

The Five Sons of the Hawk
Bring Burning to Their Flock

Vain

are the many gatherings of man in both times
of want and plenty, for he, of all the tribes
of the earth, desires his fellow to witness his charity
5 that he might be praised for it, that the goodness
he think of himself be seen by other men,
and in that praise be lifted above them, to sit
in a seat higher than theirs and gaze down as men
praise their bounty, many beasts lavished upon
10 the table for a chosen few as others without are left
to dream, largesse being but the desire to be seen
as bountiful, found in small gatherings
and great hosts, that desire remains, declaring
some imagined value to others that they would
15 place the value of objects in the person of the giver,
granting some imagined right to stand above them,
to order them against those who would dare stand
as tall, who would dare order men as they did,
there is but one mark by which man shall
20 be Judged.

With such wanton feasting
were Ceallach, the Otter, the Sparrow, and King
Aetheldor's agent greeted when they came
into the great home of that lord. The lands
25 of the Un Colta bar are rich in plenty,
where sweet rains from the sea fall in summer
months. Well received were they, and though much
aggrieved at the news of Galian, Aetheldor gave
to them cups and swords as though he were a king
30 equal to the dead Malach. The Hawk King received
from them the ring which Galian surrendered
as well as his confession to murder. Ceallach saw
the ring which had adorned the hand of Malach,
and remembering the vows made upon the wedding
35 bench of Hala, fretted not at seeing that Boon
passed as a trinket, from servant to master, knowing
that no man but Malach's could wear it safely
and if any hand was to hold it before he found
Ilulean, those of the Teloch of the Un Colta bar
40 were best.

Thus in idle feasting did time pass,
Glory resting beside the hearth and all great deeds

of their Sword-Fathers remembered in the passing
of good company. The land was wild and dark
45 beyond the reach of their spears, floundering
in blood, but in their own fellowship sat many great.
Each night as the surround fell into a hushed silence
of fear and a stillness came to Ioland in anticipation
of new cruelties, the Un Colta bar crowded
50 in the hall of the Teloch and raised their mead cups
in cheer and heard each night as the Sparrow sang
songs of sorrow and spirit, satisfied sighs filled
the hall as revelers drank each word. The Otter led
the warriors of the Hawk King Aetheldor,
55 bringing into security tracts of land great and tribute
from Tella, clans, and families from the surround
that the Hall of the Hawk was gilded and he wore
a circlet made of gold, the Ring of Malach set upon
his finger. Many were the offerings which the king
60 would give to his favored warrior, but these were
always refused for the Otter's love of harsh living.
Not alone was he in his refusal to surrender
to luxury, for Ceallach came but briefly to that
place, though for his arm he was given lodging
65 for all time. Ceallach rested in the hall only
when wounded many times over. He spoke nothing
of his journeys nor battles and stayed in the happy
hall only so long as his wounds were tended,
the bone-hilted sword which was given him
70 by the High Teloch Malach was never far
from his hand.

With much of the lands
of the western island, the Ring of Malach King
and a circlet of wrought gold set upon his head,
75 the Teloch Aetheldor named himself High Teloch,
the Malach, King over Kings, Master of the Iolish,
only the second in all time. His word held
the weight of iron behind it and people many
and fearful walked not in his land but gave it berth.
80 Many paid to him tribute, most of the Un Londar
were his supplicants and the Un Bolam also.
The Drocht Baalon were his blood-friends
and the many peoples who live in the mountains
of the west held him high. The city Aerellsalam
85 noted him not, holding that only Malach's blood

might rule the island. Other Telochs saw Aetheldor as the strongest of their number, appealing to him as judge, but never kneeling to him.

The great king had five sons
90 by his wife, the eldest Aedelwitz and the youngers
named Aellas, Aedroianne, Aemerrick,
and Aethelwald; each strong and powerful in both
mind and body. And so five years from when
he had received the boon, as he could not choose
95 between his sons for he that would next become
Teloch and receive tribute, he gave them command
to seek renown and make a name, and to the son
which would bring back the greatest gift
and greatest fame would go his seat. Aedelwitz
100 was a man full grown at the time of the command
and left in search of a wife that would give to him
a family, and by them secure his father's favor.
He left the lands of his fathers and sought a wife
worthy of the first child of the Hawk-King.
105 He went not into lands which paid tribute,
for he had reasoned that he could not gain the seat
unless he gained new Tella under his patronage.
So first he went to the Un Salal, who were not
supplicants to his father but meekly avoided his
110 might. Though he spoke to the Tella assembled
with grace upon his tongue, they refused to treat
with him for among their number was Noríín, long
returned from the ford with one who would
not reveal his face. Each morn they would leave,
115 not returning until after the sun had set and none
knew where they went in those hours. Noríín led
his people in their refusal, for to him it was wrong
to give the flower of their Tella to others,
he ordered his father the Teloch to withhold
120 from the Hawk's Son any hospitality in the lands of
the Tella.

Aedelwitz left Un Salal lands
swiftly, knowing that they were set against him
for all time, he went to Aerellsalam to plan anew.
125 He knew not what his brothers had won in the days
he wasted and feared that they would soon win
renown from their father. He came to speak

with those in power of the city who had long kept
the Hawk King's influence at bay and spoke
130 to them in good clear speech,

“Elders of Wise Discourse,
I have come to you with a grand future for your
city, though I give you neither gift nor homage,
but the spirit of friendship and a future honor
135 beyond all other dreams. My aim is to give to you
more than I would have you give me and by such
vows entrench our utmost care for each other.

“I am the son
of the master of this land, for though you do not
140 send to him your tribute, in all things you consider
his thought to avoid his ire. There are many Tella
who follow such rules of defiant supplication,
for to trigger open conflict with the Un Colta bar
is to call down the faithful servant of the Hawk,
145 the Otter. Yet where in the land the Tella resist us
by their contentious Iolish spirit, the great city
of Aerellsalam refuse out of another spirit
of the Iolish blood, that of loyalty. For when
the great king Malach came into these lands you
150 gave to him your fealty, vowing that only that king
or his heirs might rule over your free city.

“I am not of his blood,
nor shall I or mine ever be, that line was ended
in treachery. Before you stands a new line,
155 once again shall our people be ruled by kind
and fair judgment, but there are yet many people
who live beyond their reach, far from
their protection. So I have come to offer this to you.
Pledge to me loyalty and give to me a small purse
160 of coin, that I might set out from here to find
for myself a worthy bride. Grant me this
that I might follow my father and rule all
our people. For no gift that my brothers shall bring
him will equal a Tella and the greatest city
165 of Ioland. And should another be chosen
for my rightful seat, then we together will march
and win it by force. Give to me these things,
and as your High Teloch I shall deliver three boons.

170 First, I shall make my hall here in Aerellsalam,
you shall be outcast no longer, seat of the Teloch
and all my supplicants shall come before you.
Far richer for my being here and more so,
for my second boon shall bring all peoples along
the Aglach Salam under your power that yours will
175 be the great river of our isle. Third by decree all
coin minted in the lands that hold me as High
Teloch shall be done in the city of Aerellsalam.”

Thus he laid plain his dream
to the men who ruled the town and they debated
180 the merit of his words. Many among them thought
little of his friendship and desired not to send
warriors to serve him. Of the fifteen men who were
permitted at any time to call themselves Elder
in the city of Aerellsalam, nine stood against him.
185 The oldest of the Elders and their chief wavered
in his thinking, seeing safety in one path and glory
in the other, and to his ear came one Ragnach,
a man moved by the boons offered as the lure
in a trap. Old men should not have greed left in their
190 heart, rather it should leave them when their sex
does; for greed is the sin of a young man, the old
should not be wanting but giving. As black cancer
did greed worm to his heart, driving him to commit
folly, for Ragnach was trusted in council
195 by the chief, and by his twisted tongue convinced
him to his party. Six of those who had opposed
Aedelwitz came to join the chief, thus the elders
agreed to back the would-be-Teloch and furnish
him for travel.

200 East Aedelwitz went,
a wide berth given to the Barrows of Hala for fear
of powerful curses waiting in the fogs. He aimed
for the lands of the Ui Agla, hearing tell of a woman
of highest blood. A month from leaving the city
205 he came to the lands of that people, where
the violence which had plagued the land from
the death of the High Teloch was writ plain, crops
failed with regularity and the lands were themselves
ravished by war parties. Between the peoples
210 and families of the Tella itself there was strife

and the word of their Teloch Rolalloch Gwyair Dui
carried no weight behind it. He was a warrior
and adventurer, who in his youth had left Ioland
and traveled to the lands of Eurol where the great
215 kingdoms of men are. He served under many
banners and many kings, returning to the green isle
with wealth and fame, and the kings of those far
places still sent to him envoy, pleading for his skill.
When he returned he took the place of Teloch from
220 his cousin and ruled with a hard hand, but a fist
made to rule warriors is poorly made to rule in other
times; the mood of his Tella became unruly, so that
when Malach came to receive his submission,
when Rolalloch Gwyair Dui desired to fight
225 his people refused and made him supplicate himself
before the great king. A man of proud conquest,
he would not receive a son, having daughters only,
to his wrath.

