

# THE LINKLINGS

THEIR

COLLECTED PAPERS

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# *TABLE OF CONTENTS*

INTRODUCTION.....	2
CREATIVE WRITING.....	3
NEW STORY CHAPTER 7.....	3
POETRY.....	8
SONG OF THE SONUM CONCLAVE DRAFT 1.....	8
CINNAMON.....	10
WALK AT DAWN.....	11
I LOOK LIKE OUR DAD, ALONE; A POEM ABOUT GRIEF.....	12

# INTRODUCTION

## UPDATED PREFACE FROM THE FIRST ISSUE

In sooth, we could just keep consuming other people's media and art for the rest of our lives. But why? I thought it would be just neat to do something like what the Inklings did. That is: meet together and read each other our writing. J. R. R. Tolkien persisted in writing *The Lord of the Rings* in part because of C. S. Lewis' constant encouragement. It is likely that we would not have that masterpiece of story without Lewis. And Lewis would never have come to Christ without Tolkien. Though not a member of the Inklings, G. K. Chesterton, too, provides us with an exemplary model of Christian creativity and artistic output. So if you ever find yourself in your life creating something, I would love to hear about it. I would love to see the Lord's artistic Spirit express himself through you! However, as the pubs are closed, we, the interested parties, we will have to "link" up on the internet instead. I thought maybe once a month or so we could share what we've been working on, whether it be writing or drawing or songwriting or philosophizing or philology-ing or translating or what have you.

This is the twenty-fourth issue of the Collected Papers. Herein the reader will find a healthy variety of new art, though we must acknowledge our great indebtedness to those who have gone before. I hope you find yourself just as inspired as we have been!

Kit Alderson

# CREATIVE WRITING

## NEW STORY CHAPTER 7

*by Isaac Ogbo*

### 7

Cold weather was something the Ulaín-folk were acquainted with. Although Ulaín lands presented stark green almost year round, the Green Plains still lay in the North.

But the Ulaín-folk were a hardy people, well accustomed to the biting cold of winter. Although there was the occasional grumble and moan over the strangeness of the autumn weather, the folk still carried on with the chores and duties of their day as if the season was normal.

Norbeg was bustling with folk outfitted with wool jackets and breeches. The streets, flanked by squatted buildings made of light-gray stone, was filled with people going to or from their quarters, whether it was a smithy or a market stall.

The town lay at the feet of a large hill. The center-face of the hill was cloven, and within the natural gap stood Dún Glaíth—the towered keep.

Snow-covered foothills flanked the round base of the castle, surrounding the structure like a rumpled blanket made of green and white.

Between where the two parallel foothills met was a cobbled road that led from the castle to Norbeg, which spanned almost a mile and was as wide as seven men abreast. Those roads led directly to the town, which was surrounded by stone walls that stood ten feet tall. Norbeg was one of the largest towns in Ulaín.

The well-traveled folk of Éirn would often comment how similar Dún Glaíth was to the Tower of Nordau. Both keeps have stood in Éirn long before man's recorded time.

It took little time for the Rónáirion to leave the flat plains of the east and travel west after arriving on Éirn on horse-prow ships.

The Rónáirion were the ancestors of the Celnish and Ulaín folk, and were of a different stock than the Norish, who arrived on Éirn centuries after, from the same mythic island to the east.

Bards in any Celnish alehouse can recount how Celn Hill-leaper led the Rónáirion through the Celn Pass and into the West. They settled on green lands of oaks, hills, and fertile soil just east of the Wéomír Forest.

But decades after Celn was founded, a group of settlers set out to explore north. They eventually settled in the Green Plains north of the Ferwen Forest, and were met with flat lands, valleys, and ridges, and a climate that was cold and misty.

Those lands were abundant in stone, and the quarries during those days were countless. Ulaín—the land of stone in common speech—birthed many of the greatest stonemasons in that era.

Dún Glaíth was the greatest of their works. The craftsmanship of the tower stood almost impervious to the weathering of nine centuries time.

