

A Song of Swords

Sonoros of Eusyme

BOOK I.

Of battles won and of lost wars I sing,
 And of the fickle hands of tempted Fate;
 Of he the king that tried to better all
 And yet was scorned by those he sought to love;
 5 And of his golden haired and mighty heir
 The friend of Dawn that won eternal fame.

Goddess of voice that flows like purest stream,
 That didst inspire the first great poets and bards,
 Lend me thy voice that I may clearly sing
 10 Of glorious, mighty heroes past and brave
 And how the gods from Heaven did descend
 Upon this Earth and fight the wars of men.

First of the isle of roses I shall sing
 Of golden sands and sapphire streams, where once
 15 Impregnable did raise the son of flame
 Five castles grand of stone with tow'rs so high
 The king of Heav'n himself them struck back down,
 Henmernis, star shaped isle on sky like sea,
 Guarded by Lydna, Psykonaurai East,
 20 And Spathotouros South where once the gods
 Of Heaven fought the spawn of Gogne giant
 And mighty Krastan blest by Pheos the fire
 Where once did make his seat and Throne; this isle
 With greenest grass, a verdant plain of beauty
 25 Unmatched, with calming skies that lulled to sleep
 Even a man by Sophne curs'd: This haven,
 Blest isle, so grand and rich, so beautiful

Her men so joyous, pleased and prospering
And blossoming with smiles all 'round her coasts
30 Too happy was to quench the dreadful thirst,
And bound to tempt the fickle hand, of Fate.

Now poor and barren stood this island sad
Which once did rival in her grandeur great
The gleaming fields of Theses, Elynor
35 Not was there to be seen a smile of joy
Upon the faces of her folk nor happy
Songs to be heard where once they were
No strong young men did run across her streets
Nor hand-in-hand fair maidens walked and laughed;

Her centres where all men and women once
Gathered to watch the plays of Leusene
And Rhezelos and danced in joy when came
The feast of Serne, rose-eyed queen of love,
Deserted stood; for not was there a ware
45 For foreign merchants to display and nor
Would feign them buy a man in this poor land;
Her lofty walls and sky-high towers built
In ancient times by kings of fiery blood
Now crumbled, shattered, fell and turned to ruin
50 And not a coin was found to raise them back.

The Royal Court that housed great Krastan's Throne
Whence ruled such mighty kings as Lauchores
And swift Alyxastros of two flames born;
That once in its grandeur and pomp outshone
55 The flowing wealth of Methres and of Eis;
And softest velvet drapes whose walls adorned
When still the famous Throne so brightly burnt,
That Court as if the gods themselves had come
down to this Earth and rebuilt Meros mount
60 Once looked; those pristine walls whose golden glow
Echoed the smiles of gods that ruled above,
Now they reflected naught but Heaven's scorn,
That Court of Kings now stood the beggar's court.

Th' Iseitan eagle gleaming black and proud
65 and of Austrantia rampant argent mare,

- That once beside Henmernen lion stood
as loyal allies on Imperian shore,
Now led the fiery throne as mahout leads
His tusked beast ahead though weaker far;
70 The pompous vassal lords, ministers all
Took to their rightful king but empty oaths:
From neighbour's well as greedy farmer steals,
Foreign kings from lands beyond with gold
and Clesian riches bought their loyalties.
- 75 Say then what caused this fall from grace, O Muse,
Celestial daughter, thou that knowest all,
Of this, the isle of Melanos, once favoured
Highly of the gods in Heav'n and of the Fates
That spin above the vast Chaotic sea
80 Beside the house of Night their Fatal yarn,
What caused such sorrow, and this darkest age,
Sing of the past, thou Lady pleasant voiced,
Of that first catalyst that started all,
The force that brought these wretched times.
- 85 When still the land of clever Melanos
Enjoyed the favour of the Heav'nly host,
There ruled a king of Krastan's blessed line,
And as his father and as his before
he ruled with kingly might and noble love,
90 When those Henmernen farmers sowed their seeds,
And left their fields, for rich and potent
The land did raise the crop without their hand,
And all the gods, celestial kings, were pleased
by sacrifices of both meat and wheat:
95 The star-shaped isle was envied all around,
For kingdoms could but hope to equal her.