So to these lands of strife
230 Aedelwitz came, but to the hall of the Teloch none
would take him. Loyalty extended no further than
the edge of the tilled fields, bands came together
and broke apart with the change of the wind.
He went to a farmhouse first to learn all he might,
235 his host took him eagerly for he had with him
the coin and food from Aerellsalam which he gave
freely, charming them. A fortnight he stayed with
them, until they swore to him loyalty and promised
to bring him to the hall of the Teloch that he might
240 entreat with him.

Guarded now by local men,
the band moved through the lands slowly that they
would not be suddenly set upon, their number small.
As they approached the hall of the Teloch, battle
245 became prominent, no tree unmarked by violence
and crops grew no further than shoots, torn
from the ground by hungry hands. A lake lies near
the shore of the sea, fathomless, to which all water
of the Ui Agla lands gathers, Aglach Dremorla
250 its name. Only a league distant from the shores
of the lake is the hall of that Teloch, so that to take
a wife from that house he had need to pass

near the lake. With him twenty men of skill, loyal
to his purse he rounded the lake, but there found
255 a hundred armed brothers waiting by the shores
to slaughter and defile those thirsty and seeking
respite.

As soon as the bands came
in sight of the other, blows began to fall. Aedelwitz
260 and his men carried their arms in hand as they
traveled, but the band of carrion was resting,
the lamentations of their captives unceasing.
Aedelwitz's band closed together as a hedgehog
when threatened. Vultures caught unawares pecked
265 at the spines but could spill no blood, so well
defended was that creature. So the eager scavengers
were repulsed with loss but those more cautious
armed themselves and rained bolts upon the shields.
Covered in their dark armor and with rending axes
270 in their hands they began to break the wall
and pulled men out to slay. Aedelwitz did not
permit himself to be trapped so, ordering his people
to break apart in a sudden motion and came against
them in a burning fury. His action of swift violence
275 frightened them back and he reached the captives
and freed them without the loss of a single warrior,
felling two score of the bandits. Again under their
shields, his band advanced into the center
of the camp and slew those who drew too near
280 to them. Coming to the great fire which burned
there, Aedelwitz had his men free those held
captive, some of these gathered weapons and struck
at their captors, though many had no training
or skill with these and died. Others went and freed
285 more, or else set fire to the camp, sowing confusion
through the vultures but not through the ranks
of the band.

As Chaos expanded her reign
over the camp the twenty held firm, the great chief
290 of the camp, who called every man cur who ran, led
a small number who had not fled against the wall
to cure their flagging hearts. Yet men who reave
and defile know no bonds of true warriors, for those
who harm the unarmed and fight for spoils

295 in sudden raids cannot know the duty of an Iolish
warrior to die upon the field. So this chief came
against the wall of Aedelwitz, and though of terrible
strength, he knew far better how to harm
the innocent than how to fight men of courage.
300 Aedelwitz cleanly cut his hands from his body
and forced his submission and the raiders fled
the camp in fear, scrambling to take all they could
before vanishing. Aedelwitz then gathered those
burdened by their spoils and slew them for their lust
305 and freed all those held prisoner. He then gathered
them together and went to the hall of the Teloch.

To the Hall of that king
came that party of the disparate, he at their head
seemed to them Mathred reborn, robed in the blood
310 of foes and unable of defeat by mortal means.
To they who long since surrendered their hope
of rescue, the swiftness and ferocity of their
deliverance seemed to them a feat belonging
to a true hero of the past age or that of the Baíth.
315 A crown was made for him woven from the flowers
by the shore of the lake, golden and blue, and spoils
of the camp divided among them, mead and sour
Iolish wine. This troop, much cheered by their
freedom and drink, went to that hall in the spirit of
320 a festival. A great shout went up in the crowd, so
loud that Teloch Rolalloch Gwyair Dui heard it
clearly from his hall and wondered what new
mischief brigands had sown in his lands.

Such a procession had not come
325 to those somber halls in many years, the Teloch
fearing them called his house guard together.
Yet Aedelwitz knew the strength of the king
and had come for his favor and for his daughter,
so at his word the revelers knelt to the Teloch,
330 swearing fealty to him as their rightful lord.
Uncertain of such a peaceful act, the Teloch none
the less welcomed them into his hall, feasting them.
When the meagre mead which he had was all spent,
the Teloch Rolalloch felt no more fear for those
335 newly reconciled to him and held Aedelwitz as his
brother, a great spirit who did great deeds

in the most just way. Aedelwitz judged that as they
held each other by the arms, the Teloch would not
refuse him any request, desiring to take his oldest
340 daughter as his wife. Here the mirth of Rolalloch
died and he spoke,

“You have in this day
proven to be a warrior of skill and kindness, freeing
a captive people who are not your own is noble,
345 and to do so with so few men under arms, only
the Bear King Mathred could have done so much
with less. I beg of you to withdraw this most poor
request. For if you leave my hall with naught
but what you have won yourself today, you shall not
350 want for that which you need.

“She who you have claimed
as your wife is dear to my heart and still a child
of but nine years. If you seek to gain my friendship
for your reward, this has already been won,
355 in returning to your lands you will be greatly
renown. But there is more in your desire, in taking
my daughter you think that the Ui Agla would
become a subject people. Such things shall not
come to pass. If you take her from here seeking this
360 false dream, you would soon be betrayed. I will
permit no such union for my people. The High King
Malach has named outlaw all men who seek
wife-taking. Leave this place on the morrow, go
where you will, but not to our lands. You shall have
365 our friendship, but not our supplication. Should
in seven years you still seek a bride and if you are
such a man which she would desire, then shall I
happily welcome you as my son, but never before.”

With his refusal given,
370 the Teloch left the revelry, thinking that Aedelwitz
was now bound to friendship. Yet it was then that
the noble character of Aedelwitz fell away and his
true black heart revealed. He feared that his brothers
had already accomplished feats worthy of fame
375 and returned to their father. He had not the years
to wait, not knowing what gifts his brothers brought
to his father, but that none would outshine an entire

people, no longer to be brought over willingly
but subjugated. Aedelwitz went to those men who
380 had escorted him through the land and fought beside
him at the lake and prepared them for deceit. When
morning came the band set off from the hall,
returning to their home and pledging friendship
to Rolalloch. Aedelwitz was not in their number
385 and they told the Teloch he had set out before
the sun in order to find another gift for his people,
hoping for the eternal friendship of the Ui Agla.
They went from the hall and came to the site
of the battle, there waiting for their chief.

390 Aedelwitz waited till his band left
and stealing drew to the bedchamber where
the family of the Rolalloch still slept. There his
cunning and greed did not permit him leave
with only his prize. He took from there each
395 of the Teloch's daughters and their mother also,
for he saw value in her as a hostage; so with sword
to the throat of the child that was to be his bride,
he forced her silence and slipped away unnoticed
with his many captives. His band cheered at his
400 appearance, for no easy feat it was to take so much
from the famed Teloch. With speed they left that
place, knowing that once out of those lands their
safety would be assured, for Rolalloch had little
sway within his own Tella, his war band would
405 be small. To the city of Aerellsalam the band
prepared, moving only at night that they might
be lost to their hunters; far from the lands
of the Ui Agla they went ran, a path not as the raven
would fly but as the hare would scurry, before they
410 found their allies, where they were greeted by dark
tidings.

The Teloch, warrior well-traveled,
Rolalloch Gwyair Dui discovered swiftly that
his family was taken, and knowing at once that
415 Aedelwitz had betrayed him and been false-friend,
he sent word through the Tella. Friend and foe alike
learned of the plight of the children, their wrath
kindled. In the lands of the Ui Agla the cry went up,
the people united against the crime to their blood,

420 word soon passing beyond their borders so that all
the Iolish knew of the treachery. Those who
had long let their hate fester against the mighty
Un Colta bar now summoned their warriors
and made known their outrage; no true High King
425 could let loose a son so foul, and even they who
had reveled at his demise held high the example
of Malach. Warbands of those Tella met in outrage
shared and began to press against the lands
of the Hawk King. For the first time an army led
430 by the Otter and lifted by the music of the Sparrow
fled the field, and Ceallach, knowing that which
was fated for him who falsely wore the gold,
the Ring of Good Fortune, travelled back to his hall,
that he might spare their total destruction.