The light-gray stone, smooth and near groove-less, was taken from the quarries in Western Ulaín. Surrounding the keep was a circular wall made of stone. The wall seemed to protrude from the foothills that flanked the keep.

Several feet below the parapets of the wall's battlements, the stone-crafted heads of horses kept watch over the fields before the keep. From their manes, to the flare of their nostrils, each part of the horse was carved in meticulous detail, and each of their eye sockets held an amber-colored gem. There were thirty horse heads in all, representing each foal that Morwú gifted to the first men who journeyed to Western Éirn, a well recounted story told to most children in Ulaín and Celn.

Inside the keep were four towers. The first tower was within the outer bailey behind the keep's outer walls. It was a

squat, rotund building that was at the center of the inner curtain wall. It had sturdy wooden gates that opened into the inner bailey.

Inside the inner ward was the tower. Unlike the Tower of Nordau, it was narrower and taller in height. Its bright-gray walls—surfaced with a mosaic of thousands of brick-shaped stones—gleamed like silver even under the pale light of the misty morning sun.

An array of windows looped around the tower on each level. A lone window was at the top, wider and larger than all the others. A flag banner was draped from the window. The flag's canvas was sea-blue, and the symbol of a long-tailed hill mouse was threaded in black, announcing to any nearby traveler that the House of Tuan Dáth ruled the throne of Uláin.

Two towers half its height flanked the tall tower, and were connected to the inner bailey wall by curtain walls.

The keep was busier than usual. The battlements of the various curtain walls were filled with not a few soldiers going to and fro, and the inner wards were populated with wool-coated courtiers. Smoke ran out from one of the windows on the lower levels of the tower, signaling that the keep's kitchen was hard at work.

The Duke of Graigh was expected to visit the keep in the late afternoon, and the keep's stewards were busy making last moment preparations. Nobles and courtiers were already prepared, lingering about the courtyard and the gardens of the inner bailey.

Perwan, the King of Uláin, was guessed to already be waiting on his throne. However, there was rumor that his younger brother was nowhere to be found in the keep.

This was unsurprising to many, and there was little worry of him not showing up before the feast with the Duke. This had happened several times in the past, and the cavalier brother of the king was always found just in time.

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With a steady gloved hand, Ulwen pulled the collar of her wool cloak closer to her neck. Her other hand gripped the reins of her shaggy pony.

Her dark-brown hair was coated in flecks of snow, as was tufts of fur that stood on the shoulder parts of her green cloak. She briefly removed her hand from the reins to brush away flakes of snow near her dark-blue eyes. But such was her skill in riding that she could have let go of her reins for some time, and her mount would still ride swiftly on steady course.

Two mounted guards flanked her on either side. They wore cloaks of dark-blue draped over a coat of mail. A short surcoat covered their torso, which showed the hill mouse symbol of Tuan Dáth in white on blue cloth. They wore mail chausses that covered the length of their legs to their boots.

Their helmets were rounded with an open face, which exposed their black locks and thick beard. A bearded axe was tucked into their belts.

Ulwen and her guards rounded the corner of a wide street in Norbeg, going past a row of market stalls. Ulwen turned to briefly glance at the market offerings. The meat quarters presented smaller game than the week before, and fruits and grains were a paltry showing. The clothing stalls were lacking in woolen items and leather.

There was rumor that the towns, villages, and farms in Northern Uláin were experiencing mysterious hardship. The king had sent several of his trusted house guard to investigate almost a week ago, and Ulwen could only guess that the weather was to blame. But she—like so many folk in the keep—thought the circumstances only temporary.

After passing the market stalls, Ulwen could see smoke rising from the corner of her vision. She slowed her pony down, guiding her mount past a squat stone building with snow on its wooden roof.

A few dozen paces more led to another stone building with a bell-shaped top. A smithy was attached beside it. The hearth blazed red with ember, and smoke escaped from a chimney that ran out the small, wooden roof that covered the smithy.

