A New Path to Erebor

by Reach4theSky

Summary

The changes that Bilbo Baggins and the company of Oakenshield have made are made clear as their adventure brings them completely off the path they remember. The company is faced with a harrowing decision to stay together and continue to Erebor or to split forces in the face of their new challenges. New friends are made and battles are rewritten as Bilbo Baggins struggles with a decision of his own.
Hi all!

Sorry for the long pause! I have been losing my mind a little, I have started grad classes again and I'm also homeschooling my daughter and trying to handle her speech myself since insurance explicitly states that they will not cover autism specific/related therapies...so $&%(#*(@)&%#$)%$@Q*$ insurance companies!

Anyways, I have a few chapters done and laid out so hopefully things will go smoothly at least for this month.

Don't forget to check me out on Tumblr (Reach4theSky.tumblr.com) so sneak peeks of the next chapter!

It doesn’t matter how many times he had to wait in this very hallway, it was always nerve wracking for Bombur to pace as he listened to his wife giving birth just behind the locked double doors in front of him.

“You’re going to pace a whole in the floor.” Bofur murmured from the bench he was sprawled on. “She is a strong dam who has given you five healthy children already and is on her way to giving you another one. She will be just fine.”

Bombur turned and glared at his brother. Before he could open his mouth to retort, the loud click of the door being unlocked interrupted him and outstepped one of the midwife’s attendants.

“Bombur, she is ready to see you.” Her smile filled him with relief as he quickly crossed the hall to pass her in the doorway.

It never ceased to warm his heart to see his wife holding a new babe. His new babe. Bombur didn’t stop moving until he was next to her bed, ignoring the bustle of movement as the midwife and attendants cleared the room of any evidence of labor.

“Maeth.” His heart caught in his throat as he said her name, his eyes roaming over her tiny face. “She’s beautiful, my love.”

“Aye, she is. She was quite content to stay in as well.” Bombur looked up to see another dwarrowdam wiping sweat from his wife’s brow.

“Sleep, mizim.” Bombur smiled down at her as he carefully took the small bundle from her arms. “I’ll watch over our little one.”

He settled himself in a nearby chair, his gaze alternating between his slumbering wife and his new daughter.

Bilbo sighed as he looked around the camp. Every single member of their company had been bound
and separated with a guard standing over them. His heart clenched when he saw a few of them fighting off sleep and knew an escape would be out of the question with how little energy they all had left. Unlike his dwarves, Bilbo and his cousins had remained unbound and together off to the side of the camp.

“Who is in charge of this company?” One of the hobbits moved to the center of the clearing.

Bilbo studied this hobbit, whom looked similar to him in many ways. He was not as round as the hobbits in the Shire but still pleasantly plumped. The hobbit was also muscular from what Bilbo could see as he moved with more of a warrior’s grace rather than the relax stance of a Shireling. All of the hobbits in the clearing had dark curly hair, and thick but short beards. Bilbo also noted that their foot hair, while still neat, was quite a bit shorter than normally kept in the Shire.

“I am their leader.” Thorin’s deep voice boomed from the opposite side of the camp from Bilbo. “I am Thorin, son of Thrain.”

“Why are you keeping three hobbits hostage, Thorin son of Thrain.” The hobbit had turned to face Thorin, eyes narrowed.

“Hostage?” Aladgrim piped up. “He rescued us.”

Bilbo sighed as all the attention turned to the three of them. Before his cousin could say anything else, he carefully stood up.

“My name is Bilbo Baggins of the Shire.” He gave a short bow before gesturing behind him. “These two are my cousins, Adalgrim and Ferembras Took.”

“Took?” The strange hobbit asked as the rest broke out in whispers and raised eyebrows. “All three of you are Tooks?”

Bilbo watched curiously as they muttered to each other. “Yes, my mother was a Took.”

“And why are you with these outsiders?” The hobbit frowned as he looked at the dwarves and elves. Bilbo stiffened at the disdain in the other’s voice. He forced a smile onto his face before he asked, “It might be easier to have this conversation if I knew your name.”

“Ah, apologies.” The hobbit gave a short bow with a frown. “My name is Baldarick Took.”