435 Aellas, second of the Hawk's sons,
and but one year younger than Aedelwitz,
was in temperament calmly measured. He desired
not the seat of his father, but when called upon
to test his right he went from his people's land,
440 for his duty was forged in his blood and he would
not betray it. So Aellas met his father's favorite,
the clever Otter which led his warriors, beseeching
him that he might learn how best to reward
the Un Colta bar. To him the Otter spoke,

445 "I desire neither gold nor power,
I love only Wisdom and all her glory. Though I am
from her separated by great distance and have little
knowledge of her greatness, in that holy light I do
strive to stand. A man may love many things,
450 but together a people have need only of food, glory,
and song. To secure these for a people, one only
needs that light and his people then shall have
happiness. So Aellas, to give these three gifts you
need only procure one. Speak to the Singer, for no
455 man on this isle is wise if he is not wise. Many
times have I spoken with the Sparrow to learn from
where his power was born, though chattering bird
chirps sweetly, in its eyes I see the truth and know
that his gift was bestowed upon him, that he has not
460 always sung as a songbird. Go Aellas, that
the Wisdom he found might guide your people."

To the Sparrow went Aellas,
eager to learn the strength of him well praised
by a great warrior, not imagining that he who had
465 sung to the warriors in his father's hall was one
so strong, as though finding the creek in which he
had played as a child was fathoms deep, the word
whispering wind which he had listened to was born
of a hidden gale. He went to him and begged
470 on bended knee for the Sparrow to aid him, though
he was the servant of his father,

“In these last long years,
since the coming of the three strangers to the lands
of the Un Colta bar, this Tella knew not the gift
475 bestowed upon it. The Otter had fought a hundred
battles for his bread, in him was gained a warrior
of unmatched quality. He has led our warriors
to double our lands and made us stand tall among
all the Iolish. Ceallach too is a warrior of skill,
480 though since the burning of that exalted hall
his fire has left him. Yet though he failed
the first lord of these lands he has proved a boon
to his second, for we know not of where he walks
but that his works do heal this land of the ravages
485 it suffers. Thirdly there is you, the Sparrow,
of these three the least famed. I had often heard
your singing in the hall of my father beside
his warriors. Little seems my knowledge now,
that I learn how highly placed you are by another
490 who I had known to be greater. The power by which
you have protected our warbands was unknown
to me. Foolish it seems now that I saw not
your veiled knowledge. I seek now to right
my thinking and properly venerate that which
495 should be placed above all martial prowess.
Sparrow, teach the son of he who has guarded you
that I might protect this land.”

The Sparrow was jealous
of that which he had been given five years past
500 and had not spoken a word of where he had learned
true songs. Yet with his wisdom he knew that he
must perish as all men must perish, and that wisdom
is not wise unless shared among men, for such was

the lesson which the child taught him. Aellas must
505 Know from him, that knowledge would not perish,
and so he spoke in reply,

“Poorly spoken, if I was to be
flattered, but had you the means to persuade me
then you would not have come seeking wisdom
510 at all. Well said instead, if in presenting yourself
to me your design was to be taught. Humble is he
who seeks to learn, a haughty student cannot. Well
placed is your humility, for I had not your meekness
when I was taught my true place. Five years past,
515 mere days before I came to this hall, I went to that
land of sorrow beneath the Hill of Hala, there I had
resolved to sing, for I was well known in the lands
of the East, and in my arrogance I knew that my
voice would give sleep to those long dead. There
520 in the midst of my singing I did see a child sleeping
in the flowers upon a mound, unnatural and taboo,
the foolish girl brought me to a rage and I scolded
her, but was quickly humbled before her; I learned
that true power contained in the child of Hala.
525 So you have come to me and begged for the power
with which I have been vested, but I cannot bestow
it upon you, for it was granted to me. Should that
power become yours, the taboo must be broken,
you must ascend the Hill of Hala and receive
530 from her this boon.”

Aellas thus guided,
left his people without ceremony and wearing
but woven flax, seen off only by the Sparrow.
He came not to the homes of others in his travels,
535 but lived beneath the shelter of trees and ate
the poor fruit of the land. Word flew through Ioland
that the children of the Hawk King Aetheldor
had left their hall, suitors to power, rumor swirling
of their deeds, that his brother Aedelwitz had gone
540 to the Un Salal to gain them. As his brothers
achieved their feats, no word came home of Aellas,
for he desired to safely find that which he had
in secrecy learned. A month of slow traveling
after he had left his people, Aellas came to the land
545 of barrows. It was no more a green place, grey mist

had settled over the smallest of the graves, the sun
dismal and mourning over those hills. Aellas feared
some new misfortune had befallen the dead
that the land be so changed from the memory
550 of the Sparrow.

Aellas entered the land about Hala
prepared for battle, knowing not what he would face
in that land devoid of man, Aellas but the fourth
to enter there since the Burning. He walked through
555 the mounds as one prepared for sudden violence,
peering into the grey gloaming, yet never did it fall
upon him as he went past growing mounds, till
at last he stood upon the very Hill of Hala. No shape
or figure could he see about him, mist pressed close,
560 doubt awakened in him that if such a child had ever
walked the barrows she did so no longer, her great
power beyond his grasp, his people given to his
brothers. Aellas surrendered to this feeling and did
weep, in weeping abandoning all hope and vanity
565 for his own glory, accepting that he would serve
and not be served. A time he did spend upon
the Hill of Hala, alone in a sea of mists, alone
but for the dead, and when as it seemed to him that
haze of the sun was beginning to fall to the horizon,
570 he did leave that place. To return home and meekly
obey was now his fate, but as he passed beyond that
barrier of mist he heard a great cry, more terrible
than any he had heard before, as though a hind lay
dying, her voice lifted beyond all mortal sounds
575 until it became the sky above him. He fell to his
knees in terror, so afraid at the rending sound he
abandoned his arms to block his ears, his breathing
labored and his legs would not obey him. The cry
entered his heart, his body, his mind and as it did he
580 yielded to it, all his soul turned to that sound until
he could do naught but wait to be relinquished by it;
as he fell to its rule it seemed that that cry was
sundered into two, one a snarl, cold and violent that
he that knew not its like on the earth and at the same
585 moment a high note, the pained scream of a woman.

In the heart of Aellas
a war was waged in that hour; it seemed to him that

he could do naught but flee, for he had seen little
of war and less of the island, having only listened
590 to those who sat about his father's fire
with flowing mead and wagging tongues
as they wove tales of the glorious battles which
were etched into the halls, but he had no knowledge
of the deed. Here, without earthly goods,
595 he crouched in terror at the mere sound of battle.
Yet he could not flee, for above the bellow of that
vile maw he heard the death throes of the other,
shrill and unwavering. Eternal damnation belongs
to him that does not succor the desperate. No Tella
600 could he claim to turn so wretchedly from such
a call. Aellas could not move till both cries died
a ragged death. His breath uncertain, Aellas stood
and returned to the mist resolved, glad to die
nameless and unshamed.

605 Mists covered him,
pouring from the barrow tops and pooling at his feet
as Aellas crept as a hare under the shadow of wings,
arms forgotten beyond the boundaries, resolved
to lay his lifeblood for her he had heard
610 in the mists. Foul wind born from the ragged breath
of some bloodied bellows stifled him, the mists
swirled about him, pulled in and pushed out,
conjured apparitions veiled by haze appeared before
him, warriors long passed with wounds still running
615 gazed upon him from the threshold of their barrows,
some walked beside him as guides, pointing
to the path on which he could not fail, still others
fell and were felled with the birth and death
of the ragged wind. The procession followed him
620 guiding, watching, and dying, till at last they
followed no further, falling away to mist,
and he stood at the foot of the Hill of Hala.

Before him the maw
of a Damned Wolf had broke through the door
625 of the grand barrow, rotted teeth dug into
the ground with rabid biting and snarls, a tongue too
long lapped at the feet of a child, wounded with
many wounds, faint and falling, as above
the doorway a fog-king of such great splendor

630 gazed in despair. Aellas rushed to her side, pulling
her beyond the reach of the hound, he tore his
clothing to bind her wounds and gave to her water
from his skin. The Wolf of Sin grew in fury,
gnawing madly at the stone which restrained it.
635 He knew not how he might battle the beast, whose
rotten fangs were as large as a warrior's sword,
whose oozing tongue was as a whip, all he knew
was that in his arms was the weak child who
had taught the Sparrow.

