

The Split

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The Split

by [DuskBeforeDawn](#)

Summary

Lady Yavanna looked down upon her slumbering Hobbit, a soft smile gracing her lips. “This is only the beginning, my young Bilbo, on the morrow, your true work starts. I know you will do us proud, as you always have, in all splits.”

“Aye, he will, wife of mine.” A deep voice rumbled, “Perhaps this little one will be strong enough to save what was once lost, that should not have been.”

She sighed and leaned against him, “Indeed, husband. We shall wait and see what tapestry his thread spins.”

Or the one where Bilbo goes into an Alternate Universe where their Bilbo Baggins died during the Fell Winter and their future is headed towards defeat.

Notes

A/N: Yo, yes I started another story. I’m literally so bad at not starting new stories T.T But I needed a new fandom to experiment in for a while, though I do love KnB.

And it will be a Thorin Oakenshield/Bilbo Baggins slash, so I suggest if you don’t like that, then stop now and hit the back button.

There will be gore, violence, swearing, possibly sex (later on of course), and a BAMF Bilbo. He wont be super good at everything, but he will kick ass. ;)

I haven’t really read the books, but I’ve read just about every time travel story there is, and I’ve seen the movies and loved/hated them. Also, I may use some things from the books, such as in the first chapter you’ll see. It’s a little different, and things will go completely fucking wonky, so sit back and enjoy. Not really sure where I’m taking this, but it WILL be a fix it, because my poor little heart couldn’t take the disgrace that was the end of the movies.

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. But it WAS a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell.

PROLOGUE

“Wake Bilbo Baggins of the Shire, Protector of the Ring, and Hero of Erebor.” A soft voice called to him through the hazes of sleep.

He groaned and cracked his eyes open, seeing clearer than he had in sixty years. This could not be right, he was sailing into the Undying Lands, but he could not remember stepping off the boat. Shooting up, he gasped, his lungs working perfectly and he couldn’t help stare at his hands. Young... his mind supplied, he was young again? Bilbo just registered the voice laughing lightly and he turned his head up from his hands, gasping at the sight. A lady Hobbit, more beautiful than any he had ever seen stood before him, glowing with an inner life that normal people could not possess.

“L-Lady Yavanna?” He could not help the rush of words that tumbled next from his mouth, “Have we arrived in the Undying lands? Where is Frodo? Why am I young again? Why do I not remember?” With his wits slowly returning he glanced around the room, taking in his surroundings in a way that the War had drilled into him. The room reminded him of his home in Bag End, as it looked exactly like his room, but like it was washed out. A dream, may hap?

She laughed, a light echo of the wind. “Bilbo, one of my favorite Hobbits, you have not yet reached the Undying Lands, and you will not for some time, perhaps never should you so choose.”

That confused him, and he squeaked “Not in the Undying Lands?”

“Indeed, young one. For now, we are suspended in time, a realm of a dream that Irmo has graciously allowed for me to speak with you in. For there is not much time, no matter that it has frozen for now here, it is still passing. Currently you are in the boat to the Undying Lands, sleeping away as they travel, and you will arrive on the morrow.”

“I-I... I don’t understand? I’m in a dream? Why did you not wait to speak with me when I arrived in the Undying Lands? Did you not just say I was not going there for some time?” Bilbo almost covered his mouth for running away from him, but too much of the dwarf’s impatience had rubbed off of him.

Yavanna smiled indulgently, and Bilbo remembered that she was indeed Mahal’s wife, and was probably used to dealing with Dwarf’s impatience and blunt hardheadedness. “You are in a dream, but not. As it was one you had when you were during the Fell Winter, and so has already passed.”

Bilbo groaned, his head swirling, *I never thought that the Lady Yavanna would talk like Gandalf of all people.* “That aside, my Lady, what do you need of a simple Hobbit like me?”

She moved and sat on the bed with more grace than any elf he'd ever known, making him blink in surprise at how casual she was being with him. Somehow, it fit her, as Hobbits enjoyed comfort over anything else, except perhaps propriety. "You see young Bilbo, I am Lady Yavanna, but not *your* Lady." Yavanna laughed again at his put out face, "I can see these are not the answers you are looking for, but they are answer's to a bigger question."

"I see," Bilbo nodded, tipping his head for her to continue, but his eyes were a little more relaxed.

"As many stars there are in this universe, there are different decisions, and with each decision, fate splits. In your split, you survived the Fell Winter, but in mine, Bilbo Baggins died at age twenty-one, and as a result, there will be no one to save Thorin Oakenshield's company from the trolls, the spiders, or even from themselves." Deep green eyes glittered with something dangerously unknown, and Bilbo shivered despite himself. There was power in those eyes, and age that no one could fake.

"But... what does this have to do with me, Lady Yavanna? I am passing onto the Undying Lands soon, an old man with nothing to give." Yet, he couldn't help but feel the cold creeping in at the thought of Thorin, even in another world, dying before he gave his people their home. "Unless you mean for me to help, but the only way for me would be to..."

She smiled then, bright and wondrous as a blossoming flower, "You have much more to give in you, Bilbo Baggins, more than many suspect."

"But how could I help you? I am still an old man, no matter how I look in this dream!" His hackles rose as he thought of the pain he felt through the end of his quest, "how could you ask me to go through such a thing again?! To watch them die was the worst thing in my life!" Bilbo realized he was shouting at his creator, and shrank back, his Baggins propriety rearing it's head at how he was acting. Sighing, he looked down at his hands, and whispered, "Even then, I am changed, and not the Hobbit I once was and never will be that again."

A delicate touch tipped his head up, and those eyes were now soft with hidden sorrow and pain. "I know of the suffering you went through, as what each child of mine feels, I feel too."

"I am sorry my Lady, for speaking to you as though you did not."

"There is nothing to forgive, Bilbo. But I must proceed, for time is running quicker than I had hoped. I wish to have been able to console you, but you must make a choice soon."

"And what choice is that?" He asked warily.

Yavanna did not answer right away, gathering her thoughts, "My time is much slower than this, and we are only on the year 2915, twenty six years before the quest for Erebor, where if you had lived, would be of twenty five years of age. The Belladonna Baggins and Bungo Baggins died of grief shortly after their young Bilbo was lost to the Fell Winter and so the fates are weaving towards the success of Sauron the Deceiver, as you are not there to take the ring from Gollum, who will eventually be found and tortured. But I spotted a stray thread in Vairë's weave that connected to another weave of Arda. One that could unravel what has

been written for the future, that could save Middle Earth and change the fate that you could not.”

Bilbo could only gape, “You’re... you’re saying I wouldn’t just have to relive it... but that I could *change it*?! How could that possibly work? If I am dead there, how could I change anything or know to change anything?

“The Valar had come up with this plan when we convened a time ago, and we will make a new body for your soul, and Eru will breathe life and free will into it as he did for Aulë’s children. You will be the Bilbo Baggins that was meant to be alive, as you were in this world’s split. And though you will have that body, it will be this world’s soul and all the knowledge that it comes with.” Her eyes twinkled, “With a few little extra gifts. But I warn you, Bilbo Baggins of the Shire, no one will know you, and you will not wake in the Shire. It will be a long and difficult path, if you choose to go. You will either save the world or destroy it.”

His hands were shaking now, with the knowledge that he could *save them all*. Kíli and Fíli wouldn’t have to die... and Thorin, oh Thorin, he would survive to be King under the Mountain like he deserved. And Frodo would never carry that accursed ring if he had any say, even if he had to take it to Mordor’s gates himself. Maybe it was selfish of him that his first thoughts were of the ones he lost, and not the outcome of the entire world. But he had spent a long time being selfless, doing things for others, and living, as his father had wanted, until he went on the quest, and then lived as his mother. The weight that he had previously carried on his shoulders lifted, and he felt his burdens disappear as his determination hardened. *This time would be different, and I’m going to do things my way this time.*

“I accept.”

CHAPTER ONE – In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. But it was a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell.

Maybe he should have taken Lady Yavanna’s word more to heart, as he started up with a gasp. It was dank, and smelled of old, wet socks that hadn’t been laundered in years. When she had said he wouldn’t wake in the Shire, she hadn’t been joking. This was quite possibly the furthest thing from his warm Hobbit hole that it could get, and his ‘birth’ was in a cave with wild Belladonna flowers in front of it, otherwise known as Deadly Nightshade. Though this place looked oddly familiar. But the fact that he could breathe easy, and see quite clearly was a blessing he had not felt in a while. Too long had he been an old man. After the quest he had felt he aged thirty years.

Bilbo couldn’t help the laughs that escaped him, the almost manic grin on his face spreading wide. He could not tell how long he sat there, but he woke from his self-induced stupor from the gurgling of his belly. “It seems that even a Hobbit that is a Not-Hobbit anymore still needs to eat, but first, where the blazes am I?” He mused to himself; *I should probably take stock of everything that I have*, then proceeded to pat himself down. Thankfully, he was

dressed in well-worn traveling clothes built for his size, with a long leather coat that had a plethora of pockets in them and a hood that would cover most of his face. Unfortunately, there was nothing in it, not one scrap of food or weaponry. Sighing, he laid back in annoyance, and promptly smacked his head on something hard and metal.

“Blast it all!” Gripping the thing that hit him he pulled it in front of himself and blinked. Sting. Sting was in his hands. Then would that mean that he was in *the* trolls cave, the one’s they defeated in another life? When he glanced around and saw the weapons rack on the far wall with a little gleam shining from the outside sun, he knew exactly where he was. The Troll Cave, the one that they had originally found, but wasn’t the door closed? When he looked up the door that he had opened with the stolen key, it was wide-open, sunlight pouring through and onto his face. He groaned at the brightness of it, taking care to actually search his surroundings now.

Right next to where Sting had been found, the key that he had pick-pocketed the first time was laying there, waiting to be taken. He had wondered how the trolls could have found such a cave with a magical door to store their plunder the first time. Perhaps they had merely come upon it like he had? A laugh escaped him and he smiled, the Lady Yavanna had given him a way to survive even without going to the Shire. Further back into the cave he could see there were a few tunnels that followed along a natural seam of rock, giving him a sense of how his old Bag End used to be, and nostalgic tears came to his eyes. Wiping them away quickly, he stood and brushed his clothes off. There was no time to waste, even in self-pity, for what reason could he give for allowing that when he has a chance to redeem himself?

It took him over a half hour to search the entire cave, as it went back quite far, farther then they had searched in his lifetime, and it placed an idea in his head that he couldn’t quite get rid of. Sighing to himself, he thought, *I need somewhere to stay, so this may as well work since there is twenty-six more years until the quest begins. I’ll just have to refurbish it (more like create it) like my father did for my mother. Plus I need a place where Gandalf can come find me.*

That had him pause, then pale in horror. Gandalf didn’t even *know he was alive!* But did he need to know what had happened? Knowing Gandalf, he had at least found out that the Bilbo of this split had died during the Fell Winter, but maybe he could work off that. As during the Fell Winter many Hobbits had been lost, straying through the winter to reach other Hobbit smials to share food. They had most likely died, as they were never seen again but still... Somehow, during the years he would have to get word of another Hobbit that Gandalf would hire to be a burglar. But if Gandalf needed a burglar, well... perhaps he didn’t need one from the Shire. Not that he really needed to steal money. He spied the huge chest of gold and the stray pieces among the dirty ground, which he could probably live off for the rest of his life. Even though Bilbo didn’t need any money for much, as he had learned to live without comforts, he certainly remembered someone who did.

When the Dwarrow’s had come to his house and barged in, so excited for a real meal, he had been upset, as they were trespassing terribly. And that was a horrible breach of manners, but looking back they seemed rather thin compared to the Dwarrow’s of later times. Grimacing, *perhaps they were just hungry for food, as I recall, Balin told me they were on hard times as*

the mines had been failing for years. Bofur and his kin had practically been in rags in the beginning.

But he could change that all, couldn't he? Who other than him would even try? Everyone these days accused the Dwarrows of being greedy and rude, too ethnocentric to care for others, and were looked down upon. True, there were some like that, but he doubted that was the majority as the Dwarrows that he grew to love were nothing like travelers said. It had taken a while for them to see Bilbo as part of their group, but once they did they fought for him like he was their own. So even though they didn't know it yet, they were part of his family, and one didn't leave family in poverty if they could help it.

Dwarrows would never accept charity, but he wouldn't give them the option. Bilbo smiled, the best way to prove to a Dwarf that he was burglar material was to show them that he could, and what better way than to sneak past their defenses? Maybe he could get them to acknowledge him before the quest as a good burglar so they would be more accepting of him. He shook his head, ignoring his stomach for a while longer; even if they hated him in this life he would still protect them.

Covering his eyes from the sunshine he stepped outside. From what he remembers, there's around a weeks travel between Bree, then to the Shire, and then to the settlement in Ered Luin. In total, around a month and a half from his little cave to Ered Luin, and around five days to Rivendell. Although he would love to take a trip to Rivendell, he would have to save that for later, as more impending things were needed done. He couldn't even set off for Ered Luin yet, as he needed a place to come back to once winter set in.

Though he couldn't travel to either, perhaps he could go to Bree to purchase some supplies and food. Before leaving he tucked the gold chest and two swords in one of the back tunnels. With Bree in mind, he attached Sting to his hip, grabbed a few money pieces, and put the key in his pocket after closing the door. He could find his way back because the patches of Belladonna around this part were quite rare. While Hobbits were immune to all plants, most were not, and either took to destroying them (for their berries looked delicious and Men's children were prone to eating them) or cultivating them privately.

It was five days in that he caught sight of smoke coming from a campsite not far ahead of him. Bilbo was starving, and his hands were shaking. Although he had been snacking on the fruit he found, and edible roots (making sure to collect seeds), it still wasn't enough for a Hobbit, even a Not-Hobbit like himself. Arriving not far from the smoke he peered out from the tree he was hiding, spying on a few campfires with a couple dozen Men, with a few women and children around it. Their wagons were lined up on the sides, surrounding the fire and giving some protection from the wild.

There were a few options that he had. One, go up and ask for supplies and possibly a night by the fire, hoping that they thought him a child. Though he doubted many people would care, or even want to share provisions they had. Two, wait to arrive in Bree in a couple days. And finally, the third, burglar them blind. Well... perhaps not blind, but a few things here and there, some children's clothes gone and a few food items they wouldn't miss. It couldn't hurt to start his burglarizing reputation here either, and he was in desperate need of a good meal.

He was about to retreat until nighttime, but then paused when he heard them talking. “Why should we travel to Ered Luin, Forn? Those blasted Dwarves are a greedy, unforgiving lot.” The dirty looking man spit on the ground and there were a lot of mumbles of agreement. “Why take our business there?”

The man named Forn smirked, his beady eyes making Bilbo grimace. “Exactly, me good feller, them Dwarves will be beggin’ to get some of our wares to ge’ ‘em through the winter. We’ll raise our prices and ge’ a steal off ‘em. ‘N we need new weapons to protect the wagons, everyone ‘n their mother knows they need money bad, even discounted.”

Those words were like stones in his stomach, and his eyes hardened. There were not many things that could make Bilbo Baggins mad, but Lobelia’s shrieking, the stubbornness of Dwarrow’s, and anyone dismissing other races as lesser than others were the worst. If they could not see past their own arrogance, than Bilbo would not be a graciously forgiving Hobbit. *But then again Bilbo, you’re a Not-Hobbit now, you don’t live by their rules any longer.* And so, he waited silently till nightfall, when Men’s eyes were in the failing light, and crept silently past the watchmen.

None saw him pass, as Hobbits had a natural ability to blend in with the darkness and the feet to step quietly through them. Even without that cursed ring, he felt invisible, so perhaps those times that Nori had passed through after his trip back to the Shire had not been for nothing. All of his Dwarrow’s had stopped by at least once early on, but as Erebor had grown and Ered Luin had dwindled the trips lessened. Balin and Nori were the only frequent visitors, as Nori’s inclinations towards stealing were not dampened by being ridiculously wealthy, and Balin traveled sometimes for diplomatic reasons once Ori took over as advisor and scribe. That was of course before they decided to retake Moria, the damned fools.

