

## The Moon Lives in the Lining of Your Skin

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# **The Moon Lives in the Lining of Your Skin**

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## Summary

"The first time he had seen her she had been tending to a grove that had been burned during a sudden wildfire that consumed the outlying villages of his realm.

When they had left it had the bareness of a battlefield, but as the maia spun and danced in her moss green dress it came back to life.

He wonders if this was how Thingol felt when he met his beloved Melian.

Was he as entranced by Melian as Gil-Galad was of this red-haired creature dancing in the sunlight?"

In which Melian and Thingol are not the only Maia and Elf romance to exist in Middle Earth

# Chapter 1

The first time he had seen her she had been tending to a grove that had been burned during a sudden wildfire that consumed the outlying villages of his realm.

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He had been out riding, wearing none of his sigils or anything that would let her know he was the King of the lands she was in. Gil-Galad supposed that made it better, especially when she picked up her skirts and gave him a mischievous smile.

“Come find me.” She had whispered as she took off running and laughing as the woods returned to life behind her.

Gil-Galad raced after her, but he never did find the mysterious maiden.

"Lóteriel, I will find you ,Lóteriel!" the Elven King shouts to the trees.

The second time he saw her, she was sitting by a river, and he had gotten lost and injured on a hunt gone wrong.

Had he been in a better condition he may have heard the rushing of a swift current hiding under still waters of a seemingly shallow river.

Had he been paying attention to anything else but his relief at finding her he wouldn't have stepped into the river.

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“My lady, save me.” The words were lost in the roaring of the current. “Save me, Lóteriel.”

The river was enchanted to keep intruders out, had Erinti not been there he would have drowned and never found.

No orc, no troll, no human, no elf, no dwarf and no harfoots have ever survived it. Even the entwines who lived with her knew better than to get in it.

But this elf had not known that, to him it appears like any narrow river, and he cannot hear the way the current rushes faster than any of Oromë's horses.

Erinti could not guard an entire kingdom like Melian did with her girdle, but this part of the hills was a small haven itself. A haven this elf lord had broken into and would have paid for with his life.

But he was quite handsome and rather obvious in his infatuation with her, so she believed it would be very awful if he perished and hoped Eru did not punish her for stealing a life that may have been needed in Mandos.

Erinti had taken him out of the river, but most of the damage had been done, his poor horse would never be found and the rider had far too many injuries for her liking. He may be one of the eldar, but not even the eldar was immune to injuries like that.

Erinti may be a servant of Yavanna and Vanna, but her healing abilities were meager at best. Her abilities lied in making nature awake in spring or after a disaster, not saving people.

“You are rather bold to enter my realm.” She said placing her hands again on his broken leg. It was really broken, like if they had been humans, they would’ve just killed the man. “Had I not been there you would have died along with your horse.”

“Forgive me, my lady, I was overtaken by your beauty.” As he is now, the ellon was young barely in his majority, and like all young people, he is easily beguiled by her unnatural beauty.

Enough to almost kill himself earlier this evening.

“A rather stupid thing to do, my lord.” She scolded him. “What is your name?” she asked as he got comfortable in her modest bed.

He was wearing an old tunic Erinti had from their time in Doriath and still damp from the river, but he showed no signs of discomfort and pain...yet.

There is a pause, a telltale sign that he is lying by omission. “Rodnor, or Artanaro if you prefer Quenya over Sindarin.”

A noldo, she should have known by his looks. Noldos have gray eyes with hints of golden brown or even black like coal.

Sindarin and Silvan elves had hints of green, Teleri blue like the sea, the Vanyar the yellow gold sunshine or the cool silver of the moonlight.

Rodnor’s eyes shine like clear diamonds, like the brightest of Varda’s stars.

Finwë used to have eyes like that, all his children had eyes like that with the exception of Finarfin who had the golden hues of the Vanyar.

Rarely did sons inherit their eye colors of their mothers, but Finarfin was one of those rare cases.

A shame Erinti did not have much knowledge about the Finweans. Who could his father be?

“Well met, noble fire, I apologize for what happens next and hope you do not hold it against me.” She takes advantage of the improper thoughts he is getting as her hands moved from his ankle to his knee. The tunic fit him a bit shorter than it had when she had worn it as Melian’s

sometimes brother, that combined with his infatuation with her spelled trouble for the both of them.

If Erinti had applied herself to the healing arts, she could find a less painful way to set broken bones, but she does not know any other way. At least his bones had not splintered, splinters made healing difficult, could leave a flaw even Melian could not heal without great difficulty.

He tries to bite back the pain, but he is sweating and shouting by the time his broken leg returns to its original state. "You are a terrible healer, my lady." He says as he tries to compose himself.

"Call me Erinti, but I like the name you gave me so much I wish to keep it." She said making it worse.

"Lóteriel." The sound of it is so beautiful it makes her heart sing. "Lothriel, in Sindarin."

Crowned with Flowers.