640 She shivered in his arms,
cold to the touch and weak of breath. Aellas knew
little of the lands beyond his father's grasp, not ever
knowing such pain as was writ plain upon the child
in his arms. He knew not how to heal her wounds
645 nor how to battle the ravening wolf, casting his gaze
about in desperation for a weapon, but none lay
near. In panic he cried out to the fog-king, begging
him to leave his seat and give desperate succor.
He rose, a regal half-formed figure, descending
650 the mound in powerful stride, paying no heed
to the maw until he knelt before Aellas, his face
featureless rolling smoke, and placed to her brow
his wind-blown fingers. In an instant she awoke,
a wild scream of pain wracking her, and grabbed
655 hold of the earth below her, from her fingers mighty
roots tore through the earth, tangled brambles
snared the beast, its tongue stabbed by thorns
and rolled as twine back to its mouth, the roots
leaping followed it, growing over the door, blotting
660 the beast from the world beneath the brown roots,
the weight of them forcing the rabid maw back,
the stone door lifted from the earth by them and set
anew in the frame and sealed shut, in an instant
the howls of the beast died and the king vanished
665 in the winds. The child spoke to him, her eyes
firmly shut,

“Greatmother, I know not why
you hold me now as I have not been held since
the raising of these barrows, in these many years
670 you have not given me the compassion of an
embrace nor the healing you have given me now.

Long have I sought your love for me, the blood
which you have given my ancestors is strange and
powerful, so far removed from the bonds of family
675 which men forge. Never before have you defended
me from those creatures which wander beneath
the sleeping earth. Greatmother, if this kindness
is not too short lived, take me to my resting place
atop the barrow, else return to your people and I
680 shall, when ready, climb my father's grave alone."

The child fell silent,
Aellas lifted her and trembling took her onto
the mound where the fog-king had once sat,
for it is a great taboo to tread on the grave howes
685 of the dead. At its peak he found the bed of flowers
which the Sparrow had told him of. As he placed
her down the sun burst forth from the haze,
assuming its rightful royal place, chieftain
of the sky and seer of all things, and beneath its rays
690 a smile danced upon the child's face, the flowers
and grasses grew wildly. Aellas waited for the child,
still he did not understand that which he had
witnessed, but not wanting her to think him in bad
faith for acting as her greatmother, kneeled beside
695 her and began to speak, shaking still in fear
for treading upon a barrow. The story of his life he
told, of his father the Teloch, of his brothers four
who still sought the prize of victory, of his favorite
green grove, of melodies in mead halls, of his now
700 abandoned desires, of the Sparrow, the Otter,
and Ceallach, of the battles won, of warriors he
knew who had not returned, of his hunting dog,
till at last he knew no more of his life and fell silent,
gazing upon the outstretched sky.

705 She spoke as he ended,
not opening her eyes nor rising, but still
in measured melody her voice came to him,

"In debt I am to you,
Aellas, son of the Teloch Aetheldor and of all Iolish
710 most kind, for I have not known the decency
of living men since the hill above us was ravaged.
Above us is set the sun, that only goodness which

I have been granted, for my father will not permit
the sun to shine over his diminished kingdom when
715 I am from him, it is he who calls the mists which
shroud his people, mourning in my absence. Fear
not his wrath, for he delights to find me here
and will not curse you for standing on his howe.
I have been to my home little since the mounds
720 were raised, these lands long left grey, for I have
learned the power within my blood and I am made
to test it. Long have I walked the dark sunless lands
beneath the barrows where pale demons walk on
many limbs and eat with many mouths, long have
725 I given them battle as my greatmother watched.
Hidden knowledge my reward for victory, death
in defeat. Glad I am for you, second of the sons
of the Hawk, first in courage, your kindness stands
apart from these weary years. When a life is spared
730 a debt is owed, I now happily place myself in your
debt and shall eagerly pay it, a debt is an iron chain
and unbreakable. Aellas, you must know that I
am Ilulean, daughter of Malach, last of a Tella,
missing daughter of a second, and heir to a terrible
735 third. Speak my name and I shall come to you,
as my debt requires.”

Her eyes opened,
wounds now healed, and in sunlight was
an ordinary child. Aellas was moved to pity, seeing
740 much had changed for her since the Sparrow had
learned a piece of her power, and so he replied
to her kindly for the payment of his new credit,

“Ilulean, child of the true High Teloch,
I have need for repayment of this debt in this very
745 hour, or in that hour when you from your wounds
are healed full, I shall not add to your burdens until
you are fit to carry them. Yet it is fitting that you
should know the task with which you shall repay
me. We shall leave this place to its quiet mourning
750 and misted rest to walk the land which your father
ruled, the land which is yours by right of blood,
the land of the Iolish has fallen far to the twin
plagues of distrust and desolation. You have told
me of the great pain which has been your fate

755 for so long, pain no man has yet known. I have
but little power, yet I shall not permit such a terrible
crime to continue when by my life I may stop it.
I vow that you shall know nothing but comfort until
you are full grown, protected by my people
760 to the utmost end of our strength. We shall travel far
through the lands of man, far from the woods
and barrows, we shall sit by fires and in mead halls
guarded by guest-right. We shall hear the songs
of the many Iolish Tella sung by sundered voices,
765 then with understanding shall you know the peoples
of the land and the soul of Ioland. I will labor
to place you above all others and the right
of your blood fulfilled, and your power as a shield
for them. We will give these next years to carry
770 their troubles for them, in time this land will again
have a High Teloch.”

Ilulean rose from her bed smiling,
seeming again as an ordinary child, and gave to him
a single dawn-flower from her bed. The smile grew
775 sad and she turned to the east. She spoke slowly,

“It is a kind thing you offer,
to leave this place and go to the isle. It is right that
you say I should be among my people, who by laws
ancient are mine to rule. Alas I cannot, laws set
780 by power beyond my knowledge by my greatmother
bind me to the land of the Baíth. I am being readied
for their works, they do not want to lose me. I think
there is a day coming when I will leave these sad
hills, but it is not today. This flower I give to you
785 is the dawn-flower for which I was named,
and in its petals I placed my power. Carry it
with you and it will order the isle as you need.
Go and give that aid to the people of the isle,
and know that I shall watch over you as I can.
790 Yet beware the Wound which walks the isle, for I
am not strong enough to hold him. I fear his touch
and as he feels joy, I feel dread. Go Aellas,
and know that as I learn the power of my blood,
facing demons in the other world, I will remember
795 your kindness.”

She sat back down on the flowers
and would not move no matter how Aellas pleaded
with her, and so he left her, angered that he could
do nothing for her. Passing the barrows' boundary
800 into the world of the living, he was glad to walk
again among the lands of man, the grey mist
returning behind him, the soft mist forming a wall,
so thick that even with a torch the outstretched arms
vanished. Aellas did not go south to the land
805 of his Tella, instead walking west in the guise
of a beggar, thinking how to properly serve
the Iolish. He reached Aglach Ulmo, which bears
the water Aglach Salam brings to the great still lake
of Ioland of the same name out to the sea; but where
810 the first river flows in quiet dignity from its rise,
the Ulmo thunders its course, gleefully crashing
upon its rapids, raising mischievous din
for pleasure. The people of Ioland had long crossed
only at Aglach Salam.

815 When Aellas stood
upon the banks of that river, it sobered as a drunk
servant at the arrival of his master, and he crossed
without challenge. Upon the other bank, he turned
to see the river thundering again. Wondering at such
820 a miracle, he took out the flower which Ilulean
had given him. A pedal fell from the stalk
and was washed away by the thundering water.
Aellas wished that the Iolish would never be
troubled by the swift water again, and as he wished,
825 a seed of the earth sprouted beneath his feet,
bending, twisting, but flat as it crossed the water,
until it buried itself in the soil across the river
as a living bridge, so wide that three men could
walk abreast, its branches grew on the sides only
830 and not where men would walk, weaving between
each other until a guard spanned the bridge entire,
that no man could fall from it. A second pedal fell
from the flower.

835 Still further he went,
as Aellas searched for the proper place to walk
among the Iolish, for he sought to ensure his aid
was not spent amongst thieves and raiders,

but rather in the company of those who still
remembered the Peace and desired to see it returned
840 to the land. So he came to a farmstead
of meager means in the lands of the Un Bolam,
there offering his labor for guest-right. He wished
for strength in the fields and water in the well,
not that they would prosper in wealth but rather that
845 their fears should die and they would never want.

At that time he knew joy
tending to the animals which were kept, for they
knew nothing of death and war. Yet all Ioland
was in chaos, two months after Aellas had left
850 his home word came of the crimes of Aedelwitz
and the Un Colta bar, fire spread through the land
and the menfolk with whom Aellas stayed left
to join the gathering hosts. Aellas feared his blood
was a danger, and so in the night he snuck away
855 and went searching for his family.

The great host of united Tella,
the Un Salal, Un Bolam, Un Londar Norna,
Un Goll, Un Con Tara, and Ui Arden joined
the Ui Agla so the host swelled to the thousands
860 and marched to the walls of Aerellsalam to demand
the daughters returned; but in their hearts
they desired secretly to see their foe laid low
that he could no longer hold himself so high.
The great host set their plan to burn that great city
865 to embers and from there to march upon
the Un Colta bar and free themselves from
the tribute the High Teloch set for them.
They began a siege, a manner of war which
the Iolish were unaccustomed to, yet as they began
870 assaulting the walls in piecemeal fashion,
the Hawk King prepared the relief of the city.