Ulwen brought her pony to a halt. Her guards dismounted and approached Ulwen, then helped her off. After dismounting, she stepped into a small heap of snow, and was immediately glad that she wore her thick hided boots.

She thanked the guards, and asked one of them to lead the horses off the side of the cobbled road. With a nod, one of

the pair did as requested, while the other followed her to the building's door.

Ulwen waited some time after the first knock before attempting another. Even after several moments, she could hear no noise of footsteps walking to the door, or any acknowledging response.

She held up her gloved hand for a third knock, and then lowered it, instead reaching for the handle of the wooden door. With a gentle push, the door slowly gave way, opening into a narrow passage lit with burning candles on small sconces.

Before she went in, her dark-bearded guard stepped in front of her with an apologetic nod. Ulwen nodded in approval. With that, the guard went into the building first.

As she approached the main room of the building, she could hear faint thumping sounds, like wood smacking on wood. Her guardsman stood to the side as Ulwen emerged from the corner. As she looked into the room, her expression turned to one of slight annoyance.

In the middle of the room were two men engaged in swordplay. One held a mock longsword made of wood. He had curly black locks and wore a smith's apron.

The other figure was slightly taller than his companion. He had a full set of red locks, disheveled yet still impressive, and had stormy blue eyes. He wielded a one-handed wooden sword, and wore a dark-green tunic.

The red-haired figure dodged an upward strike from his opponent. He then responded with a low thrust, which was parried.

The parry forced him into an unusual stance. The figure with the smith's apron switched stances eagerly and raised his longsword above his head diagonally. With speed, he brought it down towards his opponent's head.

Ulwen thought she spotted a brief grin from the figure with red hair as soon as his opponent committed.

The longsword never connected. With a swift movement that betrayed his stance, he ducked to the side, dodging the wooden sword by half an inch. Then, with his sword's broad side, he swung at the back of his sparring partner's head.

With a yelp, his opponent fell to the floor with a series of muffled noises. It took Ulwen a few moments to realize that the fallen figure was chuckling. The victor then joined in with laughter.

"So, this is your new hiding spot then, when duties of the court call upon you?"

The laughter and chuckling abruptly stopped. The fallen man quickly got up, his pale face now a deep red. The red-haired man turned to Ulwen. After a brief moment, a grin slowly crept along his face.

"Norbeg is slowly running out of hiding places for a hawk like you, sister." He replied.

Ulwen shook her head, but did little to hide her smile. "Puwell, this is an important day. The Duke of Graigh arrives by noon, which is rather close."

Puwell placed a hand on his companion's shoulder, who still stood in silent shock. He then quickly, and rather clumsily, bowed to Ulwen.

"A thousand apologies, my lady. If I knew to expect you, I..."

"Calmness, Dunlan. A poor guest I am to arrive unexpected to your home. It is *I* who should be apologizing."

"Nay, my lady. You are always invited into my home, in any day or hour." Dunlan said, his boldness betrayed by a deepening blush.

Ulwen smiled. "Seeing your swordplay with my brother was very entertaining. Though I will admit—I was hoping for you to land that blow. Perhaps that would have knocked some good sense into him."

"Ha! A fool's hope, at that." Puwell said as he wrapped his arms around his companion's neck in a friendly headlock.

Ulwen shook her head in mock annoyance. Puwell released his friend and stepped closer to the Princess of Ulain.

"I wasn't hiding, just so you know. I was picking up the sword our dear brother commissioned for the Duke of

Graigh.” Puwell said the title with an unhidden bitterness.

“Oh, how useful of you.” Ulwen said with a mocking tone. “Is it ready?”

“Aye. It has been for about a day or so.” Puwell turned to his friend, and gestured to an area at the back of the room. “Dunlan, be a lad and fetch the Duke’s boon. I’ll have a word with my sister.”

Dunlan nodded and walked away rather eagerly. Ulwen’s guardsman stepped forward and whispered something to the princess. Ulwen nodded, and the guardsman disappeared around the corner.

