

---

## Character Biography

### Arien

By Silver Trails

---

Arien was the Maia who guided the vessel that contained Laurelin's last fruit. Her story evolves along with the tale of the Sun and the Moon, and not only her name changes, but also her role in the story. In the first versions of the mythology, Arien was called *Urwen* or *Urwendi* (Sun-maiden), and she was a maiden of Vána; Urwen was in charge of watering the roots of Laurelin along with other maidens.

So, back in the first versions of the story, Laurelin (and the early version of Telperion -- Silpion) needed to be watered. In the case of Laurelin, it was done with the tree's own golden rain, kept in a cauldron named *Kulullin*. Another important difference with the later versions is that Laurelin was the elder Tree:

Urien – Arien – was a maiden who had tended the golden flowers in the gardens of Vána, while still joy was in the Blissful Realm, and Nessa daughter of Vána danced on the lawns of never-fading green.<sup>1</sup>

There is yet another version of the story, which adds three changes to the previous one: there is no longer need to water the Trees; Tilion is in love with Arien; and she has now her definitive name:

In the days of the Trees Arien had tended the golden flowers in the gardens of Vána and watered them with the radiant dew of Laurelin. Tilion was a young hunter of the company of Oromë, and he had a silver bow. He loved Arien, but she was a holier spirit of greater power, and wished to be ever virgin and alone; and Tilion pursued her in vain.<sup>2</sup>

The last two versions of the tale are almost the same:

In the days of the Trees Arien had tended the golden flowers in the gardens of Vána, and refreshed them with the bright dews of Laurelin...<sup>3</sup>

As we already know, when the Trees were destroyed by Melkor and Ungoliant, the Valar failed to revive them, but the Trees gave their last fruits. The description of the birth of these fruits is quite detailed in the first versions of the story. This is the description of the birth of the last fruit of Laurelin, due to the power of Vána's song:

Loud then was the murmur about the streets of Valmar, and folk sped thronging over the plain, and when they beheld Vána beneath the Tree and the new shoot of gold then suddenly did a song of very mighty praise and joy burst forth on every tongue... Then did all the folk gaze on Laurelin, and behold, those buds opened and put forth leaves, and these were of finest gold and of other kind to those of old, and even as they watched the branch bore golden blossom, and it was thronged with flowers... One flower there was however greater than the others, more shining, and more richly golden, and it swayed to the winds but fell not; and it grew, and as it grew of its own radiant warmth it

---

fructified. Then as its petals fell and were treasured a fruit them was of great beauty hanging from that bough of Laurelin, but the leaves of the bough grew sere and they shrivelled and shone no more. Even as they dropped to earth the fruit waxed wonderfully, for all the sap and radiance of the dying Tree were in it, and the juices of that fruit were like quivering flames of amber and of red and its pips like shining gold, but its rind was of a perfect lucency smooth as a glass whose nature is transfused with gold and therethrough the moving of its juices could be seen within like throbbing furnace-fires.<sup>4</sup>

In this version, after the Trees die, the Valar made a basin to contain what remained of Laurelin's liquid light:

Its floor they made of gold and its walls of polished bronze, and an arcade of golden pillars topped with fire engirdled it, save only from the East; but Yavanna set a great and nameless spell around it, so that therein as poured the most of the waters of the fruit of noon and it became a bath of fire.<sup>5</sup>

The liquid fire was so powerful that Manwë thought it might destroy even the Valar's bodies, but Urwendi (Arien) knew that it would not hurt her, so she and her maidens bathed in that fire without fear, and their bodies changed into spirits of fire:

Then did she (Urwendi) bade as many of her maidens to follow her, even those who had aforetime watered the roots of Laurelin with light, and casting aside their raiment they went down into that pool Faskalan as bathers into the sea, and its golden foams went over their bodies... But after a while they came again to the brazen shores and were not as before, for their bodies were grown lucent and shone as with an ardour within, and light flashed from their limbs as they moved... Like air were they...<sup>6</sup>

This version then implies that there are many maidens, turned into spirits of fire, who guide the Sun's vessel while in the later versions Arien (Urwendi) is one of the Valarúkar in nature, and the only guide of the car of the Sun:

Arien the maiden was mightier than he (Tilion), and she was chosen because she had not feared the heats of Laurelin, and was unhurt by them, being from the beginning a spirit of fire, whom nonetheless Melkor had not deceived nor drawn to his service. Fair indeed was Arien to behold, but too bright were her eyes for even the Eldar to look on, and leaving Valinor he forsook the form and raiment which, like the Valar, she had there worn, and she was a naked flame, terrible in the fullness of her splendour.<sup>7</sup>

So in the oldest legends, the Sun rises in the sky before the Moon, and Arda is filled with its golden light. After a few turns of the Sun's path, Irmo (Lórien) realizes that nobody can rest because of the perpetual heat and brightness. It is he who, seeking a respite, sits under the dead Silpion and sings to it until the Rose of Silpion is born to be carried by Ilinsor (Tilion), a Maia of Varda, as the Moon.