Teloch Aetheldor called for his servants
to assemble a warband, though in size it was
to be outnumbered by the host arrayed against them,
875 but he received fewer than he had hoped for,
for the Drocht Baalon would not leave their lands
for the warning of Ceallach, and of the Un Londar
which he subdued came only weak and unwilling.

880 He would harshly punish his son who had brought
upon his people such danger by stealing children
and women from their home in deceit, but it was
for him to discipline, his blood was to be guarded
from others, none could spill that blood without
feud.

885 Three of his sons were with him
as he prepared, having completed their proofs
for kingship. Aedroianne went into the wilderness
and brought to his people fifteen wolf pelts and five
bear pelts, slain by his own hand, Aemerrick had
890 walked to the shores of the Iolish Sea and there
dove for pearls, becoming capable of holding
his breath for great periods of time so long
that his companions thought him drowned
and lost forever, in all bringing a hundred pearls
895 as a gift to his father. The youngest of his sons
was Aethelwald, twelve years of age, and who had
not left his people, rather telling his father that his
gift to the Un Colta bar was his life, and that he
would not ever raise his hand against his brothers,
900 whichever was chosen would be his Teloch.

 The numbers too few
to give battle, the Teloch sent those gathered with
Aedroianne and Aemerrick to learn the number
and manner of the enemy as the Otter rode through
905 the land to each home to gather more. With his two
sons walked two thousand men. Great secrecy
was maintained by that band, for they knew not
their foe's strength, upon any hillock foragers
and scouts of the enemy could spy them and raise
910 the alarm. As elder, Aedronianne was their chief,
the band stalked through the dells by night,
coming to the lands about Aerellsalam unnoticed.

 Aedronianne sent his brother
Aemerrick to the camp of the enemy to learn their
915 number. He with five warriors in disguise gained
their entrance by the fires of the Un Goll, who had
not set guards at night. In the night they walked
round the entire city wall, counting each man they
saw until they knew their number, a full ten

920 thousand faced them. Aemerrick then sent away
those warriors with him that his brother would
know his foe's strength, but he remained. Under
the guise of a lame camp follower Aemerrick
learned the rhythm of the host, offering his labor
925 to them, sewing and fetching water from
the river, each day observing as bands would walk
the camp, gathering men to assault the walls.
He would lash together ladders for those doomed
men, for it mattered not the number nor valor, they
930 could not capture the walls, too stoutly were they
defended, and each night the labor of Aemerrick
burned in heaps below the ramparts. In his heart,
hope bolstered him, for he saw that so many so
unaccustomed to the practice of siege could not ever
935 take their prize. Soon summer would die its reckless
death and in fields hands would be as rare as gold;
if by the great fortune of his father they might hold
then there would be no need for the Un Colta bar
to give battle, sons and fathers spared. When
940 the great host broke apart, their wrath would cool
and never again kindle, wars would begin anew
among the many Tella and his people would
be saved. He was therefore resolved to leave
the camp and return to his brother and keep him
945 from any action.

By night he prepared his leave,
moonless and clouded, he walked beyond the fires
of the camp and into the fields which stretched until
the woods. Yet as he crossed those fields,
950 a commotion rose within the camp whose source
he could not discover. Fires leapt and sparked
and the joyful sound of metal striking metal rang.
Aemerrick hid himself in the grain, watching
carefully as the camp erupted in cries, swarming as
955 bees when the hive is struck with rocks. Aemerrick
had seen many battles between the warriors
of the gathered Tella, old bloodfeuds born in battle
or raids do not die among the Iolish, though
in word they were united. The men, bitter at
960 their failure to take Aerellsalam, fought each other
for revenge, for food, for frustration, men would
slay each other in duels born of a moment's rage,

or else use cunning, some of those who lay to sleep
rose no more. So finally the blood boiled between
965 the Tella and a confused melee began,
and as the sounds of battle were carried all about
the plain Aemerrick heard a separate sound.

In the soft sighs of the wind,
rustling only as she breathed, there was another.
970 Careful as a wolf pack, they crept, drawing ever
near. Drawn by the commotion of the camp,
the band of his brother, who had so long kept
themselves hidden, came from the southern hills,
knowing the moment of their attack. Their faces
975 blackened with mud even in the moonless dark,
even the flighty Un Londar were bravely prepared,
any man is brave when he strikes unseen. The men
came slowly, until at last they were but a short leap
from their foe. Then the trap was sprung and with
980 great clatter and din they arose from the grass
and fell upon their foe, yet soon the alarm
was raised in every camp and the great host scurried
to their arms. As the battle waxed, those within
the camp who battled with each other became aware
985 that their foe was upon them and set aside their
feud, bringing all their force upon the band
of Aedroianne. Soon too did reinforcement arrive,
a band of the Un Salal and at their head the Hunter,
in mail black and woad on his face, crashed
990 into battle and none stood against him. Reckless
was he, carrying no shield and holding a great axe,
rending friends and foe alike, their blood running
down his face like sweat. All the number of the
camp now pressed against them till those who
995 fought for the Un Colta bar were forced to flee,
but in good order.

Aemerrick chose to return
to the camp of his foe, to learn of that fierce warrior
and dissuade further assaults. In guise again, he
1000 slipped easily back into the camp as warriors
gathered at the battle. He sought the Teloch
of the Un Goll whom he had served and found him
wounded in the thigh, his retainers tearing rags off
their clothes to stem the bleeding. Aemerrick

1005 limped into his tent and commanded them to be still
with such authority that they ceased, though their
Teloch still writhed in pain. He sat beside the king
and with a bone needle closed the wound with such
speed and skill that to those there it seemed he had
1010 the power of the Baíth. He then placed in
the Teloch's mouth the bark of the willow
and demanded that he be given quiet. The retainers
left the tent and Aemerrick was left alone with
the Teloch, singing a soft song to pull his mind
1015 from his pain.

A runner came with word
for that Teloch, the kings of the host were joined
together for council and the Un Goll were needed.
The Teloch gathered his wits and conquered his
1020 pain but needed aid in walking. Aemerrick lifted
the wounded chief and together walked through
the camp. Men held their arms close and the dead
remained strewn across the camp. There,
in the place where the Un Colta bar had attacked,
1025 the Telochs had gathered, some bloody
and others unmarked. At their arrival the Teloch
of the Un Con Tara, Findara, spoke,

“Long have I wondered why
our foe whose son we have caged has not come
1030 forward to give battle, if the winds still lifted
the Hawk King in his prominence, and as each day
passed I believed that their army would not come
to this place. It is proper that thieves move
in the night, for such cowardly peoples that would
1035 steal children and women would shame the sun.
Wife-taking was ended by the Malach, our war
just to remember his law. Those who work
in the shadows are known to be weaker than those
who do war by day. So I would thank Aetheldor
1040 for his battle, he has told the Tella assembled that
he cannot give battle by just means. It would be
well of us to leave this place with our host and find
his warband. How many of his people can he bring
against us, when our host numbers more than all his
1045 Tella, shall he bring even his women to the defense
of his vile son? We must leave this place and march

against those forces that attacked our camp, by our
victory over them we shall break their power in this
land and at our leisure return to Aerellsalam,
1050 they will not deny our revenge and surrender
that villain when his father is broken. We need not
waste more time before these walls which we
cannot take, our victory shall come from open
battle.”

1055 Few Telochs spoke in agreement,
their pride demanded that they not flee the field
after victory, but also each of them had come
for the desire of plunder and to humble him that
named himself High Teloch. When the Teloch
1060 of the Un Con Tara had ended, Teloch Rolalloch
Gwyair Dui of the Ui Agla spoke from his fear,

“We are each Telochs of proud Tella,
no one is set above the other, not since the death
of the great king Malach have we knelt. Nor shall
1065 we kneel to any other ever again, free now for all
time. My Tella, my family have been assaulted
by one of our number, I cannot submit to one who
has committed such vile acts of rapine, nor, I think,
would any of our proud number submit. Who can
1070 act when a Teloch upsets Ioland? Clearly it is to be
the other Telochs of the land. I thank you
for coming to my defense but I beg you not to leave
this place of justice to find so small a force
for the joys of battle. I fear with every passing day
1075 that horrible violence will be visited upon my
children and in your flight you shall permit the man
who has betrayed me and all tradition of guest right
held by the Iolish to flee his cage. I cannot leave
this place, for it would admit failure before all
1080 the Iolish, and the abandonment of my family.
Our victory comes when Aedelwitz the Traitor
is dead and my children returned. Here your reward
will be greater than in the fields of Ioland,
for the wealth of Aerellsalam, built over years
1085 of trade, will be yours to take, far more than that
which you would strip from their dead in open
fields. Do not flee from your failure, let us take
the city and proclaim our victory for all to see.”