He held back the tears and rifled through a child’s pack, making sure not to take too much from one person. No money was stolen from the women and children, but he did not hold back from the man named Forn. Though he held no regards of gold, the more he could gather for the Dwarrows, the better, as the chest wouldn’t last long if he was trying to helping out the whole settlement. Bilbo paused next to Forn, stealing his leather pack (after emptying it of things he did not need) and placing the things he had gathered (two spare outfits, a small writing kit, an empty journal, flint and tinder, two blankets, a sleeping matt, and some wrapped food and water). The man shifted, and Bilbo’s ears picked of the clinking of more gold. Obviously he was a bit smarter than he let on and kept one bag of money in his pack and another smaller one in his hands at night.

Pulling out the writing kit he withheld a smile, the man would *not* be pleased in the morning, but he deserved it. Writing a quick note he wrapped it around a wooden carving that was in Forn’s bag before switching it out for the bag of money. The name he had signed it with was a remembrance of his mother, as he could not just use his real name. A few moments later and he was out of the camp, heading back towards Bree. It was too late to make a fire, but he spread out his bedroll and wrapped himself up in blankets, saving the planning for the morrow. As only dark plans are made at night, with that thought, he nodded off.

Dear Forn,

Try to look past your arrogant pigheadedness, as it will be your downfall one day. Though I may not be one, Dwarf's are nobler than you could ever be. Thank you for your business.

~Nightshade

P.S. You need to up your watch; there are too many easy access points.

Lady Yavanna looked down upon her slumbering Hobbit, a soft smile gracing her lips. "This is only the beginning, my young Bilbo, on the morrow, your true work starts. I know you will do us proud, as you always have, in all splits."

"Aye, he will, wife of mine." A deep voice rumbled, "Perhaps this little one will be strong enough to save what was once be lost, that should not have been."

She sighed and leaned against him, "Indeed, husband. We shall wait and see what tapestry his thread spins."

Bree, the place of prancing ponies and planting plans

Chapter Notes

A/N: In case some of you didn't know, or didn't make your own assumptions, this is what i said about Not-Hobbits earlier to a commenter:

Its mostly because Bilbo has disassociated himself from other Hobbits, when he talked to Lady Yavanna he said he 'wasn't that Hobbit anymore', and he has grown apart from them in his old life (other than Frodo). Plus, he was technically 'born' in a cave and not from another Hobbit (although ironically there are belladonna flowers outside), and already at age 25 through the Valars will (which will be shown). To me, and people are really free to interpret it, hes disassociating because he knows hes going to do some things a normal Hobbit wont do and thus will not feel guilty about it (he does not have the thought of 'I'm doing it for my dwarrow friends' as most Hobbits (excluding those like Lobelia haha) are pretty selfless, now hes doing it all for himself (mostly). Also, Lady Yavanna herself said that he would have a few 'extra' things (which was in the first chapter), though he doesn't know what it is (either physical or not). He didn't even know what he looked like last chapter... so yeah.

I had originally planned on calling this story the "Not-Hobbit", and i'm still not sure i like "The Split" but I'll see how it goes.

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Cupping the water, he splashed it over his face, sighing in relief at the coolness on his warm skin. Bilbo sat at the edge of a small stream that ran parallel to the road, as he tried to travel close enough to dodge Weathertop and the South Downs, but not too close to be spotted by the various travellers. As he stared down at his reflection he couldn't help but think, *well, I haven't changed much*. And it was true, his hazel eyes and golden brown hair that curled around the tips of his pointed ears were the same as they had been in his split. Though he looked infinitely younger, maybe in his mid twenties? Bilbo remembered her speaking on how old this 'Bilbo' would have been, and realized maybe that was her hinting that he was taking over more than just saving the Quest.

When Lady Yavanna told him he'd be getting a new body, he hadn't known quite what he was expecting. He knew he had to be a Hobbit from his size when he inspected himself in the cave, but other than that he did not know. So when he came upon a stream, Bilbo could not help looking. *This will certainly make getting Gandalf to trust me a lot easier*. That sparked an idea, and he couldn't help the grin that came to his face that made him look more like Belladonna. As much as he wanted to run off and find Gandalf, he still had a lot more preparing to do.

It was a quick travel day later that he arrived in Bree, his hood up to hide his identity. The town, if one could call it that, was too close to the Shire for him to use his name, and he looked too much like the other Bilbo (or himself?). The Hobbits that occasionally visited would get word of him that way, and though some people may know that he was a Hobbit from his feet (for there was no way he would be wearing *any* kind of footwear), they wouldn't know him as Bilbo Baggins, whose supposed to be dead. It wouldn't hurt to start building up more knowledge as Nightshade either.

The light rain pelted down as he knocked on the wooden door. "Ehhh? Whose there a' this time a nigh'?" The cranky voice came closer and the upper slot opened.

Bilbo cleared his throat, "Down here, sire."

The lower slot slammed open and an old face peered out at him, "Ah, a 'obbit, eh? Well then, come in." It opened with a large creak, and he slipped past the larger form, "Lookin' for any place in particular, Master 'obbit?"

"I think I can find my way around, thank you for the offer," With that Bilbo was off down the road towards the only inn that he knew of. It took a couple of minutes to find the Prancing Pony in the dark, but was glad to get out of the rain. No one noticed his entrance, and he got up to the bar before clearing his throat once again. A large man blinked from where he was cleaning a mug, looking down at him in surprise.

"Blimey, 'ello there little feller, me name's Bartin Butterbur, what can I do for you Master...?"

"Master... Nightshade."

The man was silent for a moment before nodding, "Very well, now Master Nightshade, are yer 'ere for the night or a quick meal?"

"I'll pay for three nights, meals included, we'll see after that."

"The 'obbit standard of seven meals a day I'm guessin'?" Butterbur asked kindly.

Bilbo thought on it for a moment, traveling would not be kind to him, and he wasn't really a true Hobbit anymore. So would getting used to three meals a day be a bad thing? Not to mention, he didn't have enough food to get used to seven meals, "Hmm, no actually. Three a day will be fine, including one tonight before bed then." The man told him what it would cost and he slid the coin over, as it was a fair price.

"Take yer seat a' we'll bring some stew and bread o'er fer ya."

When he had looked around the first time he came in he had spotted a few Dwarrows in the corner, but knew he couldn't talk to them. He wondered what they were doing in Bree, traveling? Before the barman turned away he stepped closer, "Excuse me good sir, would you know what those Dwarrows are doing in town? Are they for hire of work or passing through?"

“Ah they been ‘ere a couple days, word in town says they be in the forge for a while ta save some money ‘efore headin’ o’er ta Ered Luin. Mighty fine work they do too, though yer may wanna approach ‘em at the forge on the morrow. May not be too receptive tonight.” Nodding, he left to sit in a free corner, waiting till he got fed. Thankfully, no one bothered him and he was free to eat (devour – with manners of course) his meal in peace before heading to bed. The Hobbit sized bed was a blessing, and he crawled into it, making sure Sting was close at hand.

Sighing, he wiped a tired hand across his face as he gazed at the ceiling. Sometimes it was strange to think no one knew him. All the connections in the last life were gone, all the bonds that he had forged. An ache that he had grown used to in his chest throbbed. Even if the pain had lessened at the chance of changing things, that didn’t mean he would not mourn. If things went well, he may never see Frodo Baggins, or get the chance to raise him. Pushing those thoughts away he gathered himself in his blankets, and fell into a restless sleep.

The morning came quicker than he’d have liked. It didn’t take long to change his under clothes to that of the child’s he had stolen and put his coat on, making sure the hood was up. He wanted his reputation as Nightshade to be known, but not tied to this face. Bilbo stopped at a few shops, buying food, medicinal and edible plants he didn’t find in the woods, some other medical supplies, a needle, thread, and some fabric, and then headed towards where he knew the forge lay. The building was big and billows of smoke were coming out the top, showing that it was open for business.

Gather your courage Bilbo; you’re not only a Baggins but also a Took!

It would be his first interaction with Dwarrows in this world, and even if they weren’t *his* Dwarrows, it still mattered. They were an insular folk, and he knew that one bad interaction with one would spread through the grapevine. With a deep breath he stepped through the doorway... and was promptly ignored. His eye twitched, but he realized that they hadn’t even heard him. Sometimes it was hard to understand that people weren’t used to someone so quiet, as they were a loud race.

There were a couple Men in there also taking commissions, but he knew that Dwarf’s mastery of smithing was far superior. He went straight to one of the three Dwarrows inside and raised his voice, “Master Dwarf, are you open for a request?”

Shoulders tensed and the Dwarf sped around, eyes slightly wide, clearly not used to being snuck up on so easily. He was around the height of Dwalin, but with a large gray beard that had a single braid at the bottom tied with a golden bead. The Dwarf got his bearings back relatively fast and eyed him suspiciously, “Aye, what do ye need, lad?”

Last night while waiting for his food he had written a list and a couple sketches of things he wanted made. If he were going to do wood work to make a semi-smial in the cave then he would need tools. Not to mention he was also planning on making a garden for food so he didn’t have to keep making trips to Bree. Bilbo handed over the list and the Dwarf read over it and gave him another look that stopped at his large furry feet for a moment. If he had to guess, he would assume it was the Dwarf reevaluating Bilbo. Most Hobbits would not order throwing knives while also purchasing gardening tools. In fact, no Hobbit would ever own a

weapon unless they were Bounders, and most used bows. Bilbo wasn't sure how he'd fair with them, but he was a master at conkers in his previous life, and after watching Nori, he thought he might be able to do it just as well.

"How long would this list take?"

"Ach, a week with the addition of the blades," The Dwarf paused before walking over to the side where their wares were at and dug something out. "These're left overs I created fer some of the wee ones back home, but fer yer size they're about right Master Hobbit." Well, this Dwarf was already kinder than Thorin had been in the first half of the quest. Calling him Hobbit instead of Halfling and all, but that was pushed aside from the amazement of the throwing knives. Bilbo may not know much about smithing, but he had seen Nori's, and these were around the same quality. Which knowing how Nori liked his weapons, was *very* good. "I have some extra carpentry tools from Forvari's stock," He nodded towards the slightly darker redheaded Dwarf who nodded back; the other redhead just ignored them. "All in all, three days, since ye only need the kitchen 'n gardenin' tools made."

"Three days?!" He said in slight shock.

The Dwarf scowled, "If ye don' like the time ye can look elsewhere."

Bilbo calmed himself, "No, no, you misunderstand me, sir. I was merely amazed at how *short* it would take for this commission. I guess it is true what they say about Dwarrow's skills in forging. Ah, where are my manners?" He gave a short bow, making sure to be able to see around the room still, "The name is Nightshade, son of Belladonna, at your service."

The scowl melted off his face quickly, and another of those looks was thrown his way, maybe it was the odd name? It was as if he wasn't expecting that at all, and he slowly nodded, "Baldur, son of Baldin, at yer service." Baldur stroked his beard again, "That'll be around two silver for the gardening and kitchen tools, and two for the knives and carpentry tools."

Before he gave him the money he paused, "Master Baldur, could you actually engrave the hilt of the knives too, with a design?" Bilbo handed over another page from his journal, with a small drawing of a Belladonna flower with some Dwarvish style lines around it.

A raised eyebrow, as if asking 'Ye want a flower on yer weapon?', "Aye, wont e'en add much time, a' I'll do it fer a couple copper."

Bilbo surprised him further by agreeing to the amount rather than haggling, as he had the money and it was fair. It was sad to think that the Dwarrows were more used to being ripped off than given a fair deal. Four silver coins and two coppers were in his hand without the Dwarf being able to tell where he had taken them out. It was a simple trick that Nori had taught him which was good for discouraging thieves that were looking for an easy trick. That way, they wouldn't know where your money pouch was.

"Thank you, I'll be around town for another couple days, so I'll come back in three days time."

“Aye, we’ll be done by then.” Another stroke of his beard, and Bilbo shifted before asking a question.

“Any chance you know of someone selling a pony?” It would be handy to have one to carry his things back, and it would speed up the trip by a couple days.

“Up the road and a right at the yellow sign,” Baldur nodded in the direction, and then turned back to the sword he had been hammering into place.

“My thanks,” and with that, he was off down the road, a little jittery from the exchange. He hoped it had went well, and if he could have a good reputation with Dwarrow as Nightshade before he travelled to Ered Luin, then all the better.

The small stable was tucked in between the bakery he had passed earlier and a house. There were a couple full sized horses, and some ponies grazing in the back. After speaking with the man cleaning up the stables he was able to find the owner. The pony he chose was a brown and gray mix, with a small gray spot around its eye that was five silvers. Bilbo paid him three coppers to have his pony, now named Zinnia, stabled for the next three days and went back to the inn.

After the third day he went back to the forge, more confident in himself this time. Stepping through the entryway he spotted Baldur easily, as he was in the corner with the two other Dwarrow. He walked to them, pausing at his side, “Master Baldur, good morn to you, have you the things I asked for?”

They all paused and turned to him, and Baldur, upon noticing him, relaxed minutely. “Ah, Master Nightshade, your commissions ‘r finished. This way.” The other two watched them as they went further back, and he gave them a smile, which they could just make out from under his hood.

Bilbo looked over the quality of the work and was impressed; this was worth more than those four silvers worth, much more, at least seven silvers for the quality of them and denseness of the metal. *Were the Dwarrows given such bad prices that they already lowered the normal price they would pay?* Frowning, he tested the edge of the axe that would be used to cut firewood with barely any pressure. A small bead of blood came from his finger. When he looked at the engraved set of fifteen knives he couldn’t help but be impressed further, it was exactly how he had wanted it.

Taking the frown to mean he was displeased, the Dwarrow he didn’t know the name of growled, “That’s the finest work your gonna find round these parts, and for a steal too.” His Westron was definitely better than Baldur’s was.

Bilbo turned to face the red bearded Dwarf that spoke, and nodded in agreement, “Of course, it is of great quality.”

He stared at him, surprise on his face, “...Aye.”

It didn’t take too long before the knives were hidden away in various pockets, some in his pants, sleeve and inside his coat. The tools were gathered into a small box that he could carry

without getting the edges roughed up. Pulling out four more silvers he placed it on the bench and turned to leave. A hand on his shoulder stopped him, making him face towards the three Dwarfrow.

“Ye already paid, lad.” Bilbo felt warmth in his chest at how honest they were. And here most people talked badly about Dwarfrow.

Tipping his head, “I know. But this is worth at least seven or eight silvers by my estimation. And I do not like owing anyone.”

A moment passed, “Ach, yer an odd one,” The hand on his arm moved to pat his shoulder, and he had to brace himself as to not tip over completely. Baldur gave him a grin, “But I like ye, what inn were ye stayin’ at lad?”

Bilbo didn’t hesitate to answer, “Prancing Pony, if I may ask why you’re inquiring?”

“Me and the laddies ‘ere were goin’ for a drink after, join us for a round or two before ye leave!”

Now it was Bilbo’s turn to be surprised, “O-oh well if you insist, how could I not?”

Baldur laughed, “Aye, we insist.”

When he came down from his room after packing he spotted them immediately. Baldur waved him over, his great grey beard shaking in laughter at what the redheaded Dwarf, who he recalled was named Forvari, said. The last Dwarf was stockier and shorter than the others, and seemed to have a glum demeanor, but his red hair was even brighter than the others as if to contrast it, but his skin was darker, like he stayed in the sun a lot more than the others. Nodding at them, he sat down.

“Butterbur!” Baldur called, “Another for my friend!” The bartender looked at his hooded face to the Dwarfrow a few times before starting to fill another mug.

“Thank you for inviting me, I cannot stay too long for I must get on the road soon.” He stated a little hesitantly, as he didn’t want to offend them.

Baldur just laughed, “It’s all right Master Nightshade, we were plannin’ on headin’ towards Ered Luin in the mornin’ and lookin’ for more work on the way. What way are ye travelin’? It be mighty dangerous on these roads, even for here.” His smile disappeared and he grimaced, leaning closer, “Orcs are crawling out of the holes they disappeared in a while ago.”

“That so?” Humming in thought, Bilbo nodded, “Well my thanks yet again, for advising me, but I’m heading back towards home. With luck, no orcs will cross our paths.” He grinned, “Though I’m sure they’ll have a hard time catching me first.” *Though I’m a little out of practice, but that is what these years are for.*

Their eyebrows rose at that, “Aye, I’ll believe that.” Baldur turned to the glummer of the two Dwarrow next to him, “This here is Dorvari, son of Dorv, my son-in-law, and next to ‘im is his brother Forvari, son of Dorv. These bunches of lump ‘ave been wit me since I traveled East a’ back.”