The siblings were now alone in the room. Puwell crossed his arms and chuckled as he looked at his sister.

“You’ve got a lovely dress on you. Did Eleth tailor it?”

Beneath Ulwen’s wool cloak was a dark-blue dress that matched her eyes, lined with a silver-threaded hem. White ruffled cuffs extended from her sleeves, and a golden sash was wrapped around her slender waist. She was unadorned with bracelets or rings—despite pleas from her handmaidens—but she wore a silver necklace that bore a horse-shaped pendant.

Ulwen smiled, but raised an eyebrow. “Your flattery will not get you out of trouble. Half the court has been looking for you. Again.”

Puwell shook his head. Then, a moment later, a mischievous grin flashed across his face.

“Oh, don’t worry dear sister. I promise my foolery won’t distract from your very big day.”

“My... what do you mean?” Ulwen asked with a puzzled tone.

“Well... with your fancy dress, and your eagerness to return to the keep, with both your brothers near... it... well, it seems rather obvious, doesn’t it?”

“Puwell.” Her tone was now serious. “What do you mean?”

“Oh, Ulwen! When were you going to tell me about your engagement to the Duke?”

Ulwen was surprisingly fast in her strikes before her brother could raise a defensive arm. Puwell mockingly recoiled, which invited two more punches on his shoulder.

“You are wicked!” She said as Puwell leaned on the wall, shaking with laughter. “To be married to... oh, I can’t even entertain the thought!”

“Oh, come now! He’s not too bad. In fact, I’ve heard talk from woman-folk saying he’s quite handsome. That is, if you could grow to love his shadowed eyes and ice-cold heart.” Puwell said as he wiped his eyes.

“Oh, I hope Morwú guides any honest maiden away from his path. But even still... we must be nice to him, Puwell.”

“Aye, of course—I should break bread with the man who would see my head and Perwan’s on a spike if fair chance ever struck.”

Ulwen paused, and it took a moment for her to respond.

“His father led that war of succession, not him.”

“And yet he would have been the direct benefactor if that war was won. Nay, I give him no quarter.” Puwell said, his smile now gone.

“So we should judge a man not on his own merit, but that of his father?”

“His own merit?” Puwell’s voice was slightly raised. “Ulwen, I met him on the battlefield. Araun’s horn, I slew a few of his cavalry guard! I bet there are only a few soldiers in Dún Glaíth who haven’t seen his blade unsheathed.”

“And? He fought for his father, just as you have in the past.”

“Aye, but you weren’t there, Ulwen. You did not ride through the Battle of Unín Celad. The Duke charged into the

frontlines, surrounded by his cavalry. I saw an eagerness, a bloodlust to his eyes, and many good Ulaínmen fell to his blade.”

Puwell paused, as if remembering that bloody battle of succession from six years ago, where two-hundred Ulaínmen were slain.

“He’s a serpent dressed in a nobleman’s garb. We should be readying prison quarters for him, not preparing him a feast.”

Ulwen stepped forward and placed a hand on Puwell’s shoulder. “Our brother knows what he is doing. I trust his judgment, and I know that he appraises the Duke cautiously.”

Puwell turned his head, but then nodded a moment later.

“I agree to his wisdom.” A few seconds later, Puwell slapped his thigh and called to Dunlan. “Alright sister, let’s make haste to the Keep. Our dear brother has been waiting for quite a time.”



# POETRY

## SONG OF THE SONUM CONCLAVE DRAFT 1

*by Kit Alderson*

We owe everything            to everlasting explorers  
 those crusaders had courage            who cast their lot upon the sea.  
 Sailing over swan-road    singing still of hope  
 Hard-pressed they passed through perilous storms.

Wonder brought them West            way beyond bounds.  
 Fate drove them far            but fortune favored them,  
 though hoar-frost harrowed            the haggard families  
 who had havered round hearth-fires            high in the fjords.