1090 The many Telochs gathered
agreed to stay, the gold and linens gathered behind
the walls weighed on their mind, yet they knew not
how to take their prize and debate broke out for how
to mount the walls. Here, though not a Teloch,
the Hunter spoke, awarded his place for his victory,

1095 “I have seen war in many forms
but never the slow wastefulness of this host. Walls
cannot be taken by sloth, our victory shall not be
secured by patience. Why does our host fight in this
manner, so unaccustomed to the Iolish blood, when
1100 our warriors desire the heat and sweat of battle.
Of all the men of Ioland I am the greatest warrior,
unconquerable in my might and should you seek
proof look about you, have you ever seen men
so humiliated in death as those I rend, but my power
1105 irresistible cannot slay those behind walls. Let all
your host assault the walls at daybreak, no man
spared, and we shall have victory. I shall myself
take the gate if all the city battles upon the walls.

 “At nightfall the morrow
1110 we shall revenge the Ui Agla and bring safely
home his children, the haughty son of the tyrant
shall bleed his lifeblood upon my axe, but we
cannot then disband after but one battle. For what
father would not seek to revenge himself upon those
1115 that slew his heir? We are all here gathered
for the rage of a father that has lost his own, can we
break camp and go to our homes before a final
victory which ensures this will not happen again?
Would the Hawk King not pursue us in our
1120 fractured bands over all of Ioland and slay us
piecemeal for what we will do to his son? We must
remain as our mighty host until the power
of the Un Colta bar has been broken and they forfeit
all claim to the place of Mebeb and vengeance.
1125 We together shall secure the freedom of our lands
for all time.”

 At his finish, the words
captured both camps, those who desired the riches
of Aerellsalam and those who wished to see

1130 the power of Aetheldor broken saw use in this first
humiliation. They went to their warbands, preparing
great siege ladders large enough for five men,
through the night no man slept but labored,
in careful numbers they reached the forest edge
1135 and there cut many trees. Aedroianne and his men
made but small uncertain war upon them, fighting
and fading, worried of the pursuit from the camp.
Aemerrick worked among them tying the rungs
and preparing arms, all along the walls the men
1140 of Aerellsalam stood prepared, watching them,
and slowly the camp fell to silence as their labors
were complete, until the appointed hour
for the charge came as dawn rode into the sky.

Shot, missile, and dart

1145 fell thick among them, many fell before reaching
the wall, more still had lost their arms beneath
the hacking axes as they climbed. Again the charge
was stalled, though they had so many thousands.
Yet as the war waxed about the still waters,
1150 the guard on the gate gave their succor upon
the walls and the Hunter came there, bare
and unarmored, in his arms the trunk of a great tree
broad as a man's chest and fifteen rella long, hewn
by his own hand. Ten men came with him to wield
1155 it, each stood opposite him, they began their slow
business. Even with the irresistible might
of the cursed wanderer the walls gave but haltingly,
well-built and studded with iron, and as they
battered the wall, men came, drawn to the noise,
1160 and raised the alarm. Swiftly came the men
of Aerellsalam to that place, dart fell upon the ram
as the gate began buckling, ravaged by the ram,
a rabid wolf clawing at the door desperate
for the slaughter which lay beyond, all but the
1165 Hunter were felled by fierce dart, the ram falling
silent as hands fell from it.

Yet its work was done,
let free by the eager Hunter, who brought up his axe
and hewed the last resisting wood to kindling
1170 as about him fell useless the arms of Aerellsalam,
no dart dared touch the darkness. In strode

the Darkened One, bound by terrible curse, into
the poorly led city he came, and behind him flooded
the host. The assault upon the walls ceased when
1175 word came that the gate had fallen, few risked
themselves in the battle for the wall, but rather gave
to desire. Doomed to swift death were those who
came down from the walls in vain hope seeking
to stop the advance. For with his great weapon
1180 the Hunter slew his foes with ease, taking no notice
of their lives but reveling in his strength, till swiftly
the gate was won by the host of many Tella
and Aerellsalam fated to fall. In poured the armies
of Ioland and the war ended, the city surrendered
1185 to rape and fire, the still waters churned muddy
and dark.

The Hunter stalked the streets,
about him the fires raged, thick smoke billowed
snakelike above, the sky turned dark, and he
1190 wrought no work but slaughter with axe or hand,
joyfully taking the lifeblood of those who came
across him. The reavers brought to humiliation
Aerellsalam, but he still searched, sparing neither
friend or foe, until he came on the final band
1195 defending the city and with them Aedelwitz. Here
were the city fathers gathered behind the shield
wall, their captain held them fast as the tortoise
moved for a gate, in the midst of their circle
the children of Ui Agla. the raiders did not come
1200 against them for they saw no easy treasure,
but the Hunter saw only gain and came against
them, hewing their shields and hacking at their legs
from beyond the reach of their arms till Aedelwitz
came forward, commanding his men to continue
1205 their march and gave battle.

He came forward in wrath,
forcing back the bloodstained Hunter and with his
shield pressed against him the axe would not swing,
wounding the dark twice. As the dark ichor fell
1210 to the earth the Hunter abandoned his arms and with
hands bare sought to crush his prey, becoming lithe
as smoke, more wild did the sword swing but
no blow would land on him as he began to beat

1215 against the shield of Aedelwitz, his irresistible fists
hammer blows against the wood. Wearied,
Aedelwitz hid behind it, no longer battling
with sword, seeking but to survive. Long had he
stood against the Hunter, their feet turning the blood
and ash to muck. The fire leaped gleefully about
1220 the city and the terrible screams of the timbers
in their collapse were the death throes of some
mighty beast, but the tortoise had not gotten far,
being slowed by their wounded and the age
of the fathers. They could reach no gate unguarded,
1225 too few in number to force their way and cowardly
without their captain.

Aedelwitz had no strength
remaining in him, his legs gave way under
the assault, exhausted in the mud he lay as
1230 the Hunter retrieved his arms. The headsman's axe
was stained with blood and mud or else danced with
the fires about them. Not able to battle any longer,
the Teloch's son watched unmoving as his death
came to him, sword falling from his hand, shield
1235 laying useless beside him. The Hunter came to
him and without a moment's pause brought end
to the life of the Well-Travelled-But-Greedy son.

The Hunter hastened
to the shield wall, the wounds left long trails
1240 in the dirt, his hands too bled, but his strength
did not flag, growing more terrible as the day wore
on. Easily did he kill the guard of the Elders,
brushing aside the branches as he prepared to fell
a mighty pine, the band was slain to a man. He then
1245 set about the slaughter of the Elders of Aerellsalam,
and as the city which they had led to ruin, they were
humiliated in death. The Hunter had them surrender
their clothes and cut their beards before he slew
them, but he would not wield his axe, instead with
1250 the sword of Aedelwitz and his bloody hands.
Ragnach was killed beneath his boot as he begged
ceaselessly for mercy. Then he turned to
the frightened family of Rolalloch Gwyair Dui,
licking clean his axe and sword as he eyed them.
1255 The bloodlust was on him, the need to rend flesh,

and the darkness which was laid upon his heart
yearned to feast on them. Yet there was still some
small part of him that was a man, and he knew that
to keep the host together he needed them to live.

1260 So the Hunter threw aside the sword and led them
safely from the city.

The city lay dying
and the sky wept ash as the host retreated. They
watched the flames devour every timber, shocked
1265 by the violence which they had done those people
who had been their disgraced kin, but kin none
the less. No slave was taken, no child spared,
no woman who was not outraged, none left among
the living, none would know peace and rest beneath
1270 a mound. Every man looked at his own heart
and the heart of his neighbor and saw it tainted.
Aerellsalam was long in dying, her embers glowed
for a month, the whole city razed and her people lay
strewn across the ground. Naught was left of the
1275 city but ash, no people would go there again for
shame and in time the forest would claim it, the still
waters would again fall quiet.

The Hunter brought safely
from beneath the cloud of death his wards
1280 and brought them to the camp of the Ui Agla,
to joyful reunion between father and daughter,
husband and wife till that great war chief was
reduced to tears as through the camp a cry went up,
the only joy in a mournful field. The Hunter
1285 watched carefully for his moment, fearing lest
the fire of their rage would die, until the Teloch
Rolalloch was in happiness complete, and he spoke
to him,

“Hail Father of family rejoined,
1290 let this sight reign supreme in Iolish memory,
no heart untouched by your tears, nothing
is closer to the Iolish than a family living in peace.
Gaze upon your children’s face and know they were
unharmd, rejoice in your lover’s touch and fear no
1295 harmful hand, look out to the fields beyond me
and see the host of all Ioland which has come

for justice, know that that justice has been fulfilled
and revenge satisfied. For I myself sought out your
daughters and slew him that had abused guest right,
1300 damn his name from memory. Teloch of a great
people, you owe a great boon to those who have
delivered so for your cause. Again would they have
failed without my arm, their lives wasted and your
children in captivity, victory assured by me alone
1305 and to me should fall your gift. Remember now this
debt and prove the greatness of the Ui Agla.”