In the later versions of the legendarium, it is the Moon that comes forth first, and its light welcomes Fingolfin's host to Middle-earth. The Sun rises soon after, and because of its brilliant light everything "smoked and glowed like gold". Fingolfin unfurled his blue and silver banners then, and the flowers awoke from the Sleep of Yavanna. Melkor hid his realm with the darkest shadows:

---

Therefore Fingolfin marched from the North unopposed through the fastness of the realm of Morgoth, and he passed over Dor-Daedeloth, and his foes hid beneath the earth; but the Elves smote upon the gates of Angband, and the challenges of their trumpets shook the towers of Thangorodrim. And Maidros heard them amid his torment and cried aloud, but his voice was lost in the echoes of the stone.<sup>8</sup>

This is the version published in *The Silmarillion*:

Isil was first wrought and made ready, and first rose into the realm of the stars and was the elder of the new lights, as was Telperion of the Trees... Tilion had traversed the heavens seven times, and was thus in the furthest East when the vessel of Arien was made ready. Then Anar rose in glory, and the snow upon the mountains glowed as with fire, and there as heard the sound of many waterfalls; but the servants of Morgoth fled to Angband and cowered in fear, and Fingolfin unfurled his banners.<sup>9</sup>

The ships of the Sun and the Moon rise from the West and travel eastwards until their courses are corrected on the journey from East to West. At the end of her journey, Urwendi (Arien) goes under the earth and passes through Ulmo's realm, where sometimes she gets lost. After Fionwë finds her and brings her back to the Blessed Lands, the Valar decide to make two doors, the Door of Night in the West, which can only be opened by a magic word that Manwë has spoken to Urwendi (Arien):

Thus came it that the Gods dared a very great deed, the most mighty of all their works; for making a fleet of magic rafts and boats with Ulmo's aid -- and otherwise had none of these endured to sail upon the waters of Vai -- they drew to the Wall of Things, and there they made the Door of Night (Moritarnon or Tarn Fui as the Eldar name it in their tongues).<sup>10</sup>

And the Gates of Morn are built in the East and they open only before Urwendi (Arien):

In the East however was the work of the Gods of other sort, for there was a great arch made, and, 'tis said, 'tis all of shining gold and barred with silver gates, yet few have beheld it even of the Gods for the wealth of glowing vapours that are often swathed about it. Now the Gates of Morn open also before Urwendi only, and the word she speaks is the same that she utters at the Door of Night, but it is reversed.<sup>11</sup>

Arien's final fate is tied to the Dagor Dagorath in the first versions of the legendarium. The following paragraph is about how the vessel of the Sun (that came forth first in the older stories) was called back by Manwë so the vessel of the Moon could sail the sky:

So saying Manwë sent Fionwë his son, swiftest of all to move about the airs, and bade him say to Urwendi that the bark of the Sun come back awhile to Valinor, for the Gods have counsels for her ear; and Fionwë fled most readily, for he had conceived a great love for that bright maiden long ago, and her loveliness now, when bathed in fire she sate as the radiant mistress of the Sun, set him aflame with the eagerness of the Gods.<sup>12</sup>

Fionwë was Manwë's and Varda's son; he evolved into Eonwë, Manwë's herald, when Tolkien decided that the Valar didn't have children. While he was still Fionwë, and the last exiled Elves have already come to Tol Eressëa, Melkor manages to break his bonds with Tevildo's (Sauron's) help:

Melko again breaks away, by the aid of Tevildo (who in long ages gnaws his bonds); the Gods are in dissension about Men and Elves, some favouring the one and some the other. Melko goes to Tol Eressëa and tries to stir up dissension among the Elves (between Gnomes and Solosimpi), who are in consternation and send to Valinor. No help comes, but Tulkas sends privily Teliméktar (Taimonto) his son.<sup>13</sup>

Ingil (Ingwë's son) and Teliméktar (Tulkas' son) wound Melkor, who runs away and climbs the great Pine of Tavrobel that reaches to Ilwë and the stars. Ingil and Teliméktar pursue Melkor and stay in the sky to keep watch. In spite of this, Melkor manages to upset the ship of the Sun, and Urwendi (Arien) falls into the sea. She dies, and her fallen ship scorches the Earth:

The clarity of the Sun's radiance has not been so great since, and something of magic has gone from it. Hence it is, and long has been, that the fairies dance and sing more sweetly and can the better be seen by the light of the Moon -- because of the death of Urwendi.<sup>14</sup>

The Valar cut down the Pine of Tavrobel and Melkor is at last out of the world. As we can see, this is supposed to happen before the Dagor Dagorath, the death of Urwendi and the fall of her ship on earth. It is also said that Melkor can still do evil in the world because he has planted its seeds in the minds of the Secondborn.