Dorvari shot him a glare, “Ach, your the sad lump, old man.” Forvari just laughed and nodded, with whom he was agreeing, Bilbo did not know.

“So, travel out here for extra money? I hear that Ered Luin’s been having a hard year,” Actually, he hadn’t heard that at all. But it wasn’t too hard to guess from the state of their clothes.

They all looked a little grimmer at that, this time Forvari spoke up, with a higher voice and a more fluent Westron like Dorvari. “Indeed, lots of folks are havin’ hard times, but home is home.” The answer seemed simple in essence, but Bilbo could see the slyness behind those green eyes. Forvari had answered the question without really answering it.

“I see.”

“So what’s a Hobbit like you doin’ out here? Ye don’t seem like any I’ve met before. They’re all flowered up a’ what not,” Dorvari eyed his get up, with the leather coat hiding his face and the sword at his hip. “I’ve never even seen one carry a weapon before.”

Bilbo shrugged uneasily, “I doubt you’ll find another of the like. There are no other of them that would have a reason to carry a weapon.”

“An you do, I suppose?”

Another shrug, “As Master Baldur said, times are darkening, Orcs are coming out further and further.”

Forvari’s gaze sharpened, “You don’t live in the Shire do you?”

Bilbo paused, turning to the younger Dwarf, “What makes you say that?”

“You said ‘them’ like you were apart from them.”

“Ah. Well then.” Shifting in his seat, he continued, “I guess that makes sense. Since I don’t live in the Shire, it feels natural to say it that way.” *Technically true in this lifetime.*

Baldur guzzled the rest of his beer, slamming it down and frowning towards him, “Ne’er heard of a Hobbit that doesn’t live in the Shire.”

“That’s probably because there aren’t, other than me of course. In fact, I have been traveling for quite a while, and just found a place for me to settle my roots, as it were.” A shine came into Bilbo’s eyes, he may be taking a chance, but from what he could see, these were honorable Dwarrow. “Say... would you be up to a proposition?”

“Proposition ye say?” Glances were shared and they seemed to come to a decision, “Aye, we’ll hear ya.”

He looked around and lowered his voice, "It may be a little out of your way, as it's a couple days back I found a place to settle down. But I'm building a place into a cave that I found. I could use some extra help, and Dwarrow strength would be a boon. I'll pay you a fair price for the work of course." They seemed to want to talk it out, from the way they were looking at one another.

Bilbo finished his drink and placed a coin down, "How about I stay this night and in the morning you'll give your answer? If you're up to it, we'll head out back towards my pla—," before he finished the doors to the Prancing Pony burst open, the place going silent, and he paled. *Well, I knew my luck wouldn't last forever, and I did use more than a lifetimes worth in the last split.* There stood Forn, grim faced and angry, with a couple more Men behind him. Bilbo slid into the shadows silently and without attracting attention. The Dwarrow sat up straighter in shock, about to ask where he had gone when Forn stormed over to the barman.

"Those Dwarf basterds! Them 'ad the nerve to steal from me! From *me!*" He couldn't help gulping, he didn't want them blaming Dwarrow! Didn't he specifically state he wasn't a Dwarf? Bilbo sighed; of course they would think he was a Dwarf if he thought highly of them, plus, why would they take him at his word after stealing. How could he have been so stupid?

The Dwarrow close to him grew still, faces blank. It was obvious they had faced such discrimination before, and it hadn't changed. Eventually the other Men settled around Forn's table, all speaking loudly on how terrible Dwarrow were and that they deserved what was coming to them, shooting looks at the Dwarrow he had grown fond of. When it didn't look like they were leaving, Bilbo bit his lip, indecision warring with the desire to *do* something. But he couldn't, he was weak, and that frustrated him to no end.

The grey haired Dwarf was pulling out his knife when he felt Bilbo's hand on his arm, but stopped when he started speaking lowly, recognizing his voice, "I'll be at the East gates right after dawn, if you so wish to come work for me for a couple months. And it may be a good idea to head the opposite way from those men."

Baldur gave a barely discernable inclination of his head, "Aye, we'll think on it. Good night laddie." Dorvari just grunted and Forvari gave him a friendly smile when he said good night back.

That morning he opted out from leaving through the front door, lowering down his things with rope he had purchased a day ago, and then crawling down himself. It didn't take too long to grab his horse and go the back ways until he left out of the East Gate. "Mornin' Master Baldur, Forvari and Dorvari."

"Same to ye, lad." Baldur stood up from leaning against the outside of the door, "We've decided to take ye on yer offer, as we'll 'ave a hard enough time gettin' work where we're goin' without the likes of those Men goin' the same way."

Beaming, he looked up at them, and they could barely make out the bright hazel eyes underneath. "Excellent, I was hoping so."

They chuckled, "Not many would hope so these days. Ye indeed are an odd one."

“Pish posh,” He said, straightening out his sleeves like his father used to do, “You Dwarrow are the finest fellows I’ve met in a good time.” That got them puffing their chests up in pride, and Bilbo hid an amused grin. “Now, let’s be on, unless you have something you need to grab?”

“Nay lad, we’re all ready.” With that, they were off, exchanging a few words here and started on the road. They travelled all day except for a few breaks where Bilbo showed off his cooking skills, much to the Dwarrow’s appreciation. Bilbo could not sleep that night. He kept seeing Fíli, Kíli, and Thorin’s faces so much that he wasn’t able to do anything except squirm. It didn’t help how close they were to the South Downs. Eventually he gave up and sat next to Forvari, who merely smiled at him and went back to carving.

“I’ve seen you doing that a lot, is that your mastery? Baldur mentioned something about you having extra carpentry tools.”

His motions paused, “Aye, I am a carpenter first and a blacksmith second, but it’s hard to find too much of that around here, unless they want little fixes.”

Smiling he said, “Well it’ll definitely be helpful as another carpenter would be faster than one.”

Forvari looked up at that, his green eyes flickering with interest in the firelight, “Another carpenter? Does that mean you are by trade a carpenter?”

“Heavens no, I dabble here and there with many things, but I have no formal trade.” Dabble indeed, he was a writer, gardener, burglar, riddler, sketcher, and semi-warrior and healer, he did fight in a war after all. Not really a master at any of them, but good enough when it counted. “My father when I was young built a smial,” When a look of confusion crossed Forvari’s face he added, “a Hobbit home, for my mother as a wedding gift, and when I was born he taught me some of the intricacies of it. I’ve got an idea how I want my smial, as I’ve been sketching some plans out. Take a look.” Pulling out the journal he had been filling through the past days, he tipped it so the fire would give more light.

Forvari hummed, “This part seems a bit odd, but it’s hard to tell without knowing the structure of the cave.”

“Of course, it’s been around two weeks since I was there but from what I remembered it can work.” They traded ideas back for a while before a baying noise broke their whispers. Thankfully it wasn’t a warg howl, which would be worse as Orc’s were close wherever there were wargs.

Instantly, they were on edge, hands on their weapons. Forvari shot him a look, and then went to quietly wake up Baldur and Dorvari. Baldur had a huge axe that he picked up as if it was a light piece of wood, while Dorvari had a curved sword with smaller throwing axes at his hips. They flashed a few Iglismek signs, a few that he recognized as ‘wolf’ and then ‘dog’ and ‘close’, as one tended to do after spending over six months with a Dwarf that mostly communicated that way or ancient Khuzdûl. Bilbo tapped on Forvari’s shoulder to get his attention and mouthed the word ‘scout’, and before they could protest he was slipping into the shadows.

Everything was eerily silent except the few howls coming from ahead of him. Across the stream there were three dogs, but that wasn't the worst part. Bilbo stared in horror as he noticed the twelve Men that held them back, Forn at its helm. They must have bought the dogs in Bree, to track the Dwarrow down and pay them back for the slight against them. *What in the Green Lady's name am I going to do?!* It wouldn't take long before they caught their scent, stream or no, so he turned back to camp, hurrying.

"Master Baldur," He whispered at his shoulder, ignoring how he tensed.

"Laddie, yer like the wind, 'ere one moment a' gone the next. What'd ye find?" Bilbo winced at the 'quiet' voice as the others gathered close to hear.

At his face the others sobered, "There's three dogs—,"

"Ach, lad ye had me worried."

Bilbo shot him a glare, before cutting in, which his father would be appalled at, "which isn't the worst of it. Twelve men come with them, and they'll catch our scent soon, as they are close to where we crossed. The man from before is leading them, so I assume it's you they're after." They seemed resigned at that, and Baldur hefted his axe up onto his shoulder, giving him a sad look.

"Lad, leave. They 'ave no quarrel with ye." Bilbo winced, *and that is where you are wrong*. He held his tongue back from blurting it out, knowing it wouldn't help either way, and they were wasting time.

"I will be back, make no mistake" He stated instead, a plan forming in his head.

Dorvari snorted in a show of disbelief, "Right. Now get, they'll be 'ere soon enough, a' we can't outrun them, but they wont know to look for you. We don't need your pretty words to know you're gonna leave." Ignoring those derisive words, he disappeared into the night, but he stayed in the sight of the camp. If he was right, this was going to be a big risk, and he hoped it would work, or else they would all die. Bilbo's heart pounded as he heard the dogs getting closer. Shifting from where he was crouched, his hand gripped tighter at Sting, almost hurting.

The dozen of men surrounded the Dwarrow, throwing jeers and taunts. Instead of the nerves he had been displaying, this oddly calmed him. He could do this, for the new friends he had made. Bilbo stepped out, pushing the *—dangerDANGERrunRUNrun—* fear back. He had faced trolls, wargs, Azog the Defiler, and a damned Dragon, and so he could face these Men. *Lady Yavanna herself sent me here! I cannot fail at the first sign of trouble!*

"Excuse me!" The Dwarrows gob smacked faces almost made him laugh hysterically, the Men's even more so. "Forn, how nice to see you here, crawl out of the last hole I saw you in? You definitely smell it." And there it goes, his mouth running away from him again.

Forn's face twisted in anger, "Who be ye?! I ain't have no quarrel with ye," and then as if he had just noticed Bilbo's size, snarled, "Ahh! Another fuckin' Dwarf! Shoulda known there'd be more of ye parasites hidin' round 'ere!"

Bilbo cleared his throat, gaining their attention again, a little surprised they hadn't outright attacked him, and, "Actually, I am a Not-Hobbit,"

They all blinked in confusion, the Dwarf sending each other raised eyebrows as he had said he was a Hobbit before, and now he was denying it? "What're ye talkin' about?!" Forn growled, and a couple men moved closer, brandishing knives and all sorts of weapons.

"Well, you see, I'm a Not-Hobbit, a Hobbit, but Not. You see?" He tilted his head, as if to say that Forn was an idiot not to. "Ah, but that was rude, I haven't even introduced myself!"

"I don't care what yer name is ye baste—,"

"I'm Nightshade, son of Belladonna, at your service." The Men instantly fell silent, before roaring in rage and running at him. Bilbo sent a quick nod to the absolutely flabbergasted Dwarf before taking off. Ducking under a log, he just dodged the arrows flying his ways. Luckily there were only two Men with bows, and they obviously weren't very good at it. His feet were flying fast, and his heart jumped as he heard them yelling and crashing through the woods not far back from him.

Bilbo glared at the sky, hoping that the Lady caught sight of his scowl. He could have been sitting quietly in the Undying Lands with a cup of tea... But he couldn't help but grin, this was *so much more interesting* than that would have been. It felt good to run freely, well... not with a pack of angry Men after him, but he digresses. A few minutes passed and his breath was still strong, making him happy he had grown more used to traveling through this past week.

He shivered, and his eyes widened. It was time. Bilbo quickly slid into the shadows and moved to climb a tree, watching as the Men ran a couple feet past and then stopped. They looked around angrily, and Forn yelled something. His voice was cut off from a bone chilling sound, and Bilbo stuffed his ears before he could hear the rest.

*"Cold be hand and heart and bone
and cold be sleep under stone
never more to wake on stony bed
never, till the Sun fails and the Moon is dead
In the black wind the stars shall die
and still be gold here let them lie
till the Dark Lord lifts his hand over dead sea and withered land."*

Withered shadows slithered out from the forest hills, and he could see the Men fighting before being touched and dragged into their spells. He muffled a gasp and looked away, for it was worse than young Frodo had mentioned, seeing those strange beings take the Men further into the woods like docile dolls. When they disappeared Bilbo slid down, his hands shaking. Stumbling towards where the Dwarf's camp was, as his legs couldn't quite hold him up.

He finally paused, halfway back and threw up right into the bushes. Bilbo knew what those Barrow-wights were going to do, they had sung about it too! Maybe he had killed orcs and goblins before, but never had he taken the life of a mortal. Once his stomach was empty he

groaned and sat up, but not before his eyes widened. Forn was there, a few feet ahead of him, glaring at him with hatred.

“Ye basterd, I don’t know what them things were tha’ took me men, but ye’ll pay fer it!” Forn charged, a wild look in his eyes, a look that showed he had been close to death and survived, but it had clearly broken him.

Bilbo stumbled back again, his body still shaken from what had happened. His hand shook and he pulled Sting out right before Forn jumped at him and ended up impaling himself. They tumbled back, the hilt of Sting resting uncomfortably against his stomach. Warmth spread against his chest and down his sides. Breath coming quick, and a panic attack just edging onto the sides of his vision, he rolled the man off of him and sprung back. There was blood covering the whole front of him, and he tried to wipe it off.

It was a long moment before he had calmed himself, and he ended up dry heaving next to the bushes again. Wiping the tears that had come unbidden, he stood up straight and went over to pull Sting from the body. It came out with a squelch, making his empty stomach curl into itself. Straightening out his coat and putting back on the hood that had fallen in his tumble, he walked back.

There were a few bodies littered about the camp, as not all the Men had followed him. Bilbo didn’t chance a look at them, as he would be in the bushes all night that way. The three Dwarrow shot to their feet as they saw him come from the dark of the trees, covered in drying blood. All of them were wary, and Bilbo sighed.

This was going to be an interesting conversation.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Okay, so i'm not an expert on blacksmiths or anything, so i just guesstimated based on some research, and then gave them a shorter time because they're Dwarrows, aight? They obviously are more skilled than Men, even in the less modern times like those.

Also, the OC's, hope you like them, they'll have a part in the story, which you'll see more about next chapter. It was a tag, so you cant really be angry with me, right...? lol, anyways, I'll say it again just in case... I DID NOT READ THE BOOKS, I've only watched the movies and done some research on the books. So I wasn't exactly sure how the Wights had gotten Merry and Pippin under their spell, but i just made it that they had to hear them and not get touched? So that's why Bilbo is marginally better off than Forn, he didn't hear them mostly, or get close to them. I'm assuming their presence is much like the Nazgul.

Also, dont expect 6k words every chapter lol, i mostly do 3k to 5k per chapter, but this one really got away from me.

P.S. It may be a little bit before you meet Canon characters, as Bilbo isn't just going to only meet them and not other people. So yes, OCs.

Comments are love ;)

To gain trust, it must first be given, it is not earned. Trust is a chance, a risk, and one must decide when to take the jump.

Chapter Notes

Glad you guys liked the OCs! There's plenty of them this chapter, and I didn't mean it for them to talk so long but they realllllly got away from me. Oh and i forgot to mention the Wights song was from the web, and not mine.

Hope you like their talk!

Enjoy~

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Dorvari grunted, giving him a considering look, “So, you did come back, and you slayed over five men. I underestimated you Master Nightshade.” Baldur, at his side, had his hand still on his blade, but he was silent now.

Noticing that he still held the bloody Sting in his hands, he slowly returned it to its sheathe. Thankfully his hands were not shaking now. When it was away, they relaxed a bit, but still were wary. “I guess you want an explanation then?” Hoping to stall them for longer, trying to think of what in the world to tell them.

Forvari smiled at him, but this one didn’t feel half as welcoming as his old ones, “Indeed, Master Nightshade. You certainly live up to your name, although I’d be lying if I said it was your birth one. It took me twice over this morn when I called your name for you to respond.”