It was rather sweet of him to give her a name, and such a lovely name it was.

Maybe she should rejoin society for a while, just to make sure he does not die.

## Chapter 2

“Have you always lived here?” he asks her as they wait for him to be healed enough to leave.

Rodnor sits on the bench while she tends to her garden of medicinal herbs. She cannot heal like Estë and her servants, but she can make the things that will heal people. This was her element; she tells herself as she digs her hands into the recently planted flowerbed and willed life to grow.

Especially the stubborn elf lord who refused to remember his body has limits.

It was not enough for him to be just a day or two away from recovery, just this morning he tried to spar with one of the trees and set himself back a week after being told his right hand was not ready yet.

But he had been so brave, gritting his teeth as his bones healed themselves with her touch. Been so brave that she kissed the pain away.

A mistake, she thinks, a mistake because now Rodnor knows her lips are better healers than her hands and now Erinti wonders how it would feel to kiss his lips.

She’s never kissed anyone before, the Eldar and the Edain have the most curious and strict set of ways that leave little freedom in her opinion.

“No, before here I used to live with my sister, Melian in Menegroth, but then I grew restless and decided it was time to be on my own.” She answers as she willed the seeds to grow as she poured her power into the soft earth. They grow too quickly, they always do whenever she feels infatuated with someone, “Have you always lived wherever it is you live at, Rodnor?”

“I grew up in the Havens of the Falas with my mother, Gilher. After the Nirnaeth Arnoediad we moved in the Isle of Balar, where I still live even after my lady mother faded a decade ago.” He does not mention the specifics, but Erinti cannot ask about those things he won’t say after he mentioned his mother’s passing.

“It must have been very painful for you to lose her.” Erinti paused and added as she cleaned the dirt off her hands with her apron and joined him on the bench, “I am very sorry for your loss, Rodnor.”

If she could kiss his pain away, she would, but wounds of the heart are not like those of the flesh. Erinti had cried herself for ages when Melian returned to Aman and Luthien died of the sickness that comes with old age.

She felt so lonely then, she wonders if Rodnor felt the same when his mother died.

“My thanks, Lothriel, I am sorry for burdening you with my grief. I already owe you my life and telling you things that make you sad seems like a terrible way to repay your kindness.”

The elf feels embarrassed at having been just a little vulnerable with her, Erinti wondered if that stupid notion some have of bottling everything up inside will ever stop.

“When Melian left, I felt as if my sister had abandoned me, I think by the time I finished mourning her and her family, her great granddaughter had married and had her own set of twins. A thing I learned during that time is that sometimes talking about it helps ease the pain.”

Erinti had cried on the lap of a human grandmother when she finally let herself speak of the pain in her heart.

The old woman had not judged her, perhaps that was what Rodnor needed to let go of some of that pain.

“My mother was in great pain, you see, my elder sister and my father passed when Nargothrond fell.” He began and Erinti did not fight the urge to hold his hand in support.

“How old were you when that happened?” the maia asked. So many kingdoms had fallen. Erinti had trouble keeping track of it all.

“I was a babe at her breast when we were sent away for our safety and that was the last time either of us saw them again.” He answers, leaning closer to her as if seeking comfort.

“I was all she had left, even if she had friends and kin to help her raise me, it pained her that her eldest child and her husband were gone.”

“When I had my hundredth begetting day, we quarreled, and I told her she was no longer burdened with raising me and the next morning she was gone.” There is a knot in his throat as he tells her this, and no wonder the death of a loved one is such a terrible thing to recount. The Maia felt awful for having even brought it up.

“The last time I saw Melian I told her she had become my jailer instead of remaining my sister. I wish I had not said such things, but I hope one day we can both apologize to them in Valinor.” She leans against his shoulder, relishing the warmth he gives.

“Perhaps we shall, my lady.” Rodnor then turns to look at her and held the Maia’s gaze.

It makes their heart skip a beat and Erinti considers if they should pack provisions for two.

Been too long by your lonesome, no wonder this mystery *ellon* has you like this, the Maia can almost hear teenage Luthien’s sweet voice in the air.

Perhaps they have been alone too long, she thinks.

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Rodnor has many questions, Erinti occasionally finds herself a little annoyed by them, but he ---like all people she was met--- is very adorable when he is being curious.

“How old are you?” he asks after they sit down for dinner one evening. Tomorrow he is supposed to be leaving and she has yet to find the courage to ask him if he would like a

travelling companion.

“Older than the Ea, although this body is about as old as the Trees, and I did not grow into the person you see until Luthien ran off with Beren.” She answered as she sat back in her elegant blue silk chiton that still bore Melian’s sigil on the belt.

“So you grew at the same rate as she did, she was like your little sister, or perhaps, big sister?”

He looked handsome in her old clothes; blue was his most definitely his color. They look very well in somewhat matching blue chitons.

He must be a of the line of Fingolfin, only he and his family could pull that dark haired blue and gold wearing noldo look.

