

Dance with Me, Death

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Dance with Me, Death

by [Bofur1](#)

Summary

They stood gathered around the bloody Book of Mazarbul in Dwalin's office, bound in dusty and torn cloth, the best Gimli could provide for in those cursed halls, as Gloin read out the hastily written letter enclosed with it.

...fierce battle...cave troll... ...Cousin Balin's tomb... ...Uncle Oin...west gates...the Watcher in the Water... ...enclosed is the Book of Mazarbul...written in Ori's hand...

Dwalin leaned his fists on the table, face still. Finally, he calmly pushed himself up, walked into the next room, and shut the door. Nori flinched as the sounds of furniture smashing into walls competed with Dwalin's heartbroken wordless roaring. Bifur visibly steeled himself, and strode in after him.

None but them knew what happened afterward.

Notes

Here's that missing scene you said I could write. Sorry it took so long!! :/

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

- Inspired by [Nori Knows](#) by [in_a_blog_in_the_ground](#)

Moria was lost. Everyone in it slaughtered. As he strode from the room where his friends were weeping inconsolably over the Book of Mazarbul, Dwalin found himself with only a lukewarm knot of something resembling *calm* roiling in his stomach.

The door of the adjoining room shut behind Dwalin with a quiet click and he rested his back against it, taking in the room's contents but not quite seeing them as they were. There was an empty chair—

—but then Balin was there, sinking down into the chair and staring at him with dark, distant eyes.

Dwalin's feet were cold, so he couldn't feel the impact as he padded forward toward the chair and reached out. Much to his shock, Balin flinched away from him with an unusual expression. It was an expression of pain, worse, of utter *exhaustion*. Dwalin had rarely ever seen him look that way. In fact, he barely remembered the times he had, probably because he had blocked those memories. His brother wasn't supposed to look so afraid.

The chair fell backwards when he touched it, landing with a dull crack on the hard stone floor. Dwalin blinked, startled, and found himself with his hand outstretched to help Balin up. No one took it.

The knot in Dwalin's stomach threw itself upward into his throat with the force of a catapult, driving out a keening moan which grew in strength, rising into a roar. Seizing the chair by the legs, he swung it at the wall, breaking it on first contact. The table was the next victim. Dwalin threw himself at it, pounding his fists upon it, raking the prongs of his knuckle-dusters into the wood and then shoving that into the opposite wall. Still he was screaming as if he didn't need breath.

Never again would he sharpen Balin's weapons under analytical supervision. Never again would he sulk through a reprimand he knew he deserved or play with fluffy white hair and beard free of braids usually sported by Dwarves. Never again would he look on in unease and admiration when Balin responded to an argument or threat, his entire air changing as he instilled a sure sense of his *power* into his antagonist. Never again would he be touched by that unending, unfailing compassion and wisdom.

He had been through this process with his father, Fundin. His memory of Balin would never, ever fade, but the small things he had expected to have forever would begin slipping away. He would reach for his memory of that blessed laugh and find only a faint echo of it. He would try to picture those dark eyes sparkling with joy or tears and find them closed against death. He'd lose the perfect fit of their embrace, ache for the warm, sweet breath against his face as they nestled close together for the night, deafen to the stories that were never funny until his brother told them and made him howl with glee.

Balin was everything stable in Dwalin's life. He drenched everything in life with his existence and now Dwalin wondered how he had coped with his brother away for so long.

He could never have expected the goodbye he had said to be the *last*.

Dwalin sensed a presence behind him and spun around, ready to command whoever it was to get out before he maimed them. The words were knocked back into his mind when a calloused fist greeted him. Stumbling two steps backward, Dwalin shook his head to clear his vision and found Bifur before him, already crouched in a defensive position.

That was *not* going to be tolerated.

Dwalin swung back at him vigorously, but Bifur narrowly dodged it and slid around him toward the wall behind, seizing the damaged table and shoving it between them. Just as quickly, Dwalin clambered over it and crushed Bifur against the wall. The winded Broadbeam barked out a jumble of Khuzdûl at him, sidetracking him as he maneuvered his hands around Dwalin's neck, bruising it and pulling painfully at his hair in the process.

Working his own hands around Bifur's torso, Dwalin compressed inward as far as he could. Growling as his ribs buckled, Bifur relied on the wall for leverage as he lifted his legs from the floor and used them as a barrier. Dwalin responded by pulling away from the wall and flinging Bifur across the floor. He bounced back up almost immediately, surprising Dwalin, and struck his chest and neck in unison before retreating to catch his breath. He was a fierce fighter.

Dwalin always hated having the air knocked out of him. He took a lurching step forward, swung again and knew it felt too sluggish. Bifur taunted him with a single step backward as his dodge and went in for another shot. Dwalin shoved him off. Watching him scoot back so far from the force gave Dwalin the second wind he needed and he covered the distance between them. The next three punches landed and Bifur stumbled but caught the fourth blow, twisting Dwalin's arm around. A sharp snap signaled its dislocation and Dwalin yelped, turning and striking the same ribs he had bruised with an audible crack. They separated, both hugging their injuries and gasping in breathless agony.

A long moment passed before steel-silver eyes met amber-brown ones. Dwalin saw pain in Bifur's gaze—understandable, but there was also something else. Dwalin didn't recognize it at first; as Bifur stepped forward, he put up his fists for another round. *I'm not sure I can handle another round*, Dwalin thought to himself, *but the Maker strike me if I don't try!*

Bifur shook his head slowly, pushing down Dwalin's hands and putting his own on the sides of Dwalin's neck. Dwalin would have shoved them away, but Bifur didn't seem intent to choke him; his touch was gentle. Sighing softly, his breath hitting Dwalin's face, Bifur lifted himself onto the balls of his feet, using the position of his hands to guide their foreheads together.

The axe was cold against his right temple, but Dwalin could make no move away from it in his suddenly-paralyzed state. From years of practice, his hands went to Bifur's shoulders and squeezed. Gently at first, but then he could feel his grief flooding in, tightening his grip to steady his balance. He sobbed softly and finally let himself sink to the floor. Bifur knelt across from him silently and stayed there, hoping to be a stability to him.

He didn't know it yet—his mourning would blind him to it for a long while yet—but Dwalin had just been promised another brother.

End Notes

The title comes from this quote:

"Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions. You change direction but the sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous dance with death just before dawn."

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