Above the debate the brash wind whirled  
 carrying the call of Clavis their clansmen.  
 Fear not the foe fashioned by the brain  
 boldly go beyond through bitter strain.

So when those sailors            set foot in sand  
 the black-cast bells            bellowed over land.  
 The barbarian brash            betrayed his fellow  
 and offered kin up            as he would tallow.

Daring some dark deity            that would deign hear  
 to act according to            Invictus' ire.  
 The Sinister slayer spurned the river.            He sped southward.  
 Upon Polēs he put up            his pile of rubble.

Now Clavis climbed on            clambering over Erus  
 He passed up the Arar            ending at last  
 on that steep stone            where Clivus stands  
 ever in sight of the sea            the Citadel vast.

Reign forever rampant      rock of the Sonorant.  
 “Ave Vox Populi!”      Victory Eternal!  
 Sound forth Fragor!      Fight against foemen!  
 Take on the Taciturn      as Tonitrus thunders.

Though Poles plot      and lay up plans  
 against the Infants      of Mare Ingluvies,  
 they shall never conquer Clivus      or cast up their ramps  
 or set in siege      the City of Song.

Though burnished bronze lay between them  
 went surging southward      soldiers of the north.  
 Ranks overrun      the rout soon began.  
 The traitor Invictus      was trampled in the van.

The legions laid waste      the wains of war.  
 Clavis bore the bright standard      brandishing his sword.  
 Polēs he pulled down      a portent for all.  
 The barbarians bore witness      to the broken nation’s fall.

Slaves were sent. Sold to the Citadel.  
 The Capital took ten thousand      of the Tongueless.  
 The last of that lineage      has yet to live.  
 Silent in servitude      no sorrow to tell.

Cliffs of Clivus clamoring mouth  
 The Soli sang      a song to the south  
 The People’s proclamation made Polēs a Province.  
 From Parma to Perditus      peace prevails.

## CINNAMON

*by Samantha Alderson*

There is a stick in my tagine  
A quite effective small machine  
that through such tender lips that curl  
evoke sensations, sweet as pearl.  
That feel of warm and hearthfire light  
upon my tongue, a spicy bite  
Rolls through my ears and down my veins  
Insatiably my taste still wanes  
Because the thing I want to do  
If I did I'd quickly rue  
But still my teeth it seeks to woo  
to clamp down, snap the stick in two.  
However be not I uncouth  
(not so a fan of sweet vermouth)  
I do admit, i long to crunch  
twigs in my grasp, a handful munch.

## WALK AT DAWN

*by Samantha Alderson*

A pink fire hailed me as i wandered in the wind  
The pillars of a greycree temple seemed to bow before her coming  
I pondered my confessions before that simmering dawn  
fingers itching for penitentiary pearls  
that provided so much solace when the night had folded over me  
black silk which makes my sins press upon my skin.  
I could not bear to lick those pinpricks then  
but now the light has brushed my face, they do not feel so sharp

## I LOOK LIKE OUR DAD, ALONE; A POEM ABOUT GRIEF

*by Samantha Alderson*

When I was a child, I heard all the time; 'you look just like your mother!'

back then, I was her made over.

Wide dark eyes, her wide jaw, her smile was in my mouth.

Now that I'm grown, I see myself more in the image of dad.

I smile with my teeth like he does, his brow is mine,

my eyes are hooded in just the same way as his.

My brother's eyes were the same.

Dad's eyes were what made our shared blood tangible.

Without them, he was my friend, as he was 15 years my senior, our mother was not the same, our other brother was adopted, and we rarely shared a house.

One thing I love about my husband,

is how clearly I see his mom in his nose and eyes, and his father in his mouth.

I look for traces of ancestry.

I rarely find it in myself, but the puzzle pieces fit in my hooded eyes, which I share with my father, and my brother.

I'll never see those eyes again, a drink and a gun took them away.

I look like my dad, a set of three, a rogue puzzle piece, alone.