I may as well have shouted that it wasn’t my name, bebother this sly Dwarf! Bilbo just sighed, if he was going to survive here, he needed to learn how to keep things to himself better. “You are quite right, Master Forvari, but for now that is what I am and no other.”

“Master Nightshade or what not, he distracted those Men for us when we couldn’t even fight all of ‘em.” Dorvari interrupted, surprising Bilbo for speaking up for him. A part of him had anticipated the sort of response Thorin would have given before Bilbo was accepted at the Carrock, but it was clear that he seemed much more level-headed. Dorvari had been staunch against trusting him a minute ago, but it seemed that him coming back had changed that, if only a little. Those eyes connected with his, “You need understand we wanna know a little about someone whose employing us if you are that dangerous to take on over five or more men by yourself? And why did they seem to know your name?”

He looked over them. There was no reason not to trust them; it was just he hadn’t planned on giving his ‘story’ out so soon. There was no way he was telling them that he had been sent here by that Valar, that would be a disaster waiting to happen. He’d be labeled ‘Mad’ in this

lifetime too, and once was quite enough for Bilbo. These Dwarrows would have to spend the next few months with him in his cave-smial, would he hide his face there the whole time? Could he afford to give his trust to these honorable Dwarrows? *Let's be honest Bilbo*, he thought to himself, *you are in dire need of good friends, and how can they trust you when they don't know you?* If he were in their position he would want some answers at least. To gain trust, someone had to give it first.

"I didn't." When Baldur raised a disbelieving eyebrow, Bilbo continued, "Take on over five men myself. I only killed one. The others... well, let's just say they'll be dead before the night is over." As it didn't look like they were going to jump up and kill him where he stood, Bilbo sat on one of the fallen logs they collected to seat around the fire earlier.

"Then what in the name of Mahal happened to them?" Dorvari cut in. "And why do you hide your name?"

"I will tell you of my name after. For now, to ease your minds I will explain what happened to the Men. Further South of here is a place named the Downs, I'm sure you've heard whispers of Wights that haunt the place. And they are quite real, I assure you, just like the Nazgûl. Whispers they may be, but I knew of them from... a relative of mine."

"Wights?" Baldur seemed to think it over, "Them fell beasts tha' take o'er the minds of travelers?"

Bilbo nodded, stopping himself from shivering at the thought of their harrowing presence and how it had affected him even from where he had hid, "They are dark creatures, but after knowing of them you can predict if they are near. You can feel the chill, and the hope and life drain from your body."

"And what do these Wights have to do with these Men?" Dorvari asked, but Bilbo could see that Dorvari already understood, and Baldur had a good idea.

A somber smile twisted Bilbo's lips, "Everything, as Wights were what took those other Men into the Barrow-Downs, where they will be bound in golden chains and then killed. The plan first formed in my head after scouting, knowing we were close to where they laid. Wights can sense when someone has crossed their borders into the Downs, and I used that to my advantage. After I got them to follow me away from you three, I led them on a goose chase through the forest and hid right when I started feeling their cold presence. The Wights took their minds over, with song and touch, and then I left."

"And the last, lad?" The grey-bearded Dwarf said, gentler than before, as if sensing Bilbo's tension.

"It was Forn," He gripped the front of his bloody coat, "he had escaped from the Barrow-wights somehow, and I defended myself when he attacked."

"Aye, I'll believe tha' more a' I'll believe ye killed them all."

Blinking in surprise, Bilbo lifted his gaze to meet Baldur's again, "You do?"

“No offense to yer fightin’ skills laddie, but six on one be terrible odds, e’en for a seasoned warrior.”

“Ah, I see.” Bilbo’s eyes dropped, “As for my name... well, they recognized it from an earlier... encounter that we had.”

“Is that why in yer contract ye had us sign to ensure the privacy of yer, schmail (“smial,” Bilbo corrected), smial or whate’er? Ye in some trouble ‘er somethin’?” He had the smarts to have them include that into their contract for work once they had set out the day before. Bilbo had rolled his eyes at Dwarrows and their love for contracts, but it had made his chest tighten in something he couldn’t quite distinguish between fondness and nostalgia.

Forvari gave him a once over and nodded, his smile easing back like it hadn’t held that brittle edge earlier, “And does it have something to do with this Not-Hobbit nonsense?”

Bilbo sighed, for what felt like the hundredth time this night, and then pulled down his hood. “Yes, that is a big reason, I do not want just anyone knowing where I live. And I said that I was a Not-Hobbit, because to me, I am not really a Hobbit anymore.”

They all took in the beardless face, wide hazel eyes that seemed older than his body suggested, and the curly golden hair. Baldur and Dorvari practically reared back in shock, “Mahal’s beard! Ye can’t have e’en hit yer coming o’ age yet! Wha’s a lad like ye doin’ on yer own!” Bilbo looked to see that Forvari didn’t even look shocked, and he wondered if the Dwarf had suspected since he had met him. The oldest Dwarf calmed and stroked his beard, “Where be yer parents laddie? They can’t have left ye on yer—,” then he cut himself off. Understanding lit, and he wiped his hand over his eyes. “Of course, ye don’t ‘ave any.”

Bilbo shrugged, the sting of his parent’s deaths had faded with time, and sure, it still hurt, but not as much, “They passed a few years ago, and I can take care of myself, thank you very much. Just because I haven’t turned thirty three yet doesn’t—,”

“Ye aren’t e’en thirty-three?!” Baldur almost roared. This time, Forvari joined them in their shock. “There must be some relative round these parts to take ye in, lad?”

His shoulders straightened and he glared sternly at them, “I am perfectly capable of taking care of myself, and none of my relatives even know I live. Even if they did I would not live with them, they expect me to be something that I cannot, and will not, be. I have had enough of people telling me what I should and shouldn’t do for a lifetime. That is why I call myself a Not-Hobbit, because despite them wanting me to be a *proper* Hobbit, I am not and never will.”

“That’s not the whole reason, Master Nightshade.” The sly Dwarf smiled, green eyes glinting, “What kind of trouble are you getting into that you don’t want it to reflect onto the other Hobbits, enough to disassociate yourself from them? Enough to change your name, not let your relatives know you live, and have Men charge after you with intent to kill?”

His jaw clenched, *damn this Dwarf and his intelligence*. But Bilbo couldn’t help the fondness with that thought, they may not be *his* Dwarrow, but they slowly were becoming part of them.

“Bilbo, my name is Bilbo Baggins, formerly of the Shire, son of Belladonna Took and Bungo Baggins. But if you please, in public call me Nightshade.”

They all nodded, “Master Baggins, then.”

“Bilbo is fine.” Running his hands through his curls, he pursed his lips, “I am rich, I have all the money I could possibly need, and I could live off of it if I wanted to. If I wanted to, I could retreat to my cave and never be seen from the world again... but I cannot. I have something that is very important, something that I must do, but cannot have people knowing of me.”

When Forvari grinned this time, it was mostly teeth, “Ah, so you are working from the shadows.”

Next to him, Dorvari slumped down, groaning, “Mahal, we don’t need another Forvari.” Said Dwarf just smirked, and smacked him on the back of his head, earning a grunt.

His eyebrow raised, “Another Forvari? So are you a thief then?”

“You could say that, in simpler terms. But really, I deal in... information of sorts.”

Baldur snorted, and mockingly said “To put it *simply*, he’s a grifter.”

“Grifter?”

“In essence, I swindle people out of their things, whether it is information, money, or something else, by being charming. And then I disappear, like I never existed.”

The other redhead rolled his eyes, “Charming my arse. Ye didn’t charm the Menace into giving you a job.”

For the first time, Forvari scowled, “The *Lady* is above such things. That is part of the reason why I work for her after all.”

Bilbo frowned, “And are you going to report what has happened here, and who I am to this... Lady? I cannot have my intentions known by anyone unless I trust them to keep quiet.”

“That depends on what your intentions are, and if you can convince me there’s a reason not to.” Forvari’s eyes softened for a moment, “I do like you Bilbo, for as much as you’ve lied to us, you’ve had your reasons. And you saved our lives, so we owe you a debt. My debt is being repaid by listening to you here instead of sneaking off to tell her right away; excluding where you live of course as a contract is a contract. Anything more, there must be a reason.”

He hadn’t really planned on giving away this much, but somehow he had. A part of him thought that perhaps they could help him, that it would be better if he told them. The complete truth wouldn’t work, as much as he wanted to blurt it out to someone, he couldn’t chance it. But his new version, perhaps he could share. “Just as you are paying back your debt to me, you could say I’m doing the same. A few years ago, a terrible winter came, as the Hobbits call it, the Fell Winter.” Bilbo gripped his coat tighter, a phantom chill working its way up his spine. “We didn’t expect it, and it came swiftly. Bringing cold and barren fields,

which we could deal with if we rationed for the most part. What we didn't expect was for the Brandywine River to freeze, and the wolves to come. They tore into smials and Hobbits alike, making their way through the Shire. It was one night that my neighbor's smial was attacked and I picked up my mother's old sword from her adventures to help. Thankfully, my mother and father did not follow me, or know I left until after." In his world, they had, and his father had died protecting him, and his mother faded a year after his coming of age. Here, they did not, as Yavanna had told them they died of grief a scant year later after he was said to be dead.

All the Dwarrow were seated at this point, the fire crackling in the night. Forvari looked resigned, as did the others. Bilbo continued after a pause, "I could hear the cries of my neighbors and I called the wolves to me, gaining their attention. They followed me into the forests, far away from the Shire before they caught me. I was only a lad of twenty-one, and I fought with all the strength I had, but it wasn't enough. I don't know exactly what happened, but I fell into the River and hit my head. When I woke, I realized I had been rescued, but had no clue of who I was. The Dwarrows that found me told me it was amnesia of some sort, and they nursed me back to health as the cold water had done great damage to my lungs. I must have swallowed some, because I had pneumonia for a month.

They saved my life, and we travelled together, as I didn't want to go looking for people that I didn't know. Even if they tried to persuade me to go to the Shire to look, as I was clearly a Hobbit, and they never steered far from there. I regret that now, as after a year when my memories came back to me, I went searching for my parents only to hear they had died a few weeks before." He grimaced, he hated lying, but he was well versed with it now. "I left, going back to my friends, only to find they had been slaughtered by Orcs. My friend... he d-died in my arms..." A tear fell, the grief of Thorin's death gripping him tightly. If only he had *been* there. "I made a promise to myself, to help them then. And I will, even if it's their relatives. But I know that you Dwarrow take a lot to trust someone, as burned as you have been these past decades, and you will not take charity, whatever the reason. So I have become a thief, a shadow, a ghost. I will do what I must to help those in need, as they had once done for me." *I will save them this time!* "I must get my name, as Nightshade, out there, so that perhaps they will eventually trust me when I help them. But in the meantime, my true name and where I live cannot be known, as most may not understand, and come looking for me."

Forvari's eyes glittered once Bilbo finally looked up, a smile coming to his face that looked devious more than anything, "I think... that I believe you Bilbo. Though it may not all be the truth, I can see you really want to help. So I'll put my trust in you, and that is a hard thing to gain," Dorvari and Baldur looked at the redhead, seeing him believe Bilbo, they relaxed and nodded. "And that maybe, I can be of service to you."

"Why would you do that? As you have said, I've lied to you." He asked wearily.

He chuckled, "Well, for one, it'll be damn amusing." Baldur sighed, tugging his beard, and Forvari's brother looked resigned. "For another, my Lady could be of use to you and you to her. I assume you are looking to eventually go to Ered Luin?"

"How did you know that?"

“It was just a hunch, but I definitely know now.” Bilbo groaned, and he continued. “So you’re going to have to know how to get in. And *no one* gets in without my Lady’s say so. And even if you had managed, she would have you spilling your secrets the next night, and then hung, drawn and quartered if she didn’t like what you were doing.”

He shivered, that sounded like a fearsome lady. She must have a huge influence then, to have so many people under her beck and call, as she couldn’t just have spies every where otherwise. And from what he remembered of Thorin telling him, Dwarrowdams were fierce and loyal, just like his— Bilbo’s eyes widened, head whipping up, and blurted, “Your Lady is Princess Dís?!”

An awkward silence followed, and Forvari’s eyes narrowed, “How did you jump to that conclusion?”

“It makes sense, as the Lady must have a huge influence...” He started, working out the steps himself, “You told me yourself that no one would get in without her consent, even if you meant illegally, it would still take a lot of sway with other Dwarrow to make them follow her. You said ‘my Lady’ so obviously all the men are out, unless that was to protect their identity, but I doubt it. The only one I can think of would be Princess Dís, or one of the upper ladies of the court. But I think that the only one that Thorin Oakenshield would trust would be his sister. Not to mention, from... what I have heard by my friends years back, Thorin Oakenshield does not seem to have a tactful bone in his body, meaning that he wouldn’t have a hand in what goes on in the darkest parts of Ered Luin. Princess Dís however, I have heard she is sly, sharp, and has more money than the other Dwarrow in Ered Luin, a perfect person for a Spymaster, and close enough to Master Oakenshield to have the influence to do it. Not to mention, Dwarrowdams are very protective, and she would see protecting Ered Luin as a way of protecting her family. Even now, without a kingdom, Master Oakenshield’s head is worth money, and grudges stay long in the hearts of every race.”

To his surprise, Forvari started laughing. When he stopped, trying not to crack up again at Bilbo’s bewildered face, he said, “I’ll be damned. No one’s ever worked that out before, Outsiders at least but I bet that’s cause you knew some Dwarrow yourself. It’s a not so well kept secret of Ered Luin’s lower levels. Master Oakenshield and their lot don’t know a thing about it, except perhaps Balin, that old bastard’s a smart one, and a good Dwarf to boot. Probably has a hand in it himself.”

“So... I was right?” He felt a little numb, how had he been so lucky to come across these Dwarrow? So willing to help him, granted, after he saved their lives. Also... Dís... Thorin’s *sister*; was going to know about him before he did. That scared him a little, from the tales he had heard from her sons and brother. Though, it did ease his worries about Forvari telling her, as it could indeed help him. Especially if she knew Ered Luin’s comings and goings as well as Forvari said she did. Bilbo cleared his throat, “Regardless, know that it’s the Princess Dís makes it a lot easier to agree with you. I may not have met her, but my Dwarrow had, and if they said she was honorable, then I’ll believe you.”

“Can we get on with this?” Dorvari growled, “My arse is numb from all this sittin’ and the suns starting to rise.”

“Well since you offered Dorvari, you can help me pack up the camp while they finish talking.” Baldur’s smile curved into a smirk at his groan, but they both got up and started on it. There was a lot of grumbling coming from Dorvari’s direction though.

Forvari plopped down next to him, gaining his attention, “I’ll have to send a letter to her when we get to your cave, but you can help me write it, to ease more of your tension. If she gives her approval, I’ll help you. Even if she doesn’t, I’ll still finish your cave-smial thing, as I did sign the contract but other than that it’s out of my hands. You’ll have to explain what exactly you were planning on doing in Ered Luin first.”

Bilbo blushed, “Ahh... I have an idea, but it wasn’t that great yet. You’ll have to see when we get back to the cave.”

A nod, “Alright, let’s get a packin’!” He jumped up, in his usual bright spirits, going over to his brother to help. Well... more like harass him, from the sounds of it. Bilbo shook his head, smiling. That could have gone a lot worse, but for now, he felt like his heart was a little lighter. He had tentative friends, and a common ally in his work, within the first two weeks of coming back. If that wasn’t a bunch of luck, then he didn’t know what was.

He went over to Baldur, packing his own things while avoiding the bodies, and a thought came to him, “Master Baldur, what happened to those dogs?” Their bodies weren’t among the dead.

“Ah, laddie, they ran off after one o’ the Men. He escaped from us a little after ye came out of ‘em woods like a ghost, covered in blood ‘n all that.”

“Oh dear, I hope they’ll be alright.”

Baldur chuckled, “Lad, ye have a soft heart after all, but a spine of mithril. Them dogs’ll be fine, scent’ll lead ‘em back to Bree, if nothin’ else.” He snorted, “An if ye are tryna get yer name out there, lettin’ one go’ll only help in the long run. He’ll be tellin’ stories of the fearsome Nightshade for weeks.”