There is another version of the fates of Urwendi (Arien) and Ilinsor (Tilion), recounted to Gilfanon by Vairë (in *The Book of Lost Tales*, the Elven storyteller of Tol Eressëa, not the Valië) in Tol Eressëa:

'But as for the Ships of Light themselves, behold! O Gilfanon and all that hearken, I will end the tale of Lindo and Vairë concerning the building of the Sun and Moon with that great foreboding that was spoken among the Gods when first the Door of Night was opened. For 'tis said that ere the Great End come Melko shall in some wise contrive a quarrel between Moon and Sun, and Ilinsor shall seek to follow Urwendi through the Gates, and when they are gone the Gates of both East and West will be destroyed, and Urwendi and Ilinsor shall be lost. So shall it be that Fionwë Urion, son of Manwë, of love for Urwendi shall in the end be Melko's bane, and shall destroy the world to destroy his foe, and so shall all things then be rolled away.'<sup>15</sup>

As we can see these earlier versions always imply that the Sun is lost because of Melkor. In this version Fionwë Urion is the one to slay Melkor, while in the later versions it is Túrin Turambar who does it. The last version of the Dagor Dagorath and Arien's and Tilion's fates can be read in *The Lost Road*:

Thus spake Mandos in prophecy, when the Gods sat in judgement in Valinor, and the rumour of his words was whispered among all the Elves of the West. When the world is old and the Powers grow weary, then Morgoth, seeing that the guard sleepeth, shall come back through the Door of Night out of the Timeless Void; and he shall destroy the Sun and Moon. But Eärendel shall descend upon him as a white and searing flame and drive him from the airs. Then shall the Last Battle be gathered on the fields of Valinor. In that day Tulkas shall strive with Morgoth, and on his right hand shall be Fionwë, and on his left Túrin Turambar, son of Húrin, coming from the halls of Mandos; and the black sword of Túrin shall deal unto Morgoth his death and final end; and so shall the children of Húrin and all Men be avenged.<sup>16</sup>

---

So in every version of Tolkien's legendarium Arien dies in the end, in most of them along with Tilion. Therefore, Arien's role in the story is to bring light to a darkened world, only to be destroyed when Melkor comes back from the Void. So again we can see how the gift of Light given by Ilúvatar is diminished once again and will only be rekindled when Fëanor comes out of the halls of Mandos and breaks the Silmarils.

---

## Works Cited

1. *The History of Middle-earth: The Shaping of Middle-earth*, "The Quenta," §6.
  2. *The History of Middle-earth: The Lost Road and Other Writings*, "Of the Sun, the Moon, and the Hiding of Valinor."
  3. I am transcribing here the quote from *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Sun and the Moon and the Hiding of Valinor." An almost identical quote can be found in *The History of Middle-earth: Morgoth's Ring*, "Of the Moon and the Sun."
  4. *The History of Middle-earth, The Book of Lost Tales Part 1*, "The Tale of Sun and Moon."
  5. Ibid.
  6. Ibid.
  7. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Sun and the Moon and the Hiding of Valinor."
  8. *The History of Middle-earth: The War of the Jewels*, Commentary to "Of the Coming of the Noldor."
  9. *The Silmarillion*, "Of the Sun and the Moon and the Hiding of Valinor." Again, an almost identical quote can be found in *The History of Middle-earth: Morgoth's Ring*, "Of the Moon and the Sun."
  10. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales Part 1*, "The Hiding of Valinor."
  11. Ibid.
  12. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales Part 1*, "The Tale of Sun and Moon."
  13. *The History of Middle-earth: The Book of Lost Tales Part 1*, "The Story of Eriol."
  14. Ibid.
  15. *The History of Middle-earth, The Book of Lost Tales Part 1*, "The Hiding of Valinor."
  16. *The History of Middle-earth: The Lost Road*, "The Conclusion of the Quenta Silmarillion."
-