Aegnor knew he was to die. All the windows were barred, the light shut out, the day darkened; he could see nothing else. The least of the descendants of Finwë, he knew his unimportance as none of the other Noldor ever would.

_I shall escape this place, the endless battles, I shall enjoy the peace of Valinor --_

Whywhywhy?

No longer will I be bound by my fate, bound to those who slew my kin, I was a fool to come --

If I had not, I would never have seen, never known my Andreth --

Andreth --

Where was she now? Had she wed one of her own race, perhaps? Borne him children?

_Do they release those in Mandos who hate figments of their own imaginations?_ Aegnor laughed, and sang, and did not care when finally he was pierced by orc-arrows --

_I shall remain alone to the end, remembering the morning in the hills of Dorthonion_
Chapter 2

Jane Bingley sat very still, staring out her window. They would not let her out, they were keeping her imprisoned in this room where she had last held her son.

*We were going to call him Bennet, for Papa,* she thought dully. She had never dreamed that *she* might lose one, not after carrying him -- *him,* she would scream the next time someone called her child *it* -- for so long. Not after her mother and uncle each had five children who lived to plague them, that was what Uncle Gardiner said.

Jane longed to hold a child to her, whether her own or not, she felt so alone, the world hidden from her, the windows barred, the light shut out --

She heard a wail.

*I'm imagining things now.*

“Jane?” The door unbolted; she drew a long shuddering breath, staring at the sister she had not seen for months.

“The baby, I heard a baby.”

“Lydia brought her daughter.” Neither mentioned their niece’s healthy size for a child born only eight months after her parents’ marriage.

“Let me hold her. Please. Ask Lydia . . . she won’t mind.”

Five minutes later, she was rocking little Bess Wickham in her arms, humming a lullaby and weeping silently.

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