

## SLAYING THE DRAGON

Tuilinde

What first I feared had finally come to pass!  
 Their graceless grandeur, their greed and foolishness,  
 ignorance, thoughtlessness, arrogance and pride  
 had drawn down the dragon's ire, and doom was come  
 upon us.

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Our place, our prosperity and precarious peace  
 we had held here hidden in our hands;  
 with quiet commerce cautiously constructing  
 a life and living on the lake through long years.  
 Not troubling the terror, nor travelling to the north;  
 but finding firm friends in the Elf kingdoms,  
 winning trade in wine both west and south.

Then the Dwarves came with confusion and controversy.  
 Ragged refugees, claiming royal rights.  
 Hopes were heard, and were hurriedly believed —  
 rich and poor saw a bold brightness brandished.  
 False was the future they unfolded before us!  
 The briefest thought had told me, that burning bane  
 could not be conned and cornered, or craftily killed,  
 by so few, so simply, and so soon!  
 "Doom and disaster, danger and devastation!"  
 Perforce I spoke these words of woe,  
 pleading for patience, and proper thought.  
 But all-unmoved, a mockery they made of me,  
 in excitement bound to their unreal dreams.  
 New songs they sang, sated their thirst, and spoke  
 of fame and fortune, gold and glory!  
 Thorin - a new and caring kind of Dwarven king!!

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The year's end approached, and our ending also!  
 Lo, in the North, a light was lit in the darkness!  
 Bereaved of his gold by the bold burglar —  
 Arisen from rest, his revenge seeking,  
 roaring in rage, he rowed the dark skies,  
 as a flaming dart of final doom.  
 Red the ripples on river and lake,  
 as Smaug, in swift spite swooped down  
 and with furious fire fought against us.

Urgent, the trumpet sang out the alarm!  
 At once our axes bit and cut  
 until crashing, the causeway crumpled and fell.  
 But broad wings beating bore him on  
 daring the danger of dark, quenching depths.  
 Fear of our fiery foe found many unmanned,  
 scattering and scrambling to escape all scathe.  
 Sturdily my mighty men still stood unmoved,  
 terror not tearing their trusty hearts.

Archers all, 'gainst Smaug their anger stirred  
 till hard hands high their shafts directed  
 straight and strong, none straying from the target.  
 Vainly we loosed until the last, yet naught availed.  
 Hard as adamant his hauberk of jewels,  
 and our shafts shrivelled in his white-hot breathing.  
 Through all the town the thatch he tore and burned,  
 as with brimful buckets brave souls struggled  
 to quickly quench the flaming roofs.  
 His thrashing tail smashed homes and Hall;  
 his brute breath burned the broken ruins.

The while we fought, wives and widows wept;  
 and bundled into boats with babes in arms,  
 hoping against hope this horror would be halted.  
 Almost my soul and strength did quail  
 as still unhurt he hunted them across the waves.  
 Wrathful beyond reason he raged over us again,  
 careless and reckless, in heedless confidence.

Then to my shoulder the thrush flew, fluttering.  
 "Wait!" he whispered, "Watch for his weakness!"  
 "A hole there is in his ancient armour —  
 beside the breast, behold — beneath the leg!"  
 Bending my bow I begged, "Black arrow,  
 trusty heirloom, fly true to the final target!  
 Straight from the string smite this evil Smaug!"  
 So deafening was the dreadful, dying cry,  
 the awful anguish echoing across the lake,  
 his scream splintered stone, split trees tumbled.  
 Full on the flames of his fiery pyre  
 he crashed... and was quickly quenched.  
 The dark depths swallowed him in steam...  
 and sudden silence.

### ARWEN

Ben Gribbin

With flowers on her silver wrists and silence in her hair,  
 where darkness dries and moonlight twists, having escaped  
 the rain —  
 she wakes when I wake; in the dark, the words she whispers  
 span  
 the stars, until we see a hidden link for every fire,  
 and bearing back against the sheets, I sense her words explain  
 the bonds, unbreakable and strong, I couldn't see before,  
 that her own thoughts have strung, connecting, tautly, every star:  
 and as she speaks, the simple moonlight flutters at her face —  
 these are the words that call the constellations into place,  
 she says to me, then says the words. I can't repeat them here,  
 any more than I might say the moonlight; nonetheless,  
 I saw, I swear, on that dark air, the patterns, very old  
 and wonderful, and mythical — impossibly distant, cold  
 dry silver lines connected stars, spun into place as she spoke,  
 held high in space, as spiders' webs, then broke, and broke,  
 and broke,  
 until by dawn, there were no more, and both of us awoke.