Luckily, nothing else exciting happened for the remainder of the trip. He had plenty of that the first night. When Bilbo stood in front of the door, the others shared a look that he had finally interpreted as surprise. Why were they always so surprised? *Must be my Hobbit-yness, they may not have actually talked to a Hobbit before this, not that I’m a stunning example of one.* “Here we are,” Bilbo stated as he put the key in and turned, the door swinging open towards him, and he left it open as he waved the Dwarrow inside. “Not much right now, just a cave. But it has a few tunnels that go further back that I’d like to fit into my design.”

They were already investigating the structure of stonewalls, muttering under their breaths here and there. Forvari gave a nod, “Sturdy place here, it’ll work well with your plan.”

“It’ll be a fine establishment after we’re done with it, ye hear?” Dorvari added, as if Bilbo would tell them to leave before they even got started.

Bilbo smiled, "I wouldn't expect anything less." This seemed to mollify him a bit and he gave another grunt before wandering back in the tunnels to map it out. "Lovely fellow, that."

Forvari laughed, "Aye, he's something. Don't be bothered by him, I used to say he was born with a frown on his face." Baldur chuckled along with him and even Bilbo couldn't help the laugh that escaped him.

This is nice, Bilbo thought, smiling at the Dwarf in his cave-smial, I missed this camaraderie. Hobbits back home never understood how adventures, even as short as this, can bring people together.

A hand clapped down on his shoulder, making him sputter to their amusement, "Let's get started." Bilbo was glad they were acting normally again; it had been touch and go after that awkward conversation the first night out of Bree.

A week and a half ago

The Lands of Lothlórien

The Lady of Lothlórien sat back from her basin of water, thoughts swirling of the vision she had been given. The waters still trembled, shaking in its containment.

"Grandmother?" A voice came from a few steps away, she turned to face Arwen, "What troubles thee so?"

"Something has cast a new stone into the waters, and its affects will reach far... perhaps to the edges of Middle Earth. All will feel it." She leaned her head into her hand, eyes narrowed, and then she smiled. "But do not fear Arwen, your worries are for naught."

"I do not understand Grandmother, it worries you, but you tell me not to worry?"

"This stone ripples through, changing things that could not have before, but mayhap it is for the better. I have sat at these waters now for these past two moons, gathering what knowledge I could." Galadriel gazed down once again at the waters, contemplating. "Though this change has come, the future still wishes to flow in the current that was chosen, and is fighting against him, and that is what worries me."

Arwen glided over, standing before her Grandmother, "And who is this stone that changes so much? They must be quite important."

"Indeed, young one." A secretive smile came to her face, "Such a daunting future for one so small."

Her granddaughter looked on in confusion, but she was used to such things and brushed it off. "You are planning something?"

Galadriel laughed, "And I hear I am the one with telepathic powers?"

They shared a smile, “I do not have to have your powers to understand that look on your face.”

“Quite true, my granddaughter.” Galadriel called out, “Haldir,” and when he appeared in the trees above them, quickly and silently like any Marchwarden, she continued, “Ready my horse, I shall be leaving for the Greenwood shortly.” He gave a sharp bow, and disappeared as fast as he had come.

“The Greenwoods? What could you have to do there?”

“I must meet with the Elvenking Thranduil. There is much we must discuss.”

A week and a half ago

Somewhere in the Greenwood Forest

An old man shot up in his bed, ignoring the snort of indignation from the hedgehog sleeping on him. He was dressed in all brown, with a hat and clothes that had seen better days. For the first time in a century, his eyes were clear of the effects of strange fauna, most likely the mushrooms. Radagast the Brown stood, whispering reverently, “Lady Yavanna,” over and over again as he packed his things.

Another snort sounded and he whipped around to face the hedgehog, “No Sebastian! You cannot come with me... this is of great importance.”

One of his smaller birds chirped from the nest on his head. Radagast gave a huff and plucked her off, placing her gently in the other nest on his shelf. “That wasn’t nice Arandell, apologize to him.” The bird buried her head in the nest, and he scowled.

“I have no time for your games, I have been protecting this forest for as long as I have been here, but another thing calls now.” The hedgehog gave him a look, as if to say ‘I’m not impressed’.

Radagast huffed again, putting random things in his temporary bag to place on his sled. “It is much too fast, too fast I tell you! With no warning! The Lady Yavanna has never had another here before, nonetheless to give them her gift! I am unprepared, completely unprepared!”

Sebastian rolled off the bed and nudged his leg, beady eyes looking up at him.

“Yes, yes, I’ll be fine. No need to worry about me! I must go visit this conduit, yes a conduit, not a coconut!” Radagast smiled down at the bird that had chirped, “Even though they are quite delicious, and their juice has interesting proper— No no no!” He shook his head, “I must not get lost again! Conduit, yes conduit. I must go to them, now be safe, stay out of trouble; yes I’m talking to you Sebastian!”

And then he was flying out the door, throwing his things on the sled and grabbed his staff— Radagast blinked and stared at his hand. Staff, where was his staff? “Where was it last? Under my bed? No, no, I found it yesterday, or was it the day before?” Another nudge on his

leg and he looked to see Sebastian glancing back towards where Arandell and her friends were flying it out. "Oh! Thank you my friends," He grasped it and nodded at them, pushing his hat back up when it fell forward

"Now, where are those Rhosgobel rabbits gone off to?" Looking around he realized they had already lined up and gotten onto the sled. "Ah, there you are! Rascals you are, now ready to go?" Without waiting, he climbed on pointing ahead, "Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Dunder, Blitzen, lets be off!"

Chapter End Notes

Haha, yes, i did name his rabbits after Santas reindeer. ;) It just seemed appropriate, lol.

I have not went through and edited, so sorry for extra mistakes, but i had somewhere i have to go! I'll edit it later.

A Not-Hobbit hole is still a Hobbit-y hole, with all comforts included, and maybe a weapon or two

Chapter Notes

A/N: Heyyy, so I was looking more at maps (better ones than I had before) and I meant to go back and change how I said Rivendell was 5 days away, to about 2 or 3. But for now, pretend he said 3 instead of 5.

Keep in mind... I have no freakin' idea about houses, so bear with me.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

A week after arriving at cave

"I don't see why ye need ta go out on yer own lad, ye just a wee one after all, it would nay be right to let ye go off by yerself." Baldur grumbled his lips turned down in a frown. Bilbo rolled his eyes, these Dwarrow were already starting to hover, and it had only been a week or two ago they were questioning his motives! It seems like once they realized he was genuine about assisting other Dwarrow that it finally sunk in that he was young, since he had taken to wearing his hood down around his house. He still had a few inches to grow until he was at his old height, and maybe his face seemed youthful, but he was the farthest thing from being a fauntling. Bilbo had faced a dragon, for Yavanna's sake! True, they didn't know that, and probably won't ever know that, but it was the principal of the thing. Perhaps he should have thought on that more.

"I have been fine in the years since my Dwarrow died, Baldur," they had even given permission to use first names, without any of that Mister/Master stuff, "and I don't see why I need any protectors now. No one is going to know I'm young, and they wont even catch me. This is something that I must do on my own." Before Forvari could interrupt Bilbo carried on, "And no, Forvari, Dís has yet to give her permission, so no you cannot assist me, remember?"

Said Dwarf grumbled, "'S not right is all."

Bilbo pinched the bridge of his nose, "I'll be safe, you silly Dwarrow!"

What had surprised him most was Dorvari's reluctance; he had been the most adamant about not letting him off on his lonesome self. The Dwarf had mumbled and griped for an hour before finally he growled out, "We signed a contract, and if you die then we don't get paid, so therefore you must be protected." Dorvari had huffed, crossing his arms with a great glare on his face staring down at the short Not-Hobbit.

Forvari snorted, while Baldur covered a laugh as a cough, “You great lily-livered lump, just say you’re going to be worried about him. No need for pretenses.”

His face covered in red splotches, steam practically flowing out of his ears, “I ain’t worried! I’m just sayin’ he better be protecting our interests is all, long term investment ‘n such.”

After that, Forvari had teased him probably until Bilbo had gotten back. Baldur had later mentioned that his face had been permanently red while he was on his trip. Although, the Dwarrow banded together when he had come back covered in blood, asking for their help. They had erupted in yells and patted him down for wounds, ignoring his sputtering and attempts to tell them it wasn’t his blood. The grey-bearded Dwarf had glared at him until he had given them the full story, evading his protests until finally he stomped his foot (he was embarrassed he had acted like the faunt he wasn’t supposed to be later).

“Enough!” Bilbo had yelled, silencing them. It was the first time he had raised his voice, and they had wide eyes. “There is a young girl out there that is bleeding, which is where the blood came from! And I need your help taking her back here.” Merely nodding, they followed behind him, glancing at each other to him and murmuring. He had to restrain himself from huffing at their actions, but he had more important things to do. Soon they reached the small clearing, which held a small Man’s child around the age of ten with a broken arm and bite marks on his chest. It looked like a wolf had attacked her, or some wild animal. Bilbo was just glad the young lady was alive and the animal gone from the looks of it.

They carried her back to the main room and Bilbo had administered aid to her. First he washed his hands in the cleanest water he could find, and then cleaned out the wounds before applying ointment and wrapping it with some loose cloths. The girl had whimpered through the ordeal but still hadn’t woken, which was a small miracle. “I don’t know if she lives around here but until she’s better, we’ll have to watch her.”

Finally, when he was done, the Dwarrow had started throwing questions at him, demanding to know what had happened since he had left for Bree. Clearing his throat a couple times, he said, “I suppose it all started the trip back from Bree...”

Bilbo gripped the pack to him as he snuck closer to the camp; this was starting to become a habit whenever he spotted someone on the road. He was a lone traveler after all, and many would take that as an advantage to surround him and steal his stuff. As always, he tried to go along the Great East Road, but not too close, so that he wouldn’t go into the South Downs, or above it to the Weathertop, both of which could be dangerous places. So he tended to spot quite a few travelers.

Blinking in surprise, he stopped short of the light. Surrounding the campfire were a dozen Dwarrow, laughing and singing around the fire. He hadn’t expected them so far East, as their settlements were along the Blue Mountains. Perhaps they had traveled from the Iron Mountains? Regardless of where they were from, he didn’t know what to do. Here were Dwarrow that he could possibly help, but what should he DO?

A small cry broke through the camp and the Dwarrow all grimaced, the tallest one, with a red beard streaked with grey spoke towards the wagon they had, “Is lil’ Karthak not doin’ well

again?”

Another figure stepped out, and Bilbo muffled his shocked gasp. A Dwarrowdam! He could tell from the light dusting of beard on her face that braided up into her long black hair. If she had on armor, he may have mistaken her for another young Dwarf, but she had on a loose shirt, and he could see the swell of breasts. His eyes locked onto the small bundle in her arms, she had a baby dwarfling! But it was crying and squirming, and from the tired look on the Dwarrowdam's face, he had been at it for a while.

“Nay, the fever has not broken,” She whispered, despair creeping through her voice. Everyone looked distraught at the thought, they had already lost too many children as it were, and another lost would not be welcome. A few gave some advice, but they all ended up talking over one another until the leader gave a reprimand that silenced them all. Bilbo couldn't help compare it to Thorin, but while this leader had the power, he didn't have the commanding presence or voice like his Dwarf. Scowling at himself, because they weren't really his, he moved closer to hear better.

“We will reach Bree soon, they will trade for some weapons we have, and get medicine for the wee one.”

“Aye, we'll get the medicine Alfar, but it'll cost us a' arm a' a leg for it,” One said, and then swore something in Khuzdul that Bilbo didn't understand. Alfar, the leader, sighed and sat down, knowing there was nothing to dispute that claim.

Another piped up, “Them Men ne'er give us a fair price!” Cheers of agreement went up and Bilbo felt sickened, but at least he knew what he could do. As the night lengthened, he decided it was time. The Dwarrow were more aware during the dark than other species, so he was extra careful. The Men's camp was practically beginner level stuff compared to this, as the two Dwarrow on watch made sure to circle the camp during random intervals. Eventually he crept up next to the wagon.

Peeking through he saw that the Dwarrowdam and Alfar were wrapped up together, but the only blanket he saw they had was covering the small bundle. It was still chilly during the nights around this time, but it was obvious they had given it up for their child. When he stepped inside a creak sounded throughout, and he paused, breath stalling. After a moment passed without them waking he continued on, gently setting his pack on the ground. The child was swaddled in a basket, breath rattling as it slept fitfully.

Taking out some of the medicine he had bought from Bree and mixed into ointments Óin had taught him, he rubbed it gently on the dwarfling's chest and under his nose, making sure not to wake him. The smell of lavender and the other herbs he had mixed wafted up and made his nose twitch. Once finished with that, he placed the ointment on the box chest next to him and pulled a letter from his coat. Bilbo had written it while he was waiting, knowing he wouldn't have the chance after going into the camp. Next he grabbed his second blanket, and placed it under the ointment and letter. The letter was signed with his name 'Nightshade' and a small card with the design he had sketched onto it (the same one on his knives). This would not only begin his reputation, but also establish something that made people know it was him. The small bag of gold from Forn so many weeks ago was placed next to it, the rest of what was left over from his trip.

Feeling a bubble of pride in his chest, he smiled, and then quickly disappeared into the night, knowing that while he couldn't yet help his Dwarrow, he had helped their people. He could only hope that the family would take his advice on the medicine, although he knew they were a suspicious folk. Finished doing all he could, he moved on through the night, wanting to be far enough away the Dwarrow's couldn't find him.

“And ah,” Bilbo cleared his throat again, taking a sip of his water, scowling at the thought of what happened, “After that I had taken more of a northern route than I would have normally. Which was lucky I guess, because I would not have heard of the group of Men that had set their animal on a thieving girl. She hadn't even stolen anything but bread and those... those...”

“Beardless bastards,” Forvari interrupted.

“Yes, yes, those bastards, they... how they could do that to this poor, starving girl is beyond my comprehension!”

“Aye, them Men not carin' fer their wee ones 's a shame. If a Dwarf had done it 'n got found, they would a been shaved and exiled.” The two brothers nodded grimly, it was always hard hearing about neglect and such harsh actions towards little ones.

Bilbo wilted, sinking to the ground next to the girl, “I hope her family is out there somewhere, otherwise, well, I cannot have it on my conscience to leave her by herself!”

“Aye, you two can have play dates, she's around your age 'n all,” Forvari had snickered then promptly dodged the roll of cloth that was thrown at him.

One week or so after Bilbo & co arrived at the cave-smial

My Lady,

Interesting news from Bree, we arrived there a month ago, and a while into our stay we met the most intriguing fellow. He has hired us to build his house, which I cannot disclose its location due to a contract – he's a wily one, and even figured out your identity from a few words spoken between us and knowledge from his previous encounters with Dwarrow. Before that, not even a day into our travels to his home we ran into trouble in the form of a dozen men that believed us to have stolen from them. He had even scouted ahead, and even I could not see him or hear him – showing his prowess in such a way that I have not experienced since my old teacher, you know the one? When he came back from scouting he left on Baldur's orders, but to our surprise when we were confronted, he came out and drew off half of the lot of them. Saved our lives, and then didn't ask for a thing for it! Didn't even seem to know we owed him anything...

Nightshade is his name, and though he shows the deadliness of such a name (he had survived the six men sent after him!), there is softness and kindness to him. After the skirmish, he sat down and patched some of my brother's wounds once we talked. He wanted neither money nor thanks for what seemed to be top-notch medicine. This is another reason why I have decided to trust him, as though he lied of his true name (another thing I cannot disclose in a letter – for his peoples protection) there was no malice in those actions. In turn, he trusted me enough to tell me the reasons why he asked for our help in his home, and why he assisted us with the men when he could have run away.

As it was, years ago, when he left the Shire after an attack (wolves, during that dreadful winter) he was saved by a band of Dwarrow. I do not know yet, if they were from Ered Luin or another smaller settlement, but they were from the Blue Mountains, that I am sure of. He travelled with them for a year, gaining their trust and friendship before Orcs killed them. Thus, he has been working from the shadows to repay the debt that he owes them, though it is less from just repaying it, and more because he desires to. The pain in his eyes is true, and he has indeed experienced loss, even for not being a lad of thirty-three yet. Yes, that was correct, he is under thirty-three, which is apparently the coming of age for his race. Nightshade is an enigma, but I am willing to trust him, which says much to his character.