Did Fingon finally marry or did Turgon remarry because remarriage is not prohibited in Middle Earth?

Aredhel had a boy, but the birds say he sold his soul to Mogroth in exchange for his uncle’s city. Unfortunately, no one in the human village is brave enough to talk to her like their past generations and most of them had not been born then.

She was bereft of news of the outside world.

Last Erinti heard, Fingolfin’s youngest died with no issue and Aredhel’s one boy sold his soul to Melkor.

Who could this elf be?

“Sort of older twin sibling, I had the body of a twenty-year-old elfling when she was born and I did not begin to age until she had her twentieth begetting day.” Erinti then spent roughly two thousand years unable to decide if she was male or female. The ainur are not born with the sex they present and some of them take more time to see what we like. Erinti may look female but does not wish to label herself something as trivial as sex.

Not many understand that, besides she does not know his given name. When he tells her his given name then she may tell him more.

Sometimes Erinti feels like a her or a him or a them. Anyone can call her whatever pronoun and they will not be offended.

And yet she turns as red as her hair when Rodnor calls her his lady with flowers in her hair.

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“I wish I did not have to leave; I have grown used to your company, Lothriel.” He says when they finish readying everything for tomorrow.

Rodnor is to leave at first light after a fortnight here with her.



Is it bad that she does not want him to leave? Or that her gaze keeps going to his lips in curiosity when he mutters to himself as they made sure he had enough food and things for the travel,

Erinti has never felt this before, is this how Melian felt when she first met her beloved Thingol?

She's different now, as if she had aged that fortnight. As if she had stopped being the maia who came here to find their purpose, and now they wish to see if they can find it elsewhere.

"So have I, even if you refuse to tell me the name you gave yourself." She teased him, looking up and thinking it was a terrible idea.

"Gil-galad. Radiant Star, after my naneth." He is only a whisper away, looking at her with intent and desire. Desire she can feel brushing against her feä like tender caress.

If she were to step on her tiptoes ever so slightly, she could follow that pleasant feeling all the way to his lips.

"Lover of the stars, mother of starlight." She cannot help but smile at the thoughtfulness of it. He chose his name after hers and not his father's.

He reaches out to touch her face and she does not stop him, why would she? Even if it's just for tonight she wants to be like girls in the tales she used to hear and sing about with Luthien.

This touch, this caress that is light and electrifying against her skin, is different from the ones before. There is something there that there never was before, not with Tilion, not with Nellas nor with Sael of the Edain.

"Leave with me tomorrow, Erinti Lóteriel. I do not wish to be parted from you." He sounds as if the mere idea of being apart pains him, a sweet pain that she can feel too.

The maia cannot make the words come out, but she knows sometimes an action can speak louder than any word, so she takes a chance, reaches out for him and pressed her lips to his.

## Chapter 3

Romantic love is a strange thing amongst the Eldar. The Edain seem to find it with anyone, but the Eldar only feel it with one person ---with the exception being Finwë and the handful of other who are given a second chance at love by Ilúvatar.

Erinti always assumed people were exaggerating, but now that they were traveling with Gil-galad, the Maia felt silly for having thought so.

He looks very handsome in his hunter's garb, fit him better than Erinti's chitons and men's tunics.

Rodnor looks better in just the leather breeches alone, if you ask her.

"The new King of the Noldor is the son of Orodreth, there is talk of Eärendil, Elwing's husband seeking the Valar for aid." He caught her up on what happened in the world while she was in Nan-Tathren. "Lady Galadriel and Lord Celeborn had a daughter last winter; I think that is all I can think you have missed during your seclusion."

He lived in the Havens with Nówë, or Círdan the Shipwright, who was his mother's kinsman.

He was an elf of some standing. His spear was named Aeglos, he had a sword as well, Aegros.

Snow thorn and piercing rain.

Gil-galad told her about his life, Erinti told him about theirs and would come to miss this being alone together now that they are half a day away from an Elven outpost.

"Strange when I arrived to Nan-Tathren Luthien had eloped with Beren and died and came back as a human woman, Orodreth only had a daughter and Artanis was still playing hard to get with Celeborn. I feel as if I had taken longer to meet you half the continent would be missing and I entirely unaware of it." The maia admits as they stop to rest.

Erinti does not need it, but Gil-galad does. Although they have been getting the feeling that he is deliberately delaying them.

He even tried to get them lost yesterday.

Rodnor is hiding something, but what could it be?

"How did you not notice almost a century had passed, Erinti Lóteriel?" He shook his head and asked as she pulled out some fruit and bread to break their fast.

Gil-galad had offered to hunt something for them, but she had reminded him it would take longer to hunt, dress and cook the beast than to reach the outpost down the river.

“The same way I did not realize I was a child for almost fifty thousand sun years until Luthien started to grow, time passes differently for the Ainur.” For the Edain and the Dwarves, twenty sun years are a lifetime, for the Eldar and the Ents it feels like a few years and to beings like them, it felt like a few hours ago.