The Teloch was angered
by such greed and would have brought forth his
sword had not the bloodstained figure of the Hunter
1310 loomed before him so large. So he spoke to him
in feigned gratitude,

“Oh Warrior of a lost people,
there is much that I owe to the host assembled,
a debt so great that I cannot pay it full in all my
1315 remaining days. Yet with our victory assured
and at the utmost exhaustion of arms, he which first
comes for reward is no king of great Tella, rather
him with no home. When he might have secured
for himself treasure from a rich foe, he instead
1320 returns with naught and requests it of a poor king.
Let none say of me that I am ungrateful, for the joy
I now have is greater than my despair. Very well, I
shall give unto him any boon which he desires,
should it be in my power, but for one, I shall not
1325 permit any man in all the world betrothed to my
daughters though he pushed my people to utmost
desperation. So warrior, what would you ask
of me?”

The Hunter had desired
1330 such a match but at its refusal asked that his boon
be the mighty Teloch leading the Ui Agla in the van
as they pursued Aetheldor the Hawk King. This
the Teloch promised to do in the utmost power.

As morning burned into the sky
1335 it was diminished by the blaze of Aerellsalam,
which raged undimmed. The host of Tella followed
the Ui Agla in search of that band which had

assaulted them, but Aedrioanne and Aemerrick
were by that time gone. In search of their father
1340 they went, having watched weeping as the city
of Aerellsalam died so horribly, cursing that
their meager arms could not save the city. So ever
south did the host of many Tella march, tempered
in their battle lust, only ever falling to violence
1345 among themselves but never against those which
they came upon. A shame festered in their hearts
and they began to hate those they marched with,
rivalries new sprang with each mile. Those bare few
of Aerellsalam that lived made their way down
1350 the tumbling water of Aglach Ulmo, until they
found a bridge and crossed it, thinking themselves
safe. They followed Aglach Ulmo to the sea
and there found a small fishing village whose
people were exiles same as them. The haggard
1355 settled there and lived in peace with the villagers.
A wall they raised and they kept a watch for those
that had harmed them. This new city they named
Teldrim, which is Hope.

Aellas left the farm where he worked,
1360 as about him all Ioland seemed to think only of war,
he desired only that the Iolish remember the Peace.
So while he moved through the land, he gave the
magic of the flower only where he found the needy.
Coming thus to the Aglach Ulmo he found the river
1365 dark and swollen; Aellas gazing at the muddied
water knew that which must have passed and spoke
to the empty air, knowing that she heard him,

“Child bright, True Teloch
of all things in this land, I fear this is our parting.
1370 In the tainted Ulmo I do see that great tragedy has
befallen your kingdom and I must go to its remedy.
In my heart I feel a great threat to my family
and Tella, to succor them I must now go, to aid
them with what meager arms I have according
1375 to the duty of a son.

“Ilulean, you have in you
such sadness immeasurable I would not wish upon
the cruelest war chief, which I could not bear

myself. Worse still is your awesome power given
1380 to you so young. Fate has decreed you no ordinary
child, but one that shall decide all things to come.
In the little time I have known you I have come
to learn my true place, but I hope that you have
learned yours. Man is small. Only the smallest hope
1385 exists for him to rise above want and pain,
he cannot do these things alone. A strong and good
Teloch can guard him and guide him until he sees
that to which he was blinded; this can be done
by you alone in all of Ioland, you who have seen
1390 them starve and walked their fallow fields. In such
low condition man must be pitied, his poor
character is not the natural order of his soul,
you must see with eyes clear his true nature and lift
him till he stands in his good place. For what
1395 purpose you have been given such strength
is beyond all my knowledge but I think it unjust
to use it for another's war, when it might instead
be used to end the pains of all your people.
Understand Ilulean and forgive me when I beg
1400 you remain in the land of your father, learn well
your strength that when the day comes you shall
become Teloch. Follow me not, for I must now go
to secure this land to the great promise of your
coming. Go and gain power irresistible, until
1405 in your fifteenth year I shall join you and the Iolish
redeemed."

He set aside the flower,
and when it touched the ground it withered.
He followed the river north, seeking to learn
1410 truthful tidings of the land, still garbed in his
humility and without arms. War unending moved
through the land, and though in his guise secure,
he knew not if he would be challenged by the war
parties, the signs of their violence writ large through
1415 the land. Yet even as the trees and fields were
marked by their passing he did not want for food,
finding the plenty of the forests better than
the hall of his father.

The lands were heaving in war,
1420 the vanguard of the Un Colta bar led by his brothers

Aedrioanne and Aemerrick were near him,
harassing the scattered bands of the great host
of Tella as they searched for the Hawk-King. Aellas
knew not how near they were to him and continued
1425 his path north along the river, keeping to plentiful
forests. At the shores of the disturbed lake
Aglach Salam he came to understand the war
on the island, for there he came into the camp
of Un Salal who had marched there down the shores
1430 from the ruin. He made himself seem as the poorest
of Iolish and desperate for succor, but they gave not
to him, uncertain of his Tella. They were buoyed
by victory and certain of further prestige, haughty
in denying him food, humiliating him as they ate.
1435 Aellas had learned of their number and strength,
desiring to remain no longer but to find his brothers
and aid them yet as he left their camp he was set
upon by the Hunter, who travelled with the Un Salal
as the guest of Norín the Teloch's son. For though
1440 he had been humiliated and starved by their hand,
the cruel warrior would not permit his leaving,
declaring him to be his thrall in final disgrace.

Aellas did not submit,
but instead pushed past continuing in his journey.
1445 This affront was that which the Hunter desired,
for his proud cruelty now demanded that men pay
homage to him and serve his whims. He then rushed
after him and slew him as his back was turned, thus
died the Kind-But-Timid son. The Hunter returned
1450 to the camp, calling the warriors of the Un Salal
to come witness his cruelty, but when they were
roused neither body nor blood was found.

In the lands between
the Aglach Ulmo and the hills of Ail Bolam was
1455 the burning war, with the coming fall harvest
the great host searched for the brothers as they slew
the loose forage parties. Aedrioanne and Aemerrick
did great damage to them as word reached
to the host that the Hawk King Aetheldor with all
1460 of the men of the Un Cotla bar was coming to join
his sons and give fierce battle. Runners went
through the warbands calling for the host to march

as one to victory or else be defeated alone. Together
they gathered till they found their number to be
1465 eight thousand, many deserted since the fall
and others perished at the hand of the brothers,
but the large host once more marched to battle.

The reunion between
Aetheldor and his children was joyless, for all the
1470 host combined numbered six thousand, too few in
number against such a large host. With them
was the Otter and Sparrow, and Ceallach also from
lands unknown, unwounded but weary. The Teloch
had brought with him his youngest child,
1475 Aethelwald, who had refused all birthright to serve
truthfully his people. Though he was twelve years
of age he was raised in manly arts and knew his
place in a shield wall. They knew of the burning
of Aerellsalam and the death of Aedelwitz, but none
1480 knew where Aellas was. The imperious Teloch
demanded battle in revenge for his dead child,
but the captains about him were uncertain. His sons
Aedriianne and Aemerrick began the council,

“Father and captains
1485 in all lands renowned, we have gone to war many
times, though in experience less than those gathered
here, and in our leading of the van we have fought
against the terrible host arrayed opposite us.
We have won forty battles against our foe and lost
1490 but one, that which cost our brother his life. Victory
in this war cannot be won by battle, this much we
know, their number too great to overcome.
You have taken all men from the fields who can
walk, each child that that can bear his own arms.
1495 Here with us is Aethelwald, of character true but of
years few. How will he stand when the lines meet,
in the crush? How might they? Father how can we
win a pitched battle? Return them to their homes
and permit us with our van to hold your foe in place
1500 until in time they are forced to make peace. We
shall grind them to dust before they find us
and the island shall remain as it is, their host
returning to separate lands.”