As he has found out what I am, and who you are, I have made a proposition to help him. He says that he is planning on going to Ered Luin eventually, to see what he can do to better the Dwarrow of our settlement... and I believe him. Nightshade now knows that without your approval, he will not be gained entry, legally or illegally. From the information I have gathered, his race is excellent at plants and gardening, and will freely give us instructions and guidance in that area. In fact, on the way here he made a budded flower bloom after touching it! I'm not sure if it his race, or simply his, but there is a feeling to him that is different. I don't think he even noticed the effects he has on the wildlife. Even the woods seem to come alive around him. Not only that, but I believe he could be a fine addition to our spy route, seemingly no one knows of his location where he is making his house. It could be a great safe house, and his knowledge on medicine seems to be quite exquisite despite his humbleness on the subject. Dorvari's wounds have healed in the week that it took to reach his place. I suspect time spent with some elves, as his sword is of elven make, and he has another two where he planned for his house to go. This could explain some of his medicinal mastery. His letter is tied along with mine, as he also wanted to address you personally. I will stay longer even if you do not agree so to work on his house, and probably won't arrive in Ered Luin till next year.

Now onto what I found in Bree...

F

Dear Lady,

You have not heard of me before, though I have heard of your great loyalty and strength. I have come across the most lovely of fellows, and I have found a sort of friendship in them, as I hope they have of me. Once, I had other Dwarrow friends, closer than even in my own race and family, and held them in the highest esteem. Now, as I am sure you are a busy lady, I will

cut to the chase. Of those I have made friendship with, they spoke of you, and I knew that I wanted to help all that I could. You may wonder why, and I suspect our mutual friend has already spoken of the reasons I gave to him, but it is because of a desire to better those that are kin of my deceased Dwarrow. But... that is not the only reason, as I am a selfish fellow. For years I have wandered, my home gone with the death of my Dwarrow and parents, and searched for a new one. Though I build one now, I suspect that it will still not feel like home. So you see, my Lady, I have found a home amongst the friendship of Dwarrow before, and though it may not happen again, I still seek it amongst you. I want, more than anything, to find my home.

F and I have spoken on what I could offer you, if you grant me access to your settlement. And even without it, I will still give you all my knowledge on farming, gardening, and plants. Those things you should have no matter what, for the benefit of your people. I believe no one should go hungry because of misinformation on such things, as I have felt the pangs of starvation before, and that is not something I would wish on even my worst enemy. Once my home is done, it will have more than twenty rooms available to sleep in, and my own personal medicinal room and apothecary, it would be a good stop for your spy network on the way over the mountain, as I am sure that most Dwarrow would be sure to avoid Rivendell. I would not charge for stay, as they would be guests, and what kind of host would I be to do as such? Quite rude, I say. F had explained to me that this was quite unusual, but to me, having the chance to meet such interesting fellows and hear stories of adventures, is payment enough. If they stay here, they would have good food, a clean place to stay, and medicine if they wish it. And if they choose to help with hunting, or anything, then it is of their free will. But, if they stay here, they must sign a contract that binds them to keeping knowledge of my smial (home) to themselves. I will be continuing to work, and may gain enemies soon that I would rather them have no knowledge of it.

If you give your approval, we have written up two small contracts. One for the duration of my work for you, as a safe house and informant in exchange for access to Ered Luin. I would check in with you before I get in and before I leave, of course, as it is your city, and I have no doubt that you would still have eyes on me. The other is for anyone coming this way that you believe will have need of my safe house. There are no details on how to get there, merely a meeting place marked that I will check every few days. And if you send me a letter beforehand that someone is coming, I will check every day. This will not be available till this winter, from our estimations of how long the smial will take.

Sincerely,

Master Nightshade

Dís sat back in her chair, eyebrows raised almost to her hairline. This was certainly not what she had expected from her informant Forvari. He was to check in once he left Bree, and it had taken so long that she feared the worst. On one hand, it was a relief to hear from him, on another, this created a whole new slew of thoughts. Her fingers tapped on her desk while she stroked the beard on her chin. It was more of a short beard, with her sideburns grown longer and braided back under her ears and into the two side braids that matched her brothers. Other thicker black colored braids pulled the top of her hair back into a tight bun, with it loose on the sides. Dís's dark blue eyes shifted to the letter that had hidden behind Forvari's.

Somehow, even through a letter, this man –more like boy, seemed to exude a kind of sincerity. It was as unsettling as it was intriguing. “Hmm... what to do... what to do...” If he was smart enough to figure out her identity through a simple conversation with her best *grifter* informant, then Master Nightshade was indeed intelligent. But was he intelligent enough to fake sincerity enough to fool Forvari, and herself? She did not believe herself infallible, but unlike Thorin, Dís had always had a way with people. While Frerin had been openly charming and friendly but without a subtle bone in his body, Dís was sly, and likable in a way that made people underestimate her and get comfortable. She had a knack for knowing people, and knowing what they were going to do.

This was definitely something she was interested in, for a safe house that close to the mountain would be the first; since it was near Rivendell and most Dwarrow were not comfortable living that close to elves. Not only that, but to have free meals, medicine, and rooms? It almost seemed like a dream come true, and Dís was certainly not used to such generous propositions. It simply didn't happen like that. Although she trusted that Forvari was also a good judge of character, she would need more information. If this Nightshade fellow were as he said, then he would end up with a reputation sooner or later. And information was her specialty. Dís smirked; she had the perfect person too, as he was due to depart for the West today.

A knock sounded on her wardrobe. Shuffling the letters into a pile and folding them, she opened the door to it and pushed aside her furred coats. The redhead grinned at her and stepped through, but not before giving her a wink. Dís huffed a laugh and rolled her eyes. He was incorrigible, and she could understand why her friend had such a hard time with him. Not that he knew the redhead was working under her command, or she would never hear the end of it.

“My Lady,” he gave a mocking bow. “I come to give you the daily report before I leave westward.” A small booklet was placed on her desk and she nodded. Noticing the other letters on her desk he raised a braided brow, “News?”

“Indeed, from Forvari. Rascal sends his regards, a week after his report was due.”

A smirk, “He did learn from the best.”

She pushed the letters towards him, “Read.” As he did, his eyebrows raised even higher than hers had, disbelief in his countenance.

“Mahal's balls, this is a goldmine, if it's truthful. From the pattern and choice of words, even down to this Master Nightshades writing style, it seems genuine. Although it makes me feel better that he's admitted to being selfish. Nobody does such things without a motive.” Then he groaned, and looked at her, “You're planning on sending me there aren't yeh?”

“Why, I appreciate you being so cooperative.” Dís chuckled at his put out expression. “And Nori... do be careful. Dwalin's on guard duty for the East Gate.”

Nori groaned again, “You menace, you did that on purpose.”

She hid a smile behind her folded hands, “Well, you are such *great* friends. I’m sure you’ll like to say goodbye,” her eyes twinkled, “and he’s had such a relaxing day, why not check to make sure he’s still awake? Guarding is a boring job after all.”

“Aye,” He grinned now, “He’ll miss me so much he’ll probably want to chain me up to keep me from leaving.” A wink followed that statement as he slipped into the wardrobe again. Dís snorted, that was one way to put it. Their rivalry had the added bonus of giving her a reason to ream into Dwalin while keeping him and those under his command on their toes. It was a win-win situation.

Two weeks after the girl was found

Bilbo hummed to himself, following along the animal trails that lead to his cave-smial. It was about a month into their construction of his cave-smial, and it was going quite well. They had been of great help, Bilbo couldn’t even imagine trying to gather as much wood or stone as they had and carrying it. As it turned out, Baldur was originally a miner, who eventually got into blacksmithing to support his family more and Dorvari was a blacksmith by trade. Those two mainly helped carve into the rock where it was uneven and unfit for Bilbo and Forvari to place the wooden foundation. They had just placed the foundation at the end of the first week, and started on the insides, such as creating ways for smoke to leave the cave, daylight to get in, and a rudimentary plumbing system. It turned out to be an odd mix of wood and stone, blending throughout the structure.

Baldur and Dorvari expanded more than he thought they would, creating rooms that branched off from the natural tunnels in the cave. There were over twenty rooms, all of various sizes depending on where they could carve. He made sure to have at least one Man sized room, and fourteen Hobbit sized bedrooms (and *no* he was not thinking about the thirteen Dwarrow that would hopefully visit him in the future). Also, two pantries (not as grand as his over three in Bag End), and an herbal apothecary room where he will store all the dried herbs that he had collected on his way here. Attached to that room will be his mini-clinic. When he had left for Rivendell in his past life, he had grown fluent in the elves’ language. This enabled him to study all of the healing, geography, and history books to his content until it was eventually time to leave for the Undying Lands. Elrond had become his good friend in those days, and a part of him missed the quiet peace of the elves’ sanctuary.

For now, where they slept and ate was in the main entrance of the cave, and was the first room to be smoothed out with the foundation lain. They had even done the wooden floors in this room, which had just been finished the other day. Bilbo had sanded the floors and smoothed them out himself embellishments would come later. Candles were strewn around the room when the door wasn’t open to give more light, and they could work later in the day too. Most of the wax had come from animal fat from what they had been eating, and Bilbo had been the one to make them after a few gruff instructions from Dorvari. More blankets were spread out on the floors, with some pillows that Bilbo had bought on his trip to Bree. A couple days after they had gotten back, and they went through the cave to see what they needed, he had been sent back.

Baldur needed a couple more tools that he hadn't had, that could be bought there. They needed more lights, since they hadn't had enough animal fat at that time, and a couple other things. Bilbo had also wanted to start his reputation more. So a few days in, and he had left the Dwarf in his cave-smial to continue to work while he set out. Originally Forvari had wanted to go along with him, saying that he was sneaky as well, but Bilbo had refused. The others needed his help more than Bilbo did. He remembers them protesting with a mixture of fondness and exasperation, he was a grown Not-Hobbit despite appearances, thank you very much.

The girl he had found on his way back had yet to wake, and her fever had gone down a couple days ago. Bilbo had been frantic when a week in to healing the young one's wounds it had become inflamed and her body hot to the touch. The Dwarf fretted over the girl as much as they did for Bilbo, since he taken to caring for the girl through the night until it had went down. A shout came from the direction of the cave and Bilbo burst into a run, heading towards it. Forvari was grinning and waving him in, "Come Bilbo, the girl's eyes are open!"

Chapter End Notes

So... another OC! And this time, a young girl. Sorry about all the skipping around... but hopefully you enjoyed!

The Hope of the World Is In Our Children

Chapter Notes

IMPORTANT A/N: So Veronica, an awesome reviewer pointed out I was stupidly (she/he said it a lot nicer lol) using Ered Luin as the name for the settlement. Soooo, since going back and fixing that would be a pain (yes I'm lazy) I'm going to pull the 'its fanfic' card and say that there was an abandoned village named Ered Luin after the Western mountain range where the Dwarrow settled. It's in-between Belegost and the Grey Havens. And we aren't really sure where they lived anyways (at least from my research)... I mean speculation is the ruins of Belegost and Nogrod, but I'm making them a little South of that. It actually fits better with some of my plots. So just assume Belegost and Nogrod are now resettled with people that split away from Thorin's group, and south of that in 'Ered Luin' is where a mixture of the Blue Mountain folk and Longbeards (Thorin's/Durin's Folk) live.

This may kill you guys out there that are sticklers... but I'm sorry, I only watched the movies... *shrugs*

Also, It is still currently TA 2915 (four or so years after the Fell Winter) – if you remember in the first chapter this is when Yavanna says the date is (26 yrs before the quest)

Battle of Azanulbizar - TA 2799

Fall of Erebor - TA 2770

Quest of Erebor – TA 2941

P.S. – some of the spelling in this is intentional. As in a flaw that the character has.

I apologize, not much Bilbo in this.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Mirkwood/Greenwood

“It has been many years since I traveled this way.” The Lady of Lothlórien stated nostalgically. Glancing around at the tall trees that once stood majestically, and with a grace about them were now debilitated and withered, evil gathered around them. It saddened her that this was the state the trees were in. Part of it was the elves' own ignorance and pride standing in their way to try and find outside solutions. Another part was her own hope that Thranduil would come to see the error of his ways, which she hoped to rectify now.

Though she may be the famed lady of the woods, one of the greatest elves left in this part of the world, it did not absolve her from her mistakes or mean that she did not make them in the

first place. And this was one of them. Leaving Thranduil and his people to wither and seep into the darkness she could feel in these woods. Before, Galadriel was content, knowing that eventually he would find his hope once again in his son's generation. That was no longer an option now, for a small stone had cast its way into her pond, and she could stand idly by no longer. Too long had she herself seen darkness taking this part of the woods and ignored it.

"Haldir," She stated slowly, turning her brightly knowing eyes onto him. He stood stiffly in his saddle now, awaiting her commands. Haldir had been wondering why he was one of the only Marchwarden's allowed with her. There were a few normal guards, but none to the caliber he thought should travel as her personal guards into the lands of Mirkwood. "This is where we part ways, my friend."

Confusion was evident in his countenance. "...My Lady?" He wanted to know what she meant, where did she plan for him to go that was more important than being one of her swords?

Galadriel laughed lightly, "There are many more important things happening than to protect me. I am not as weak as some would think." Red rose on his cheeks and she knew that he didn't mean it in that way. "I know, Haldir. But this is something that is quite crucial for the future. You will take the Old Forest Road here, and travel East towards the town of Esgaroth, otherwise known as Lake Town."

"Esgaroth? What is of importance in that drivel of a town?" He sniffed haughtily, with a frown growing on his face. "I know it is not right for me to question a great Lady such as yourself, but that town is..."

"A wise woman once said to me, *'I have been finding treasures in places I did not want to search. I have been hearing wisdom from tongues I did not want to listen. I have been finding beauty where I did not want to look. And I have learned so much from journeys I did not want to take. I have learned that miracles are only called miracles because they are often witnessed by only those who can see through all of life's illusions. I am ready to see what really exists on other side, what exists behind the blinds, and taste all the ugly fruit instead of all that looks right, plump and ripe.'* It is usually in the dark that we find where the light is coming from."

Haldir looked bewildered, for what kind of great thing could he find in such a back-watered little town full of capricious Men? "I do not understand. What is it you wish for me to do?"

Galadriel hummed, thinking back on the flashes she had seen. "I shall not advise you on more, for I fear what will and will not happen if I do. This path you must tread by yourself, for any more interference and all will be lost, but not enough, and the outcome will be the same. But I part with this; Children are the hope of the world, with them, we shall rise to new great feats, or new depths of darkness."

A wave of her hand and a guard brought forth extra rations and a few things she had packed before hand. Haldir looked as if he wanted to demand to stay, but would never disobey his Ladies' orders, even if he wanted to. So he merely nodded and took his other packs off his horse's saddle to put on his back, which he was to leave with their group. When he turned to walk through the forest path Galadriel's telepathic voice made him pause, "*Haldir, do not go*

with anger in your heart, lest it fester and grow. Come back to us when new life comes to Greenwood."

And then he was off. To do what, and for how long, he did not know. Nor did he expect to know the truth of it until he was ready, as was usual with his Lady's will. He still couldn't help the bitterness it caused, why was he sent off to such a town? Was he not worthy of being by his Ladies' side? Haldir shook off his doubts, all he had to do was wait until Greenwood was restored and then he would be back with his trees. Elves' were born to wait, time had no meaning to him, what was a few mere years?

At the Cave-Smial

Bilbo hurried from the fire with a newly made cup of tea. The girl had woken for a while before falling back into slumber, only after giving her name, 'Gil' she'd gotten out in a half-daze, before falling back asleep, exhausted. Forvari rolled his eyes good-naturedly at Bilbo's frantic rushing when he came in the room again. "Calm yourself Bilbo, she's fine and the fever is all cleared up."

He wrung his hands, looking over her. Finally, Forvari gave a huff and led him to the floor to sit. It was all for naught when the girl shot up in the bundle of blankets with a gasp, making Bilbo jump up and move to her side. "For the love of Mahal!" He muttered under his breath, but gave the wild-eyed girl a small smile when she looked at him.

"W-Who are you?!" She gripped the blanket closer to her chest. Wild grey eyes flicked between Bilbo and Forvari, who were the only ones in the room. Her hair was like spun gold, glimmering in the light of the candles with hints of red mixed into it. When Bilbo's eyes melted at the sight of her fear, and stepped more into the light, she stopped trembling. "Y-You! I... I remember you..." Gil's eyes brightened in hope, "You saved me from t-that dog!"