It depends, really.

Time passes slower when you are directly involved in something or with someone.

There is a lull in conversation, neither knowing what to say.

There is a slight crease on his forehead as if he were thinking of a way to break bad news to her.

Surely it cannot be so bad?

“Something is bothering you, Rodnor. Is it why you are needlessly delaying us?” She asks taking his hand in hers.

“I have not been honest with you, Erinti. I should have been, but I was afraid you would look at me differently.” He begins, but the distant sound of horses is enough to make him stop on his tracks.

“Riders, armed, all coming this way.” That is all Erinti can make out as Rodnor unsheathed his sword and put himself in front of them.

They may have the body of an elleth, but really, he should let the immortal being defend him from danger just this time around.

“Elves or men?” he asks her, but the earth jumps as the horde gets closer.

“Elves, but one of them feels different?” Erinti answers, the elf in question felt just slightly human. Like someone introduced a different instrument into the song and wove it beautifully into the melody. “Slightly human, or at least it feels that way.”

“Man or woman?” he asks, but by now he hears and likely sees them nearing the worn road by them.

“Woman, oh, it is Luthien’s granddaughter! She feels like her and baby Dior.” Erinti cannot help her excitement at meeting his niece and playmate’s grandchild. Occasionally Luthien and Beren would drop by for a visit, or Erinti would go to them in her travels, but eventually they aged and died, and Dior was terrible at visiting her. “I cannot believe it, last time I saw Dior he was an obnoxious little terror, oh this is so exciting, Rodnor.”

He does not share her excitement, in fact, Rodnor Gil-Galad is dreading it. Why, well, the Maia does not really care.

No, Erinti cannot think of anything else except that she gets to meet Elwing and all her friends and her baby boys she heard about from the Edain living in Nan-Tathren. Perhaps

Rodnor does not know her or he is afraid they will dislike them, but Luthien's granddaughter must have her grandmother's kind heart and Beren's easy friendship surely.

Oh, she must look her best. What a shame all her clothes are a hundred years out of fashion!

"I am so excited." She said grabbing his hands and squealing like an elfling. "Do you think she felt me in the Song and has come to meet me?"

"I suppose, Lothriel. You and Melian were sisters and the bond you had with Luthien is not easily undone." He had hesitated before lying through his teeth.

Why, Erinti wonders to herself.

"Why are you not excited or even relieved about their coming, my heart?" she asks the elf lord Iluvatar has given her as a soulmate.

"I have not been entirely honest with you, Lothriel, I am not the elf you think I am." He answers looking at her sadly.

"How? I do not understand, Rodnor?" the maia cannot remember any other thing like that. No one had ever lied to her, and they remember most things that happened in their long life.

"You disappear for half a moon, and you come back with a woman? Eärendil has been worried sick about you, Ereinion The woman, Elwing, says in a teasing manner, as if Rodnor were a kinsman of hers.

"I assure you, dear cousin, that it was not my intention. My hunt went wrong, and my lady Erinti saved me after I foolishly fell into the strid by her hamlet." He is different now, more regal, more elegant.

Scion of Kings, that is what Elwing had called him.

Erinti feels as if she has been hit.

Rodnor Gil-Galad was Orodreth's son, the new King of the Noldor.

He had lied to her!

He had lied to her when they had been honest with him about everything!

She wants to weep at the betrayal, and she does because Erinti has never had much control over themselves.

"Why do you weep, my lady?" Elwing asks softly.

"You look so much like my niece, Luthien, that I could not help it." Erinti lies as she wiped the tears with her sleeve.

## Chapter 4

They are Lady Athaenis of Nan-Tathren here.

That is what the human village called her and some of the elves here had remembered that.

They could not be Lóteriel here, it does not feel like a name Erinti feels like letting other people use.

And then there is her hurt at having been lied to.

It tainted her joy at meeting Dior's daughter and her babies, and she could not wait until he left to the Isle of Balar.

Erinti avoids him and spends as much time as she can catching up with old friends from Doriath and getting to know Elwing.

And she adores her great-niece even if she has only known her for ten days. How could she not? Elwing was her blood the moment the One made Melian Erinti's elder sister in his music.

"What was my father like as an elfling?" Elwing asked as Erinti played with the twin boys.

Twins were treated like treasures, almost all of them suffered terrible fates.

Sometimes the mother would not survive the birth, sometimes the mother would see her children die or the children see their mother die.

These boys would not be the exception. One will die a mortal death and the other will have to see it happen.

"Dior was a good child, even if he loathed my vegetable soups. Grew like a weed after spring rain, one moment he was bouncing baby boy like these two and the other he was a man grown and wanted me to meet his pregnant wife, Nimloth Galathiel."

Erinti answered her question as she played with Elros. He would die as a human, a human with exceptionally long life, but still sundered forever from his family in Valinor.

