

Zadan-bâri Nimruzîr

Not all doom comes with fire and thunder; some comes on quiet feet.

He was but a cat, or so it looked—lithe, fleet, his coat heather-dark, shining with hints of dusk, green eyes bright with secrets older than most could name. Whence he came, no orc could say; not even Sauron’s sharpest watchers knew. Some swore he slunk from a wrecked cot, drawn by the smell of lost fish. Others muttered that he simply showed up at Mordor’s bounds, slipping under the Watchers at the Black Gate as though they were not there—a shade among shades.

The orcs of Barad-dûr hated the cat from the first, and yet, so many failed to catch him that a shadow tale grew. After yet another orc tumbled to his end trying to seize the cat, an Orcish Captain gave him a name. “*Snakh-nag* will be your doom, fool, if you chase him too close to the edge! Sharp Claw—mind that!” So relentless was the chase, and count of fallen orcs so great, that, in another age, he might have been numbered among the heroes of Gondolin for his tally.

Sauron himself—grim and piercing in his watch—looked upon the beast with cold craft. Yet even he set aside wrath when the cat rid the grain stores of rats, saving many hours and not a little food. Among black walls and burning eyes, the cat flourished.

Thus *Snakh-nag* took his place, slipping through cracks, perching atop stone rails, sometimes riding the wide shoulders of war-trolls. Some reckoned him a sprite of good luck, others a dark warning—a dweller in shadows who bent the knee to none.

Yet the cat bore an old anger—one no soul in Mordor could think to guess. He remembered Númenor: green hills above the sea, white towers with golden tops, the laughter of Men before pride and Sauron’s lies brought them low. He was a lesser Maia, bound in fur, with a heart still kindled for reckoning—his vengeance sought in small things: a swiped rat, a toppled foe, a well-timed pause.

Even the heart of shadow holds a spot for ease. Thus, no one saw through him. That was true justice. By and by, the cat found his way to the highest roof of Barad-dûr. The course wound—halls thick with foul air, stairs steep and narrow, far below the rattle and shouts of war. Yet for him, ways opened: tight doors gaped, orc scouts lost their nerve or stumbled, even Fell Beasts tucked their wings when *Snakh-nag* drew near.

The very crown of the tower none could reach, save the Mouth of Sauron and Sauron himself. There the cat found a deep-dyed pillow of soft velvet, weathered not by ash or dirt. The Mouth—clad in sable and steel, face twice hidden by cloth and threats—brought forth bowls of choice meat, the best from many a raid. This was done at the will of the Great Eye, which ranged far for the One Ring.

As dusk drew over the land, and the burning gaze roamed East and West, the cat every night curled beneath it—an enigma in living fur, caught betwixt fear and stillness. Soft and steady, his purr was not so much a sound as a feel that ran like a tremor through stone. It eased the wrung wits of

servants, stilled restless orcs, and—though none among the Wise would have thought it—it even softened something twisted in Sauron’s own brooding.

At last, the Mouth of Sauron called out before all—his voice cold as the mountains: “Hear now! By the Great Will, this cat shall carry a name of power. He is *Dûmpat*—the Shadow. All here heed this. Let him be held as one who dwells in might’s own shadow.”

Years drifted while the world outside boiled: hosts gathered, the reach of Barad-dûr spread, hope withered. Yet high above, *Dûmpat* held his own watch. While Sauron’s spirit burned—grasping, bending, plotting—the cat’s gentle purring and slow kneading of the pillow became a strange balm. Some might laugh at it, but the Great Eye would flicker, the blaze dulled for a heartbeat, and the unending want for the Ring would grow less sharp. At whiles, when Sauron’s temper flared and captains trembled, the dark cat would yawn, stretch, and nudge at the edge of the Eye’s seat, curling up for a nap. In those breaths, the master’s spite thinned—a moment’s slackening, a spark of doubt.

None marked it, not the orcs nor the Mouth. But on the day a hobbit crept through barrow-dust and the Ring neared its end, the Eye turned—hungry, burning—and wavered, as the heather-dark beast rolled over and bared his belly. Sauron’s gaze slipped for a blink, just long enough for Frodo to make good his stride and pass unseen out of fate’s jaw.

So, in the heart of Barad-dûr, *Dûmpat* the Shadow wove his reckoning with a purr and a curl, his Maia work finished not in wrath, but in small, steadfast deeds that wore down darkness. In the hush after, a travel-worn king found a lone cat near the blasted edge of Mordor. The cat met Aragorn’s gaze, and by a quiet treaty, took a new name: *Galwen*, the Lucky One.

He reigned over the kitchens, the walks, and the sunlit stones of Minas Tirith with the same calm rule as before. The Wise-Woman of the Houses whispered he was of the High Cats of Númenor; others, who deemed her burdened by her years, named him a mere blessed stray. But Aragorn, and sometimes Arwen, guessed at more.

Sometimes, by night, beneath the White Tree, *Galwen* would sit, his eyes catching starlight, as if he dreamed of a far-away isle and a long-sought righting of wrongs.