

BEAUTY, TRAGEDY, AND HOPE:
IN MIDDLE EARTH
& OUR WORLD TODAY

BY MARISSA WALKER

‘We live now upon an island amid many perils, and our hands are more often upon the bowstring than upon the harp.’

‘The rivers long defended us, but they are a sure guard no more; for the Shadow has crept northward all about us...’

‘The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater.’

‘Some there are among us who sing that the Shadow will draw back, and peace shall come again. Yet I do not believe that the world about us will ever again be as it was of old, or the light of the Sun as it was aforesaid.’

HALDIR OF LOTHLORIEN
FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

Lothlorien



Acadia National Park

“That is the fairest of all the dwellings of my people. There are no trees like the trees of that land. For in the autumn their leaves fall not, but turn to gold. Not till the spring comes and the new green opens do they fall, and then the boughs are laden with yellow flowers; and the floor of the wood is golden, and golden is the roof, and its pillars are of silver, for the bark of the trees is smooth and grey.”
(Legolas, *Fellowship*)

"They BRING FIRE,' said Theoden, 'AND they ARE BURNING AS they COME, RICK, COT, AND TREE. 'THIS WAS A RICH VALE AND had MANY HOMESTEADS. ALAS FOR MY FOLK!'" (*The Two Towers*)

hELM'S DEEP



Alida REFUGEE CAMP, BETHLEHEM

BETHLEHEM, FAR FROM BEING THE QUIET TOWN ON PICTURESQUE CHRISTMAS CARDS, IS FRAUGHT WITH TENSION, RUINS, AND VIOLENCE.

“Then slowly they saw the forms of the encircling mountains mirrored in a profound blue, and the peaks were like plumes of white flame above them; beyond there was a space of sky.” (*Fellowship*)

MIRRORMERE



MOUNT RINJANI, INDONESIA

Gimli, Frodo, and Sam behold the beautiful Mirrormere in the midst of their sorrow over Gandalf's fall into the darkness of *Moria*.

“THE NOISE OF BUBBLING WATERS CAME UP FROM THE FOAMING RIVER-BED. BIRDS WERE SINGING, AND A WHOLESOME PEACE LAY ON THE LAND. TO FRODO HIS DANGEROUS FLIGHT, AND THE RUMOURS OF THE DARKNESS GROWING IN THE WORLD OUTSIDE, ALREADY SEEMED ONLY THE MEMORIES OF A TROUBLED DREAM; BUT THE FACES THAT WERE TURNED TO MEET THEM AS THEY ENTERED WERE GRAVE.” (THE COUNCIL OF ELROND, *FELLOWSHIP*)

RIVENDELL



OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK

EVEN IN RIVENDELL, THE COUNCIL FEELS THE DARKNESS OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

“FOR A MOMENT FRODO STOOD NEAR THE BRINK AND LET THE WATER FLOW OVER HIS TIRED FEET. IT WAS COLD BUT ITS TOUCH WAS CLEAN, AND AS HE WENT ON AND IT MOUNTED TO HIS KNEES, HE FELT THAT THE STAIN OF TRAVEL AND ALL WEARINESS WAS WASHED FROM HIS LIMBS.”

(Fellowship)

NIMRODEL RIVER, LOTHLORIEN



Irrawaddy River, Burma

“IN A COUNTRY FILLED WITH STRIFE, THE Irrawaddy IS A SOURCE OF HOPE FOR THE BURMESE PEOPLE. IT IS WHERE THEY WASH, WHAT THEY DRINK, HOW THEY TRAVEL, WHERE THEY PRAY.”

“Here Spring was already busy about them; fronds pierced moss and mould, larches were green-fingered, small flowers were opening in the turf, birds were singing. Ithilien, the garden of Gondor now desolate kept still a dishevelled dryad loveliness.” (*The Two Towers*)

Ithilien



Olympic National Park

Frodo and Sam find rest and hope in Ithilien, in the middle of their long and dark journey.

“AND THOUGH IN ALL LANDS LOVE IS NOW MINGLED WITH GRIEF, IT GROWS PERHAPS THE GREATER.” (HALDIR, *Fellowship*)



CENTRAL ASIA INSTITUTE

IN THE WAR-TORN MOUNTAIN REGIONS OF AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN, PHILANTHROPISTS LIKE GREG MORTENSON WORK ENDLESSLY TO PROVIDE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN, GIVING THEM HOPE IN A TIME OF DESPAIR.



“FOR, LIKE A SHAFT, CLEAR AND COLD, HE THOUGHT
PIERCED HIM THAT IN THE END THE SHADOW WAS
ONLY A SMALL AND PASSING THING: THERE WAS
LIGHT AND HIGH BEAUTY FOR EVER BEYOND ITS
REACH. (*RETURN OF THE KING*)

There is terror in the earth.
Great disasters, swift diseases,
Shouts of war, shining fires.

Death and Despair,
But also
Love and Light.

There is beauty in the earth.
Great mountains, swift rivers,
Shouts of joy, shining stars.

Credits

Acadia National Park: Photo by Michael Melford, National Geographic, November 2005

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0610/landscapes/acadia/gallery5.html>

Bethlehem: Photo by Christopher Anderson, National Geographic, December 2007

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/12/bethlehem/anderson-photography>

Mount Rinjani: photo by Nublee Shamsu Bahar,

http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/your-shot/wallpaper/2009/img/0915wallpaperys-2_1600.jpg

Olympic National Park: Photo by Melissa Farlow, National Geographic, July 2004

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0610/landscapes/olympic/gallery7.html>

Irrawaddy River (photo and quote): Steve Winter, National Geographic, May 2006

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2006/05/irrawaddy-river/winter-photography>

Olympic National Park: Photo by Melissa Farlow, National Geographic, July 2004

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0610/landscapes/olympic/gallery2.html>

Central Asia Institute: <http://www.gregmortenson.com/photos.php>