"Yes, we grow at the pace of the Edain, but age at the pace of the Eldar when we reach our twentieth begetting day. My boys will grow at that pace too, I fear they will be unrecognizable when Eärendil comes back from his voyage." Elwing looks out the window sadly.

The boys are toddlers, they can walk and run now. Elrond and Elros' babbles were turning into words, they were nearly three in human years.

She cannot bear to be apart from her husband, so afraid of being alone again.

“He will return, and the Valar will come to our aid before it is too late.” Erinti assured her. “It is in the Music, I am sure of it.”

Eärendil would leave in search of the Undying Lands, a last resort because things are so dire.

Almost all of Beleriand was under Mogroth’s control, the Sons of Fëanor flailing as they tried to overcome their cursed oath.

The tree is swaying and there is no way of telling when and how it would fall.

If there was a way for the oath to be broken and for them to receive aid, they needed the best mariners for the quest.

And that was Eärendil son of Idril.

“I could stay with you until he returns.” Erinti suggests. “Help you with the children and keep you company.”

“I would like it very much, if it’s not an inconvenience to Gil-galad, that is. He may be loath to part with you.” Elwing said as if they were something.

They were friends at the least, soulmates at the most.

But a soulmate does not mean it will be smooth sailing, even Melian and Thingol had their quarrels and she’s heard from the birds that one-time Manwë and Varda quarreled. It had been about reintegrating Melkor back into society, the warbler had said to Erinti and Melian.

Even Elwing and Earendil have been angry at each other, like now that Elwing has been completely honest with her husband about her thoughts on this quest to find the Valar.

Things were odd between them now.

Erinti felt hurt that he had lied to her. A lie by omission is still a lie in their book, and she just needs time.

Maybe the Maia will forgive him for it, but it will not be today. More than just a day and a night to think about it.

“If he misses me, he will visit or we could visit the Isle of Balar, but I am sure his grace will understand.” Just like he expected to her to understand him lying about his identity for almost two weeks. “Besides, the Isle of Balar is not that far.”

“No, but it feels like it is sometimes.” Elwing said unable to shake off a sudden chill she felt as she looked at the Nauglamír hidden under the floorboards of the nursery.

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The gardens here are beautiful, but nothing compares to the wild beauty of Arda.

They like it here, here where she can lay on the grass like an enchanted maiden as the night turns to morning.

There was another fine banquet this day, Erinti has not consumed so much mortal food since Menegroth and, frankly, they were no longer used to eating this often.

“You have been avoiding me.” Gil-Galad comes and lies down beside her.

“So, I have.” They admit and refuses to even look at him.

“I did plan on telling you who I was, just so you know.” He turns to see her even if she just stares into the heavens hoping for an answer to be spelled out to her.

Are the star people laughing at her childishness, they always had the feeling that the more powerful maiar viewed her as nuisance.

Erinti was part of the same thought Eru Iluvatar used to create Eonwe and Ilmare, and yet Erinti was the weakest of their kind.

So weak that their original corporal form was a child, like the little children Erinti had been so fascinated by when Iluvatar revealed them in the Music.

Perhaps that was why she liked children most of all, perhaps that’s why the One gave her the privilege to grow and mature into an adult.

“I know, but it stung my feelings to know you did not trust me enough to be honest, Rodnor.” She likes this, the honesty with which they talk to each other. They enjoy Rodner’s company and if it is in the Music, Erinti would like to spend the rest of it with him.

“I was afraid you would see me differently, that you would think of me as the King of the Noldor and not Rodnor Gil-Galad.” He admits quietly, as if he was afraid people would know how much he enjoyed being a nobody for even a little while.

Uneasy is the head that wears the crown, Erinti now understood what Thingol meant by that.

He can never show weakness, he can never let himself be who he is now that the Noldor chose him as their ruler.

“I would not have treated you any differently.” This time she allows herself to move her head and look at him.

He was beautiful, like all the Eldar are, but there was that indescribable thing that pulled her to him, that made him appear to be everything she ever wanted or could ever want.

“I am sorry I lied to you, Lóteriel. Will you forgive me?” Rodnor reached out for their hand on their stomach and Erinti did not flinch away.

“I do forgive you, but I am afraid I will not go with you to the Isle of Balar.” It is very difficult to say that when he is looking at her like that.

It makes her want to say she did not mean it and that she will leave with him and continue their courtship in person.

But Elwing needs them here and Erinti needs time to adjust to society. It had changed so much in this past century; it was almost unrecognizable from when Erinti was a courtier in Menegroth.

“Elwing has need of me, Rodnor. She will be so lonely without Eärendil, and I want to get to know her better.” Erinti explained turning to lean on her side.

Love is so strange; they have spent all this time alone and now that she really liked someone enough to let themselves be courted, Erinti must be apart from him.

She doesn't want to cause the beautiful elf king any pain, and yet she must cause some if they want to spend what little time Elwing has left in her song with her.