- To this the Otter rose
1505 in agreement, the veteran men he had led to battle
made less than a third of the Un Colta bar band,
and unsure of victory he spoke,
- “A good father
raises wise children, here is evidence of your own
1510 talent. These young captains have proven their
worth in a campaign more glorious than
the conquest of Malach. Teloch, we are
outnumbered, too few of our warriors have seen
battle, some have never seen it. Of those men who I
1515 have led to battle there are now too few. I am
of a mind matching your sons. I can lead those
glorious veterans in bitter delaying action and grant
you time, but do not lose your Tella in pursuit
of glory. You shall not have it.”
- 1520 After the council of those
three captains came the soothing Sparrow,
who sang before the battles of the Otter, and he
spoke calm to the Teloch,
- “Aedelwitz your son
1525 has died and the other, Aellas, has vanished from all
knowledge. Of the five children blessed to you,
three stand still before you. It is their blood that is
still warm, place not the future of your people
in vengeance for the dead. We do beg you to spare
1530 the many lives brought to this place for the faults
of Aedelwitz, who though brave did act with
malice. The war is ended in their revenge, they will
not pursue us far. Their war is not with you but your
fallen son and there let it remain. Leave and make
1535 peace.”
- As his captains each gave
arguments, the Teloch listened in rage half
concealed. When they finished, Ceallach refusing
to speak, the Hawk King gave them his mind,
- 1540 “Aedelwitz, my first,
a great warrior of our number, did act foolishly
in the halls of another while lusting after my hall,
he could not see that his life was forfeit when he

1545 stole so much from his host. Yet still am I grieved
by my loss, though he has endangered my Tella.
No other Teloch claims to rule as I do,
the subjugated people of the Un Londar pay me
tribute and the Drocht Baalon recognize my power.
1550 I am beyond their petty power, ruling as I do more
than they could desire, truly am I named High
Teloch, second in all Ioland behind only the great
Malach. My justice extends through all our land,
more powerful than the law of others.

1555 “No Teloch might judge
a man of my Tella, much less one of my blood,
by the virtue of my strength, for the justice I give
by virtue of my rank is more true than what can be
given by others. The judgement of my son
1560 for his crime was reserved for of the High Teloch,
above the right any man holds on my island.
Never have I judged poorly, and in truth I would
have stripped him of his right to inherit my seat,
returning to the good Teloch of Ui Agla his children
unharmd, but this was meant for me.

1565 “And what of Aellas,
who has vanished, doubtless slain in the turbulent
tide that rules Ioland. His blood was not theirs
to take from me. This then is our just call to war,
one which demands to be sated, the defense of the
1570 High Teloch, who shall not die in betrayal but in
peace instead, and of his son Aellas. I shall not send
from here men, though you fear their skill in war,
for every arm is needed in our shield wall. In our
number are such warriors that will inspire them
1575 to victory. Your orders are set, we march now
to battle.”

1580 Ceallach had not spoken,
nor had he assented as the captains spoke,
but as the words of the Teloch ended he advised
him, understanding that which would come
for the king,

“What poor people
are we Iolish, who can read naught but in blood.
A happier people would we be if we spent our time

1585 in learning according to the dream of Malach than
marching to war. The storm which Malach dreamed
of is coming, growing in the east. It will soon wash
upon these shores. Fight king, you can do nothing
else, it is your blood. None here has the power
1590 to change you, not even had they each the tongue
of the Sparrow, your mind fixed forever. Yet march
not to battle with all hope placed upon victory,
with all your blood risked in singular battle. Give
to your youngest, Aethelwald of honor pure,
1595 the ring set upon your hand, the signet of the true
High Teloch, for safe keeping, that should you fall
in battle with your sons the Un Colta bar shall not
perish for want of a Teloch true.”

The Hawk King refused

1600 to part with that which Malach wore and
commanded the warband to battle. So the battle
came to be as the mighty bands met in the gentle
fields between the river and the hills, terrible in
size. Aetheldor placed his men before a grove and
1605 the men of Un Londar who he trusted little were
placed on the left upon a gentle knoll, with them he
placed Ceallach and the Otter to hold them firm.
There too came the Sparrow, for he preferred the
company of his friend the Otter in the heat of battle.
1610 Ceallach had brought with him Aethelwald that he
might protect him. The brothers Aedrioanne and
Aemerrick held the right as glorious chiefs in war,
they had decided that upon victory they would
jointly appeal their father to be Telochs together.
1615 The center of the band was led by their king,
who had been wise but now stalked the line
in a madness.

The great host of their foe
came to that place well ordered. Their number
1620 was not made of the elders, children, or cowards,
but of young warriors and true, well-versed
in manly battle. They did not order themselves
according to their Tella, but having found the foe
which they had for so long searched, the opposite
1625 line formed quickly and charged.

Fierce was their meeting,
both shield walls well formed so their clash was that
of thunder. Where Ceallach stood they had success,
for the storm of spears floundered as it went up
1630 the slope. Long did the two lines push against each
other, the crush so terrible where they met that men
slain could not fall to the earth, but though they
had in number thousands more, the host of the Tella
could not overthrow the well lead line of Un Colta
1635 bar.

For two hours they battled,
the great line of the Tella would withdraw when
it stalled and charge anew. Seven times they
charged until the sun had reached its zenith,
1640 and as men rested and prepared for their eighth
battle the Hunter came to the fore of their line
in the place without honor, against him the brothers
good. The charge sounded and he rushed against
them with all the boundless power captured in his
1645 blood, he reached them first of the wave which
rushes to shore, a battle cry so fearsome that
the wall wavered and Aedrioanne, seeing peril,
rushed forth to meet him. About them the lines
again crashed but bowed where they battled, men
1650 on both sides watched the two warriors, the Hunter
fierce and Aedrioanne the Wolf-skinner
by maneuver and might whirled about the other
in a dance so skilled and passionate they were
as lovers. The Hunter battled with axe and shield,
1655 swinging both to wound his foe, where Aedrioanne
had spear bright and keen, carefully he battled
beneath his shield. Stabbing at the feet of his foe
to off balance him, Aedrioanne never permitted
close battle, knowing his spear useless if they were
1660 too near, staying at the edge of the ring while
the Hunter rushed and charged from the center.

Virtuous patience guided him
and he was not wounded but gave wounds to his foe
instead, twice upon the thigh and once in the wrist.
1665 Yet here the Hunter laid his trap, remembering
the death of Aedelwizt, he let blood spill to the
earth around them, pushing Aedrioanne against

the circle where he would be rebuffed, forced
unbalanced back to battle. Once more he wounded
1670 the Hunter, but that warrior kept him against
the shields of the host where warriors watching
did push him with their shields, but never against
the Un Colta bar line that they might not aid him.
As the blood of the Hunter wet the ground
1675 the brother's feet slipped and he fell. Chance never
passed the Hunter and he hacked at the fallen chief.

Enraged, Aemerrick burst
from the lines and claimed the warriors of the host
had violated single combat. He rushed the wounded
1680 Hunter, hurled his spear as a missile which pieced
his side as he butchered Aedrioanne. Aemerrick
drew his sword, ramming into the Hunter, throwing
him to the dirt. He saw that his brother was maimed
but not dead, assuaging his fears and he fell upon
1685 the Hunter as he struggled to his feet, his rage
revenged itself upon his foe until he returned each
wound that fell upon his brother.

He claimed victory
and rescued Aedrioanne, carrying him to their lines,
1690 all through the field the cheer was lifted, but before
reaching safety so too did the host opposite cheer,
Aemerrick knew not why till in turning the Hunter
had risen unwounded, bathed in black blood
but strong. A javelin loosed from that hand went
1695 through the eye of Aedrioanne and slew him, thus
died the Able-But-Late son. Aemerrick cried aloud
and the cheer died among the Un Colta bar.
The bull rush came with axe swinging but
Aemerrick would not put down his brother to swing
1700 his sword. The Hunter crashed his axe upon
the helm of Aemerrick and he fell, still holding his
brother in his arms, thus died the Skilled-But-
Cautious son.

At the sight of their dead
1705 chiefs the Un Colta bar began to break, running
to the safety of the forest. First the right ran
and then the center. As he saw his men flee,
the Teloch Aetheldor called to hold firm,

but upon learning his sons' death, he understood his
1710 own was at hand. He gave the ring to a runner
named Dal Brecha, that Aethelwald would hold
the ring and be Teloch after him. He then ran
the line demanding they rally. Around him the men
held but beyond them a rout began. The Un Londar
1715 fled off the knoll to their lands. Ceallach, the Otter,
the Sparrow and Aethelwald with ring on his finger
fled in that way as well, for in receiving the boon
they thought the king perished.

The small guard about the Teloch
1720 fought as wolves undying, not permitting a man
near the Hawk King as they moved for the trees,
hoping to escape, all while he called for his men
to join him. But when the routed men had left
the field, they were alone against all the might
1725 of Ioland and were slain.

In the bloody field
a weary cry of victory was raised, so complete
was their conquest that the Tella began then
to return back to their home. Men walked through
1730 the dead, stripping their clothes and raiding their
camp. The Hunter stalked the lines and found
the hated king, but though he was slain with many
wounds, the ring the Hunter sought was not there,
nor upon the hands of the two brothers. He ordered
1735 the search for Aethelwald, but the many young
who died in the field slowed the searchers. Enraged,
the Hunter demanded each man of the host present
him their carrion, but the rats refused and fled his
wrath, and though he slew many there he found
1740 it not. With their foe dead and freedom secured,
the host broke, fleeing the Hunter who remained
to search for his prize.