my brother's dreams.

THE ADJUDICATORS

"That's not a riddle, it's a question!"

"Well, I think that rather depends on whether he's speaking physically or metaphysically."

"I have absolutely no idea what you mean by that."

"No, you never do..."

"Will you two shut up? I'm trying to listen!"

"What does he have in his pockets?"

"Well, I don't know!"

"The Doom of Men."

"Oh, you always say that! Not string. Not his hands. Not nothing... Oh."

"Oh dear."

"Quite."

They waited. Time passed.

"Did we determine whether we thought that was a riddle or a question?"

"I'll let you know what I decide," said Mandos.