“It will make our courtship difficult, Lóteriel.” He reaches out with his free hand to caress the side of her face and she leans into it hoping she could make the warmth and tenderness stay with her forever.

“But not impossible, once I master the new words and writing styles, I will be sending you letters longer than the Anduin.” Erinti tries to make him smile, make him laugh like he did in Nan-Tathren.

If Erinti were given a choice they would have stayed there for the rest of eternity, and she had a feeling Gil-Galad was thinking the same.

He then says the last thing they had expected.

“I love you, and I want to marry you. What is your will?”

Gil-Galad asks her and begins the with the official words of a courtship. Typically, this was done at a feast with your family and friends, yet here, whispered as they lay together in a dark garden, the words feel as if they were never meant to be heard by anyone else.

“We have no silver rings, Rodnor.” Erinti finds herself saying in response to his words.

“Melian and Thingol never had them, who says we need them?” Rodnor brushed a stray curl away from the maia's face and moved closer to her.

*“Melin tye ar merin vesta tyenna. Man indotya ná?”* he repeats the Question in Noldorin Quenya, all formal ceremonies for his people were done in their language.

*“Indonya ná ve indotya. Apa coranar mine, vestuvangwe.”* Erinti answered in like. My will is like your will. At the end of one year, we shall wed.



## Chapter 5

“The two of you grow like weeds, my loves.” Erinti etched their height on the door frame of their room.

They are five years old, very sharp and advanced for their age, but still innocent and helpless children.

If they had been normal elflings, they would be the equivalent of a one- or two-year-old human baby, but they are not and they look and act like twenty-year old elf children.

Erinti adores him and wonders if she had been as active and curious as they were for the first forty-four thousand years.

The wind has changed, it is an icy chill that settles in everyone’s bones.

The Fëanorians are restless, they have fought against the Oath, but they are losing the battle within themselves.

Celebrimbor has sequestered himself in a holding cell because the fire of Fëanor’s Oath is burning through his reason, or so Gil-Galad had written a week ago. Her betrothed’s letters kept asking her to leave with him to Balar, their engagement had lasted three years and now Erinti knew why courtships lasted roughly one year.

The Havens are preparing for war, but it won’t be enough.

Elwing should just hand over the cursed jewel and be done with it, but she has been tainted by it.

The Silmarils were evil, they had not been at their creation, but anything that touches Melkor becomes a curse.

A shame they refused to believe it.

Luthien and Beren had died the first time because of it, they had died a second time when it sapped the life out of them and made them sickly.

Dior had killed everyone and himself when he sacrificed Menegroth for it.

And now Elwing would do the same.

“We shall have to send another portrait of the three of you with Mistress Hawk so your Adar can recognize you.” Erinti tells the boys as she ruffled their dark hair and sent them back to their nurse when the Maia saw Elwing come stand in the doorway. “Now go with Sadriel while I talk with your naneth. I promise I won’t take too long.”

Their mother waits until they are out of earshot to speak.

“I received another letter, Athaenis, the things they say!” Elwing paces as Erinti reads the letter.

It is well written, but the threats and the madness spilling through the parchment makes it as terrifying as a sword at your throat.

“Have you told anyone else about this?” the maia asked her niece.

Elwing had a council, had it with Celeborn and Galadriel and all the others who survived the fall of all those great and safe elven kingdoms.

“I have, they are too divided to give me a straight answer.” The dark-haired elf woman answered.

Some said she should take the civilians to safety and give them the cursed jewel; others sided with Elwing and told her to keep it and fight them.

Erinti had tried to make her niece see sense, but she refused to part with it.

“I will die before I left this precious jewel fall into the hands of the enemy.” A darkness had swirled around her when she put on the blasted chain.

Because when she wears the Nauglamír, Elwing forgets she has people whose lives will be taken, forgets she is a mother even.

It’s her mortal blood, the Maia surmised.

Made her more susceptible to the jewel’s darkness.

Bad enough the jewel had turned Fëanor and his sons away from Eru Ilúvatar’s light, no wonder Dior had grown arrogant like a stupid mortal man and stupid when he refused to hand it over and wash his hands of it.

Now his daughter was following his example.

There will be so much death here and those children will always remember that Elwing chose the jewel over her people, just like her father before her.

“Have you asked Gil-galad and Cirdan for help?” Erinti asked her, hoping Nowë and her beloved Rodnor could speak sense into her niece or provide some protection to the people.

“They will say the same as my false friends or worse. They are coming by the end of this week with a levee of soldiers to add to mine, Cirdan implied in his letters he could take the children away like they did with me. Gil-Galad comes with every intention of letting the world know the Noldor under him are against the Sons of Fëanor.”

And no sign or letter from Eärendil.

Mandos was calling, every day Erinti woke up praying his servants did not come to fetch them all this day.

“If you wish to leave with them, I will not stop you, aunt. I know you yearn for Erenion as much as I yearn for my husband.” Elwing is torn between wanting to keep her aunt for herself and letting her be with the soulmate the All Father has given her.