Bilbo nodded, and slowly stepped up to her bedside. Gesturing at the hot tea, "Here you go, it's nice and warm for your throat. I can image you've had a trying few days young lady."

Her nose wrinkled, "I ain't no lady. I'm a warrior!" Forvari snickered at Bilbo's bewildered look.

"Why... of course you are. Now what is a warrior like yourself doing so far away from your home?"

Her whole countenance crumbled, eyes going down to her lap in dismay. "I..."

"Come now," Bilbo gently sat at the side of her bed of blankets in the main room. "We need to know where they are so we can take you back. You'd like that right?" Gil bit her lip, glancing warily at Forvari and back at him. "Oh don't mind him. He's my friend."

Forvari stood, and bowed, "Forvari, son of Dorv, at your service." He gave a wily smirk and a wink, making her smile slightly.

“He helped me carry you back to my home, but if he makes you uneasy, I can tell him to leave.”

“N-No... it’s okay. I just—,” another lip bite, “He looks like the people that took me from my home, but um, they were slimmer.” Forvari flinched, and Bilbo gasped. The redhead Dwarf stood, giving them both a solemn nod before retreating to the back rooms to help the others. The girl’s lip wobbled, “I’m sorry... I know he’s your friend so it wasn’t him.”

He gripped her hand, “Oh my dear girl. There’s nothing you need to worry about. I think he understands more than you think, and knows that it’s just easier without him here for now. Now, I think it’s about time I introduced myself. It seems in my old age my manners are slipping.”

Giggling, she tugged on his curled hair, “You aren’t old.”

“I’m old up here,” He said, pointing to his head and then heart with a smile. “My name is Nightshade, son of Belladonna, at your service. But let’s keep that a secret, shall we?”

Her eyes widened, “N-Nightshade?! It can’t be you!” Bilbo blinked in surprise, surely his name hasn’t spread that much? “Some of the Men we met up with were muttering about you! Th-The ones who took me. Said you were evil... but you’re s-so nice?” Gil’s face scrunched up in confusion.

Evil? What in Yavanna’s name was going on! And more importantly, Men and Dwarrow working together? “How about you start at the beginning?”

Gil nodded, “Um... It was nighttime when they attacked. I was staying up late to— to um... finish my chores,” Bilbo gave a raised eyebrow, but merely let her continue, “I wasn’t able to scream when one of ‘em grabbed me from behind. I was knocked out. I didn’t see what happened, and woke a while later when I was tied up.”

“And you said it was Dwarrow? A race that looks like my friend Forvari? Around his heights and with beards? What color hair?”

“Y-Yes. Dark hair, but it was already night so it was hard to tell. They were the only ones that snuck in, but they traveled for a day or so before meeting up with some very mean Men south of where I woke up before. I remember cause my Da taught me some tracking last summer! They were the ones sayin’ mean things about a Mister Nightshade. About him robbing and killing some Men?”

Bilbo flushed and cleared his throat, “Well, I only rob mean Men and others, I wouldn’t hurt anyone that wasn’t trying to hurt me or my friends.”

“I know, Mister Nightshade, you saved me.” Grey eyes widened, “That’s what my Da’s been Seeing! He said I had to trust the shades of night and it’d save my life!”

“Seeing?”

“Oh, um...” She blushed, “Well, my Da gets some feelin’s and sight of things. Most of the time it’s random feelings, like there’s gonna be a drought that year, or somethin’. That’s why he’s the right hand man of the Chieftain!”

“That is quite impressive. I’m sure he’s worried about you.” What he wouldn’t have given for that gift during his last Quest. Perhaps it could have— *no*, that was in the past now. He has the future to look forward to now.

“I’m not sure if he knows I’m gone... He was due to leave on some business for the Chieftain early that morning.”

“We’ll get you back home young warrior, not to worry,” He gave her a wink that made her relax a little. “Hm, so if you were captive of these Dwarrow and Men, do you know why they wanted you? And if any others were taken?” His eyebrows were furrowed now, this was not looking good. Who would take a child from her village and why? The only things that came to mind of *why* were ransoming, or... *slavery*. Just the thought made him sick to his stomach.

“They said somethin’ about sabotoughin’ a meeting I think? And makin’ sure the evi-
evidence was placed. Why were they talking about dancing? Is that something these...
Dwarrow do?”

“Sabotaging?” He decided to ignore her question for right now, but what evidence could they have planted that would sabotage a meeting? Something that had to do with this child being taken.

She nodded briskly, “Ya, that’s the right word! Sabotaging a meeting ‘tween some other Dwarrow? But it was only me they took, didn’t see anyone else. I escaped by usin’ a lock picking thing my friend taught me when they were arguing.”

“They wanted you so they could sabotage a meeting between Dwarrow? You, a human girl?” That made no sense at all. For what would a Dwarrow’s meeting have to do with Men? But then... why were there Men involved in the kidnapping also?

Gil laughed, “I’m not just human! I’m Dúnedain!”

Dwarrow, Men, and now Dúnedain... what in the world was going on?!

She blushed, not noticing his absolutely flabbergasted state of mind, “I’m sorry! You interduced yourself and I got so caught up in your name and haven’t fully done so. I’m Gilraen, daughter of Dírhael and Ivorwen, at your service.”

...*GILRAEN?*!

“I...” Bilbo gulped, “Nope.” And then promptly fainted.

Tauriel was not well liked. It was a fact, like saying the sky was blue, and the stars were beautiful. The only friend she had was Legolas, Thranduilson and Prince of the Woodland Realm. Which was what made it so Valar damned awkward that he was in 'love' with her. Oh she knew of it all right, she just chose to ignore it. Because of such feelings he held, or *thought* he held, for her it made it tense between King Thranduil, the palace, and Tauriel. It was like her arms were tied with two different ropes, one Thranduil, the other, Legolas, and they were pulling and pulling until one day she would be stretched too thin.

The rest of the Silvan elves didn't like her because she held favor with Legolas, and thus they thought by extension Thranduil. And Thranduil didn't like her not just because she was Silvan, but also *because she held favor with Legolas*. It was like being stuck between a rock and a hard place. Thranduil was a fickle, capricious thing. One could have his favor one moment and then be doomed to the lowest duty the next for some slight. But Tauriel was used to not being liked, and as such, did not care for what her fellow elves thought of her as long as they respected and followed her decisions as Captain of the Guard.

It was what she had worked for since she was a young elf, what she had dreamed of, and fought to gain. But now that she was Captain, she wondered if this was what she wanted all along, or if there was something more. For as much as she loved her home, the way the stars shined brightly through the clouds here... the darkness was slowly consuming it. Tauriel fought as hard as possible, sending out already tired elven parties to fight off the ever growing population of vermin in the forest, going out herself when no one else could. It was what she had dedicated her life to.

She fought and fought and fought. But nothing ever changed. All they were doing was defending their lands, never pushing further to the root of the cause. Every time she tried, she was shot down, and it... *aggravated* her.

"My King, news from the south." She said once she clasped her hand over her heart and bowed once, only going as low as she had to for it to be respectful.

Thranduil's eyes washed over her like a bucket of ice water, frigid, "Speak." It was curt and to the point. There was nothing other than disdain in those cold cut gems, peering down at her like she was the scum of the earth. It rankled her, for she was the best at what she did, and yet... she would never be good enough. He had already seen her and found her wanting, just because she was a lowly Silvan elf.

"A Lothlórien elf was seen passing through the Old Forest Path, going East."

At this, some spark of interest shone. "A Lothlórien elf? What do they desire in my realm?" He frowned minutely, "Who knows what they will get up to otherwise. Send a guard platoon to this elf, get their reasons for passing through and have them escorted to the edge but if they fight detain them. One or the other, I care not. Just resolve this *issue*."

Her lips thinned for a millisecond before smoothing to her emotionless mask. This was not justice; this was not what she wanted to gain when she got the position of Captain of the Guard. Who was this guarding? Surely not their realm? This was only guarding the sense of bitter jealousy and hatred that Thranduil held onto from an age in the past. What Tauriel had found in these past few hundred years as Captain, was that most elves held onto their sense of

righteousness, believing themselves infallible and removed from such petty squabbles of the mortals. In reality, elves could be more narrow-minded than most. Excessive hubris would be their downfall. As it was already.

“As you order it, so it shall be.” She paused, and when she did not leave he stared at her, eyebrow raised. “For the other matter. Spiders are growing bolder, in number and actions. We have cut them down again and again, but they keep coming. I fear that if we do not take action soon, strike at the heart of the problem that we—,”

“As the Captain of the Guard you will protect our borders and the lands within it. Is Dol Guldur in our lands?” Thranduil said the last question in a sweeter tone that was dripping with condescension and made Tauriel frown. She didn’t even have to say that it was coming from Dol Guldur for him to know where the heart of the problem lay.

“No but—,”

“Then we shall have nothing to do with it. Those are not our affairs; the outside world is not ours to worry for. Our people have endured, and will continue to endure, *here*.”

They had danced to this tune many times before, and probably will many times in the future, but that did not make her any less impassioned about it. A rock and a hard place indeed. She would follow his orders of course, but Tauriel was not known for giving up on something she thought was right. With a swift bow she left. *What shall be the catalyst? Will it be when we can no longer endure as he so wishes? When these walls crumble down upon him, will he then see the error of his ways? Time is a cruel teacher, and will not wait for him.*

Sighing quietly, once she finished giving the King’s orders she stepped into her chambers. Turning around she jumped at the sound, whipping out her daggers quicker than the person could react, and had him against the wall, knife at his throat. “What in all the stars...?”

A smile twitched on her friends face, “Nice to see your reflexes are as fast as ever, Tauriel.”

Another sigh left her lips, and she slipped the knives back into their sheathes. Hopefully he wasn’t seen, or else interactions with King Thranduil would turn colder than they already were. As if reading her mind, “No one spotted me, as if I would make that mistake after the last time.” Tauriel winced, that was not a good time, and had almost gotten her demoted from her new position (at the time) as Captain.

“Weren’t we never to speak of that again?” Her delicate eyebrow rose.

He snorted, something that had once shocked her that a prince like him could do, “Yes, just like you weren’t to speak of the time with the Dorwinion wine and boots to my father...”

Scowling, she placed her bow on the ground near her bed and took to unstrapping her belt. “It was only in retaliation. You knew that when you asked me to the last Feast of Starlight to ward off all the other suitors I’d get back at you. The King gave me kitchen duties for three months after that.”

Legolas smirked, “You’re the only elf I know of that hates kitchen duty.”

"It is madness! Give me a bow, blade, and a battlefield and I will dance my way through it, but a kitchen is chaos incarnate!" Tauriel glared at him when he laughed, "Don't you dare laugh at me for that. You turn tail at the sight of a pretty elven maiden suitor batting her eyelashes at you."

A grimace settled on his features, "Indeed, that is something that I will flinch away from proudly. They are like vultures circling their prey, and I am the dead carcass." It was true that elves usually married once, and for love. But he was a Prince of the Woodland Realms, and they wanted to further their own station.

"My, you're turning morbid in your old age."

"You're older than me." He stated, a smile playing at the edges of his mouth. "Then again, you've always been quite morbid, haven't you?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about, Legless. And it is a mere four years, hardly anything."

"I'll have you know that horrid nickname will not prevail." She had been taunting him with that nickname ever since she bested him in training when they were young by tripping him repeatedly. It wasn't his fault that his youth had been spent trying to overcome his graceless long limbs. Thankfully, grace had come with age, and no one was able to tell the troubles of his youth by looking at him now.

"I can't wait until you get a spouse, and then I will tell him or her all your little secretive stories." She laughed, but stopped when his didn't ring along with hers. Instead, he was looking at her, with soft eyes that didn't belong looking like that at her.

He pulled away from the wall he had still been leaning on, taking a step towards her and she a step back. "Tauriel... you must know—,"

"No," She held her hand up, "Do not."

"But—," His hand brushed out the grasp hers. Legolas made a strangled sound in the back of his throat, eyes sad. "Why can I never speak of it? Just once?"

"Just once will be more than it should be. For what you want, cannot and will not happen." Tauriel's hand was still in his, but while his was gripping tightly, hers was loose. It was like a reflection of their feelings, him grasping for her, while she slipped away.

"My father has no right to—,"

"Your *father* is King. And I am a Silvan elf under his command. He has every right. But that is not what I speak of Legolas..." She looked up at him, green eyes brightly shining, "You are my first and only *friend*, and I will not trade that for all the stars in the sky. Not for anything."

Something flashed through his eyes, before nodding and pulling back. Then his face settled into determination and she sighed internally. Legolas would not give up that easily. "I will see

you on the morrow, Tauriel.” When he finally left she slumped onto her bed, throwing her arm over her eyes.

He was like her brother, a love so deep into her heart that nothing could break it... but it was not passionate in the sense that she would feel towards her love. She had almost shouted at him that it wasn't because of his father, but somehow, she knew that he still thought with his father's approval that he could marry her. Tauriel laughed bitterly, it was her own heart that was the problem, not Thranduil. Did he not get that she did not love him back?

She turned on her bed so she could see the twinkling of the stars through her window. “What I would give to walk among the stars. Would it be everything I ever dreamed? Or would I fall back down, to be cradled by the earth and live amongst the darkness again?” For she was just a lowly Silvan elf... surely the stars only took the ones that shined the brightest.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: The quote is from Suzy Kassem, all credit to her (I took out a little bit of it too)

Also, when I was watching the movie and it was the Thranduil and Tauriel scene it seemed like she had been saying that for a long time. So it seems very similar to the scene, and I even took some of the wording, so props to Peter Jackson.

Tauriel is an awesomely conflicted character... so yeah, she kinda stole a lot of the limelight here.

Heavy lies the head that wears the crown

Chapter Notes

A/N: Ahahaha, yeahhh... it's been a month or two, sorry~ been busy tryna find a job and working on freelance projects. ;) Can't believe I almost have 500 kudos from only 5 chapters...? Like... I'm amazed and so happy! Love you awesome readers!

If it helps... THERES THORIN, KILI, FILI, AND BALIN IN THIS ONE!!! (Though not much) But no Bilbo, my bad.

I think you guys'll be a bit shocked, cuz this showdown is gonna be a bit different than you think. (I love shocking you guys in case you didn't notice) ;D

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ered Luin (the settlement) in the Blue Mountains

"FILI! KILI!" A deep voice boomed through the hallways. The two in question gulped, glanced at each other and then promptly scampered off. They didn't get very far before a strong arm snagged them up by their scruffs and yanked them back. Yelps escaped from them momentarily. Durin blue eyes stared at them, "What in Mahal's name *were you thinking?!*" Thorin dragged them into a side room, not wanting any eavesdroppers to hear him scolding them. It was not for other's ears.

"Well... Uncle, you see..." Fili started tenuously, "we were... um..." Those intimidating eyes bore into his, making him lose his train of thought.

Kili jumped in, trying to save his brother, "we, um, weren't?" Fili groaned and pinched the base of his nose; his brother never did end up helping.

"That's right. You weren't thinking!" Thorin snarled, shaking them. "Pranking the dignitaries from Belegost! I have taught you better, have I not? Do you know what that could have done? Do you?!"

Fili glanced down in sorrow, but Kili just puffed up, looking proud of what they had done before pouting. "We were just trying to liven things up Uncle! They're so stuffy, those Broadbeams and Firebeards from Belegost, so unlike the ones here. Like we've done something wrong settling next to them!" Kili scowled. "They look at us like we're scum! And-And they..." He trailed off, his saddened eyes looking to the floor and his shoulders slumped.

This time, Fili spoke up, his eyes alight with anger, and his mouth was twisted into a grimace, "They made fun of Kili's lack of beard again. Saying he was half-Elf spawn and that his prowess with a bow only shows that it's true. They *deserved it*." Kili's soft look of adoration

towards his older brother made Thorin melt, though he would never tell them, lest they take advantage of it like the scamps they were.

“...I see, and did you not think to tell me so that I could fix it before going off and pranking them, potentially destroying our relations with our closest neighbors?” At this they looked sheepish, both scratching their faces in tandem with grins. Thorin sighed, and let them go; gently pushing them onto the seats by the fire in the room he had entered. It looked like Balin’s, which when said Dwarf came in proved it.