And the maia does wish to leave, to wed her beloved Rodnor and wake up every morning with him beside her instead sneaking into his rooms whenever he visits here.

But she cannot leave Elwing and her children.

“I will stay with you until your husband returns, Rodnor knows that, and he understands, my little El.”

Not when Elwing has so little time left.

---

Her feä sings when they are together, a heat rushes through her veins and Erinti feels like they are floating on air every second of it.

They hate all this pretending they are not starving for each other’s presence just for the sake of ceremony. To stand there wishing she could run to him the second the outriders come to announce him near the castle.

“I have a gift for you, meleth nin.” He is panting and out of breath, just as she is as he pulls away from her and reaches out to something he hid in his cloak.

They come here often, to the same part of the garden they swore themselves to each other in courtship. She likes being here more than in his chambers, even if the bed feels divine when they flirt with danger and see how far they can get without wedding each other.

But she is a spirit of the earth and the life that grows from it, and when they wed, Erinti wants to wed their husband in her element and have her master, Yavanna, bless them with children.

“Really, and here I thought you had forgotten to bring me something this time.” The maia sits up and looks at the ring box in his hand.

Does he mean to wed her tonight?

They are not wholly opposed to the idea, she loves Rodnor and cannot bear this horrid separation, but he had said he wishes to wed her and crown her his consort properly.

Can’t be that.

“That night three years ago you said we had no rings to do things properly, I wish to remedy that, Lóteriel.” The ring is silver, as it is by tradition, and made to look like leaves and vines dotted with little flowers all around it.

Twelve flowers to match his twelve stars.

“I only wish I could have had a ring for you, my love.” It is exquisite and it pains her that she has no such ring for him, even if they were to go to the smiths tonight it would not be ready

before this visit is over.

“I will visit again soon, before this year ends and give it to me then, for then, I will take you home with me, as my betrothed and future wife.” He slides the ring on her finger and pressed her hand to his heart.

“And you shall, Rodnor Gil-Galad.” She said as they sealed their promise of forever with a kiss.

## Chapter 6

The ring is beautiful, a silver band made in the style of the Doriathrim brushed to imitate the rushing of the river behind twelve stars.

His sigil with that of how he found her.

Erinti holds it in their hand as they write to their betrothed and tell him about it. Unlike him, Erinti does not have the patience for surprises. Prefers being direct, mostly because the maia has no real concept of time and is prone to forgetting anyways.

Once Erinti was going to surprise Luthien with the first elanor flowers and the flowers had withered up and died by the time they remembered it a year or so later.

*My most beloved Rodnor,*

*I write to you because I cannot contain my excitement and do not wish to wait until your visit to tell you so.*

*The Master Smiths have completed your ring and I long for the day---*

“Lady Athaenis!” Sadriel, the twins’ nurse comes running to her. Erinti functions as the queen to Elwing’s king, a great preparation for the Maia’s future and allows them enough leeway to get away with overriding Elwing’s orders.

“What is it, Sadriel? Has something happened to the children?” they ask the terrified elf woman.

“The Fëanorians are marching here, they are at Nan Tathren as we speak.” Only a week’s worth of walking, must be closer given how little time it took them to overcome the Gates of Sirion.

Erinti has never witnessed a kinslaying, she only knows that no army has been able to stop the cursed sons of Fëanor.

“How far are they?” they could never hold them off, but Erinti could help evacuate the people, get the children away or get Elwing to change her mind about the jewel.

“They were a week’s ride yesterday, but they could be here sooner. When Menegroth fell they came faster than my father had expected. They could be here on the morrow if need be.” Elwing answers as she comes in wearing the Nauglamír.

There is a chill in it, one that seeps into your bones as it tries to blind you with its beauty.

Whatever goodness it once had was gone.

And while it did not burn its wearer if they were worthy, they rained death and desolation instead of the blessings and healing Fëanor had intended.

Once Morgoth puts his thought onto something it became a curse, and this stone had been cursed since Melkor poured his honey onto Fëanor's ears.

"We could take you and the children to Nowë, Ulmo will help us stop them if they try to follow." Erinti wished Melian was here, wished she could cast a girdle of protection like she did, but the maia knew it was too late to try again.

The most she could do was cast her girdle around the children's nursery or their ship if they ever made it to the docks.

"No, their envoy vowed to hunt them down and burn the Isle of Balar as well should we seek refuge. He implied that they would hunt down the children, that it had been a mistake to let me live. Our only hope is that my husband comes to save us." Elwing is defeated, she has accepted it in her heart and once that happens, it is difficult to get a kingdom to have hope.

But hope is deathless and sometimes it is all you can have.

Erinti cannot protect a kingdom, but she can protect the children.

And she does. The redhaired Maia casts her girdle as she and Elwing barricade the nursery and get the last of the people out through a hidden corridor only a handful of people knew about. The tunnel led to the docks and from there they would be taken to the Isle of Balar.