“You’ve heard then.” Balin stated, giving the two dwarfling’s an unimpressed look. “Ye are lucky I am on good terms with the Firebeards’ leader, we were able to dismiss any notions of charges.”

“Aye, you two are indeed blessed for having Balin watch over you. Things could have been much worse. And though I understand your anger toward them, it will not do to have my heirs attacking foreign dignitaries.”

“We didn’t attack them, it was a simple prank...” Kíli protested.

Fíli nodded, “it’s not our fault the lady screamed so hard she tripped and got hit by a horse. Honestly, the lady was so big I’m surprised the horse wasn’t hurt instead.”

“Uh-huh, she was as wide as—,”

They were silenced by the glares being sent their way. “Now, lads, why would you do such a thing? You’ve known to act better around dignitaries since ye were wee ones.”

Thorin was the one that answered, after leaning back in the chair, “Kíli was disparaged by their taunts of his beard and weapon choice.”

Balin scowled, “Lady Kóna has always been an old shrew. Have no idea why Gripur married her.” Thorin’s sharp look caught his attention, “oh don’t look at me like that Thorin, you’ve said a lot worse before. And I’m not about to go off pranking them either.” Kíli and Fíli giggled in the background.

They quieted at Thorin’s look, and he rose to press his forehead against Kíli’s gently. “Do not be discouraged Kíli, the bow is a good a weapon as any other, and better in some things. Any Dwarf that cannot recognize its importance is a fool, no matter if those tree-shaggers use it.” Kíli’s beam was well worth it. He turned and bumped Fíli’s, “It is good to learn to protect your brother, and for him to stand up for himself, but when you are older a leader cannot always do what he wants or thinks is correct right away. If there’s anything I’ve learned, it’s that sometimes we must lose the skirmish if we want to win the war.”

“Well said Thorin,” Balin smiled slightly as his friend and leader pulled back to sit. “You boys best remember that.”

“I don’t understand Uncle...” Kíli said, almost shyly, not wanting to admit he didn’t get it to his Uncle.

Fíli straightened, “I think Uncle means that we should have ignored them and acted like it didn’t matter. That way they would have been upset since we weren’t affected. That by losing the battle of that simple instance that we would have won in the bigger picture since um... I actually don’t know why?”

The white bearded Dwarf nodded, “indeed, but also, if you would have simply ignored them, giving them the win, then we would have a lot smoother time getting the supplies we need from their settlement, and better deal, which would have won the ‘war’, in those terms. Because of your actions, they rose their prices from what they saw as an act of harm against them.” Fíli and Kíli nodded, finally grasping why their Uncle had been so angry with them.

“We’re sorry, Uncle.” They said together, heads bowed.

“Good, now up. We’ll have lunch and then you two are sitting with me for the open court in the afternoon. You will see how things are done while you two are messing around.” Groans were heard. “*Or* you can muck out the stables for the next week...”

Their heads shot up with twin looks of horror, almost making Thorin chuckle, but he held his glare. “No!” They cried.

“Court is fine,” Fíli bobbed his head so fast his beaded mustache almost hit his face.

“Great even, absolutely wonderful!” Kíli said.

This time Thorin did laugh, much to their chagrin. Balin hid his smile as they followed their Uncle out of his room. They certainly livened things up after all.

Mirkwood/Greenwood, Thranduil’s Palace

Thranduil’s deep scowl marred his beautiful face as he paced in front of his throne. How dare she come here after all this time? The other day, his son Legolas had come to report from the Southwest on the Elf Path that Lady Galadriel was on her way here, and then right after Tauriel had reported there was a Lothlórien elf more east on the Old Path, spouting off about the spiders invading further and further. His temper had been frayed at that point, and there was a sliver of embarrassment for how he had taken it out on her.

But their visits had taken a colder turn, as he did not approve of his son’s affections for her. Was she not grateful enough of how he had helped her? Taken her above her station of a poor orphan to a well-trusted Captain of the Guard? Teaching her through the years, and guiding her? Now his son turned his attention to her, and Thranduil was self-aware enough to know he was bitter, and jealous, for his son did not come to him anymore. Instead, he went and shared his thoughts with Tauriel.

He sneered, throwing his goblet across the room. The elven maiden that had served it paled and fled quickly out of the room. Gossip would definitely spread of his anger, but he did not care. It was not every day he lost his temper, for he prided himself on his cool logic but his people knew of how he felt on this matter. Thranduil’s mind turned back to the Lady Galadriel, visage darkening even further. What had brought on all this? All this Valar damned

movement in his lands after hundreds of years of silence from his kin and fellow elves. Did they think he would forget? That he *could* forget?

Why was she coming here?! It was driving him half mad, so much that he was almost thankful when a few hours later the notice came that she was on her way to the throne room. Thankfully the goblet had been cleaned by now, and he had just enough time to get his bearings back before the doors opened and her name was announced. Lady Galadriel came striding in, more graceful than even him, which made his eye twitch in annoyance. A sliver of a smile ghosted her mouth and this time he actually scowled; it was not fair that all minds were open to her. “Lady Galadriel.” Thranduil stated, not even bothering to tip his head.

“Elvenking Thranduil, it has been some time.” Her melodious voice spoke, and she did not tip her head to him either. They stared at each other momentarily. “There is much we need discuss.”

“Oh?” Thranduil drawled, crossing his legs. “And what is it of such importance that you would leave Lothlórien for the first time in hundreds of years? Surely there was another more *important* time or thing that could have drawn you out before?” The last part was almost snarled in that icy voice.

Her eyes gazed into his, looking as if contemplating something, “There was no need for me to interfere. Nor would you have wanted me to,” a thought passed his mind, and she responded, “indeed, I admit that I could have sent help. But then why did you not ask? For help is always given, one must merely ask.”

“Did you not think that my notice of the growing darkness was asking enough?” Thranduil retorted. “But I believe you don’t quite understand since you have hidden behind the power of a ring for years. One of such few rings that, if you would so *kindly* remember, that I do not have access to?”

Galadriel merely looked at him, but the air around her almost swirled and shook with the power emanating from her form, “I have no need to hide behind a rings’ power, as you do best to remember. It amplifies my power, yes, and helps protect my borders, but I am powerful in my own right.” She blinked a couple times, thinking of a vision that she had seen and of the past when Erebor had been in ruins. “You talk much on need for help, yet deny others the same. One does not need a ring of power to know mercy and kindness.” He knew exactly what she was implying.

Red flashed in his vision, and a dull roar echoed in his mind. Thranduil stood up, face devoid of emotion, but his eyes were burning like the fires of Mordor. His soft voice rose in the chamber, icy with its tone, “And you talk much on things you know nothing of.” The guards on the sides of the room were practically shaking in their boots.

If she were a lesser being, her eyebrow would have risen, “Enlighten me, O Elvenking.” Then blinked in what could only be shock at the thoughts on his mind.

“*Mercy*,” He spat, “*Kindness*.” Thranduil turned from her, not able to bear looking at her any longer, “They are nothing in the face of excessive hubris. Do you think I did not try? That I had merely turned them away from me?” He spun; snarl covering his beautiful face, “I

offered that fool Thrór respite in the aftermath in secret, yet he mocked me once again in his madness. So when his people came I was forced to turn away from them after dragonfire destroyed their home lest Thrór start war with me for some slight. Tell me *Lady* Galadriel, of how I failed those people brought low?”

Galadriel was reeling, thoughts flashing through her mind quicker than ever before, it seems that once again her own pride had reared. Thinking herself better while she had done what she had accused him of. “Excessive hubris indeed,” she murmured softly, frown deepening and eyes sad. “It seems that there are still things that I can learn in my age, and surprise one such as I. Deeply, I have erred, choosing to stand wayside and leaving it to fate, but I will correct that error. I am not here to rehash old fights or perceived slights.”

“You did quite the good job of fooling me,” Thranduil mocked and finally settled into his chair again. Unlike before, he looked almost weary now, tired in a way that belied his age. “Why have you come here if not to ridicule how you think I have ruled my kingdom?”

“You wish for a way to heal your forest? It is not the right time for it to be completely healed, as there is a curse on this land from the darkness that grows in the East, in the hills of Erebor, and from the South, but...” She smiled, “There is a way to stifle the growth of darkness.”

That definitely caught his attention. “What is it you speak of?”

“An awakening has happened, to the West, of one with the ability to do just as I have spoken, though they do not know of the power they hold yet.”

“Truly?” Thranduil could not hold back the hope in his voice. “Who is it?”

“A Hobbit.”

“...” He blinked, and then once more, “...A Halfling?” Disbelief colored his tone. Then he stated flatly, “With the power to stifle darkness.”

“I believe you will find this one not half of anything. For his destiny is bigger than one might assume for his stature.”

“...A Halfling?” Thranduil couldn’t help questioning again incredulously. Little was known to him of their race, but everyone knew they had amounted to nothing in their whole existence. Never had a Hobbit left the Shire for long either, and she wanted him to bring one all the way to the Greenwood. Clearly age had taken a toll on her mind.

“My mind is quite intact, Elvenking.” That was definitely humor in her tone. “Two must go, to ensure his arrival.” His raised eyebrow was clue enough to continue, “Legolas and Tauriel must go.” Galadriel left out the part that they had quite a few things to do in the West anyways, and that technically those two weren’t the only ones that could do the task. But what Thranduil didn’t know wouldn’t hurt him. She knew that he would not easily let his son and Captain of the Guard leave his kingdom otherwise, it was merely killing two birds with one stone as Gandalf was always fond of saying.

His eyes bore into her, “of this you are certain?”

“Quite.”

“And how will they know it is the correct Halfling? Surely you don’t expect me to kidnap the Shire?”

“Bring Legolas and Tauriel to me.” The guards quickly did as their King bid and the two were ushered in within minutes. “Greetings, Prince Legolas and Captain Tauriel.” They both said their greetings as well, their questioning gazes flickering between them.

“What need of us do you have?” Tauriel inquired.

“In days time you will go on a Quest, to find the awakened... Hobbit... in the West to heal the forest.”

“...An awakened Hobbit?” Legolas asked just as Tauriel spoke.

“To heal the forest?”

Lady Galadriel smiled, “I have Seen and felt the power awaken weeks ago in the West. He will have the ability to stop the darkness from spreading, though the poison cannot be destroyed completely from this forest while evil still lurks. That will come to heed, but not for many years yet.”

Tauriel’s entire countenance brightened beyond belief. This was what she had been waiting for, a chance to save her home. She stepped forward, hand clasped to her chest, “Till I have found the Hobbit and brought him here I will not step foot in Greenwood, this I vow.”

The prince smirked, “We will not fail you father.” Thranduil inclined his head, pride in his eyes.

“Come closer, Legolas, Tauriel, I will show you his visage so upon meeting you will know tis truly him.” Once they were close enough Lady Galadriel placed her hands on their temples, creating a tenuous connection before focusing on the memory of her vision. They gasped as a small beardless face appeared in their minds. Golden brown curly hair and with an impish smile on his face contrasted with a sharp intelligence showing through his green brown eyes.

“Oh he is very young,” Tauriel stated in shock after Galadriel had cut the connection and pulled her hand back.

“Be ready to leave soon, for the quicker you find him the quicker our home is cleaned of those vermin.” Thranduil stated.

Legolas looked at Tauriel haughtily with a grin, “This’ll be easy, everyone knows Hobbits only live in the Shire.”

And when they finally entered and searched the entire Shire months later, Tauriel would promptly glare at him for cursing their luck. For it seemed that not all Hobbits live in the Shire after all and their Quest had just become a whole lot harder.

Somewhere in Ered Luin (the settlement)

Kíli was not stupid, though many thought so (and had said so). There was quite the difference between acting dumb, and actually being so. He would admit that he was not as wise as his brother, but he was sly like his mother.

Do not begrudge your brother, she murmured to him one night when he was angry for being the second born, *heavy lies the head that wears the crown*. It had taken him a long while to understand her words, but when he did, all he felt was gratitude that he did not have the responsibilities his brother did. So when Fíli came back from lessons and court duties he would take his hand as they settled down for the night, weaving stories of a brave hero (and sometimes heroines – he secretly liked those ones better for a strong woman like his mother was something to be admired) and long dangerous quests.

The first time he had done so, when Fíli slumbered, Kíli had walked out to his mother and determinedly stated, *I want to make his crown lighter*. He was graced with the brightest smile he'd ever seen and she had responded that she would help him. So while Fíli took lessons from their Uncle Thorin, soaking up his knowledge of how to rule, Kíli followed his mother, watching and learning as she interacted. For she too made Uncle Thorin's crown lighter, and he wanted to grow up to be just like her.

Thus, when his beard did not grow like others, his prowess in the bow came to light, and others started making fun of him for being elf-like, he questioned *why is that such a bad thing?* He had not spoken it aloud, for that would only give them more to mock him with. Today, after he had served his time in court, Kíli decided it was time he spoke of his thoughts after so many years of silence. Not even his brother knew of it. Getting Fíli in trouble with him for the slights against him was only making his crown heavier. Usually their pranks were harmless, meaningless and fun, only meant for people's merriment. But this one had gotten someone hurt, and he was shamed for how he had been proud of that fact earlier. And as he always did when he had a question, he went straight to his mother.

He entered her room quietly, and that seemed to clue her into the fact that there was something he did not understand. "Sit, and tell me what troubles your mind, my Dushin-Mizim." She sat next to him on the bed, gathering him in her arms.

"Why does this happen?" He said softly, "Why do they get pleasure from my sadness?"

Dis sighed, brushing her fingers through his hair. She already could guess what he was speaking of. "It makes them feel better, to think they are of higher worth. Do not heed their words, young one. If they do not realize their folly, then they are not worth your time. Those that matter do not care, and those that care do not matter." Kíli nodded into her shoulder, adding that to his growing list of wisdom from his mother. For surely if she said it, it was true.

He was silent for a few minutes, gaining comfort in her embrace, "Amad?"

"Yes dear one?"

"Is it so bad that I'm Elf-like?"

“No, it does not matter.”

“Why?”

“Why doesn’t it matter that you’re elf-like, or why does it not matter that others think it’s bad?”

He pulled back and cocked his head, “Both I guess.”

Dis gently tapped his forehead, “It does not matter that you’re Elf-like because Elves are not bad. There are good and bad Elves, just like there are good and bad Dwarrow. Others hate mostly for the sake of hate, and if you were to try and please everyone in their opinions, you would never be happy.”

“So they just hate them for no reason?”

She hummed, “I would not say there are not reasons to dislike some, for just like you don’t like those boys that call you names because they are mean, a Dwarf won’t like a certain Elf because they are mean and vice versa. Their race should not be the factor of why they do not get along with them but how they treat you. Everyone bleeds the same, my Dushin-Mizim, we are not so different as most think.” Kili absorbed what she said, filing it away like before.

He lifted his head, and gazed at her for a second, “I want to learn more about Elves and the other races, Amad.”

Dis smiled proudly, “and so you will.”

Later that night, he slipped into bed with a new book on the different races tucked under his bed, hidden in his stash of important things. Looking through the window he spied the stars gleaming brightly and he smiled, thinking on how Elves loved the stars so much. He could understand what beauty they saw in them, and a little piece of the anger he held slowly faded.

And as all nights before this, he repeated in his head the things he had learned, adding the few spoken tonight.

Heavy lies the head that wears the crown

Great works are performed not by strength, but by perseverance

If there is no struggle, there is no progress

Look for the solution, not the problem

Those that matter do not care, and those that care do not matter

And finally,

Everyone bleeds the same.

Chapter End Notes

A/N: Soooo, the ending kinda got away from me, but I really like it. Also, quotes are not mine, and I kinda forgot who said each one? Lol.

So did the showdown between Galadriel and Thranduil go the way you thought? I always find that Galadriel is quite prideful, sometimes more than him, I mean, rebellion against the Valar anyone? And she's not perfect, but she does know how to realize when she is in the wrong, so props to her.

Dís is one of my favorite characters... because there's so much we don't know about her! Sorry there was no Bilbo in this! But how'd you guys like the little excerpt on Kíli?

Amad – mother

Inúdoy – son

Dushin-Mizim – Dark Jewel or Dark Opal

Comments are love :3

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