Elwing had asked Cirdan and Gil-Galad to defend the Haven of the Ships and ferry the survivors away. Erinti's job was to keep the girdle around the royal wing until the last of the people were out.

She should have known that Elrond and Elros would be the last ones to leave.

Erinti had never seen such evil happen, never felt the terror these elves had caused in their insanity, but inside the girdle, the children cannot see or hear them as they cut down men, women and children as they come for the cursed jewel Elwing wears on her pale neck.

Erinti is cursed to feel the agony of the trees, the flowers, all of Yavanna's creations be burnt, cut or trampled on as an army of damned soldiers sack the city.

"Will ada come, nana?" Elrond, or Elros, asks and Elwing tries her best to lie.

"Of course, my little birds, the hero always comes to save the children, but you must leave with Erinti and Sadriel."

Except this time the hero is too busy on his own quest to come save them.

All they can hope for is for Erinti's meager girdle to hold until the children are safe on a ship.

The siege is on its fourth day when Erinti feels them break through the castle walls and thanks Ilúvatar that her girdle does not allow people to hear as the sons of Fëanor massacre the last line defense here.

“Give them the fucking jewel and live, Elwing. Your children need their mother more than the world needs another martyr.” Erinti tries one last time to no avail.

Elwing has seen her death; her death will guarantee that the rest live. She had the blood of Melian; she had been cursed with visions of doom as long as she has remembered.

She had seen her own death the second her nurse showed her the Silmaril.

One cannot run from fate.

“That will not stop them, their madness will not stop them from—” the words catch on Elwing’s throat.

“How long can your girdle hold, Lady Athaenis?” Sadriel, the nurse asks as she makes sure the boys have all they need.

“I don’t know. If they attack it, I do not know how long I can hold them off.” The redhead answers as she feels them scour every creak and crevice for the Silmaril.

She feels the castle gardens choke with the blood and bodies of the innocent, she feels as they destroy the potted plants inside be overturned and torn out as they get closer to the royal wing.

---

“Is there a way for us to reach them in time?” Gil-Galad asked his uncle and foster father wishing they could do more than protect the Havens of the Ships as they help everyone leave the sieged city.

The castle was fortified and yet Maedhros and Maglor had cut through the defenses like a knife through butter.

The Oath burns in you and takes over you until the blood thirst is quenched, or so Celebrimbor had said when he asked them to lock him in a cell when his uncles called their men to assault the Haven.

“No, Gil-Galad, if we were to meet them in battle, we would not survive. These people need us to protect them, we cannot do that if we are dead.” Círdan shook his head as he affixed his helm before joining the men at the front.

“Do you think they will survive?” the young king knows the answer already, but he dares not lose hope that Erinti will be amongst the survivors.

There is no answer.

---

“We will be right behind you.” Elwing kissed her sons goodbye. “Cuio mhae.”

Farewell.

“Galo Anor erin rîd dhîn.” The twins hold back their tears as they hug her in return.

May the sun shine upon your path.

Erinti is caught off guard when she hears men running up the passageway.

“You thought you could escape us?” they wear the gold and reds of Fëanor, and malice shines brightly in their eyes like the light of the trees.

Those are not his sons, but foot soldiers who have too much blood in their hands. There was something almost orcish about their feä.

His sons, Maedhros and Maglor are waiting outside of the door as they try everything to break it down.

“It’s over, Athaenis, release your girdle. Protect my sons, they are all I have.” Elwing said as she let herself weep at the cruel hand fate dealt her.

And the maia does as she’s told.

The doors to the nursery open and the last Queen of the Sindar leads them away from the children.

“I need your word that you will not harm them, my lords.” The Queen made the Fëanorians swear it.

“We will not hurt them if you give us the jewel our father crafted, my lady. Give us the Silmaril and free us, only you can do so.” Maglor, the dark-haired elf with a somber and melancholic feä, spoke before his brother.

Maglor was said to be more diplomatic than his elder brother, but even he knew the Oath they swore would never be broken.

“I cannot give you the Silmaril, my lords, it is not your destiny to have this Silmaril.” She walks backwards, towards the window behind her.

Erinti prays Ulmo will give her a swift and painless death.

It is not done out of her desire to keep the jewel; Elwing had seen things even Erinti had not been able to see.

The Silmaril had a part to play, and it could not do so in the hands of these elves.

“Close your eyes, my little loves.” Erinti gathered the twin boys and gave one last look to Elwing.

“Do not do this! Just give us the jewel and live!” Maedhros tries to stop her, but she is faster and by the time he reached the window, the last Queen of the Sindar has already jumped to her death.

The twin boys cry and struggle against the women holding them, as Erinti waits to feel her feä be snuffed out like a candle.



But the moment never comes.

Instead, Elwing transforms into a great white bird and follows the path Ulmo has laid out between her and Eärendil.

If only they too could grow wings and fly to freedom.

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