Bilbo nodded tersely. “We are not their captives. My cousins were captured by goblins and when they attempted to do the same to our company, we were able to rescue them and made our way south. We didn’t know that there were still hobbits in these part, just that we needed to find away across the mountains that wasn’t goblin-infested or as far south as the Gap of Rohan.”

“Are Shire hobbits friendly with outsiders then?” Another hobbit who was standing over Ori asked. “Even after what happened during the Wandering?”

Bilbo shook his head. “We have lost many of our records of the Wandering. Most of what we know was passed down through generations but there are many different versions and we have no way of knowing which are right and which are simply stories. Hobbits from the Shire don’t usually trust strangers,” Bilbo glared at Baldarick. “Even of their own kind.”

“I think what my dear cousin means to say,” Alagrim stood quickly and subtly pinched Bilbo’s arm. “Is that these dwarves and elves have earned our trust. They are a good lot and great warriors. They were being chased by orcs when they stumbled upon the goblin caves. It was a rather good thing they did too, otherwise Ferembras and I would never have made it out ourselves.”
“And why was a company of dwarves, two elves and a hobbit trying to get over the mountains?”

Baldarick’s gaze washed over the three of them, Ferembras still seated on the ground due to his injuries.

Bilbo spoke quickly when he saw Thorin open his mouth. “We are a diplomatic convoy heading for the Iron Hills. We had decided to travel together for safety and have a meeting with the Lord of the Iron Hills within a month.”

Baldarick held his gaze, causing Bilbo to raise his chin in a silent challenge.

“As much as this posturing is entertaining, we have not slept nor eaten in days and we have a few injuries as well.” Ferembras spoke up from his seat. “I don’t know about anyone else, but I would like to lay down and sleep for a week.”

“Well that’s what happens when you antagonize several goblins at once.” Aldagrim muttered.

“I was protecting you, you muffinhead!” Ferembras glared up at his brother.

“Muffinhead?!” Aldagrim turned around. “If you weren’t so injured, I’d -”

“Enough!” Baldarick interjected. “We will rest here the night and tomorrow you will be taken to our Elders to discuss passage through the mountains. You are trespassors here so we will need to take your weapons until the Elders have heard your case.”

Bilbo sighed in relief as his company were released and quickly made his way over to Thorin.

“Are you alright?” Bilbo couldn’t help but ask.

“I am fine, ghivisha.” Thorin pulled him closer for an embrace. “You and your cousins handled that well.”

Bilbo snorted. “Aldagrim and Ferembras play off each other’s ridiculous antics to get others to bring down their guard. I’m sure that Fili and Kili will be that way as well.”

Thorin shook his head and looked over to his nephews. “I hope they will because that means they survived this terrible mess.”

Bilbo pulled back and gave him a smile. “I hope so, too.”

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Bombur rubbed his eyes as he followed behind Bifur. The company had slept through the night, although a few of them had taken watch to keep an eye on their captors and had risen when the sun was already halfway through the sky. Bombur privately thought that it was kind of them to let them rest for so long.

“Bombur, you alright?” Bofur moved so that he was walking next to his brother rather than behind him. “You have been a little rattled since we pulled you out of the river.”

Bombur shook the cobwebs from his mind before looking at his brother. “I’ve been seeing what look like memories. But they can’t be. It’s a little confusing now.”

Bofur frowned. “Memories?”

“Aye.” Bombur sighed and adjust his pack as they continued. “I’m not sure where they came from but I feel as though we aren’t meant to be here.”
Bofur hummed and looked towards the front of the company where Thorin and Bilbo were walking along side some of the hobbits and creatures. His eyes narrowed as he caught Nori staring at Bombur and watched as the thief hurried forward to speak to Kili in hushed voices.
Fili elbowed his brother, who had bumped into him, and shoveled another forkful of food into his mouth. As he chewed, he looked around the large table they had been given, taking stock of their company. He chuckled to himself as he watched Legolas and Elladan try to adjust their long legs to fit comfortably at the low table. Eventually they gave up the chairs and sat on the ground to continue their quiet conversation. Next to them, Oin was loudly trying to convince his brother to let him check him over. Gloin was ignoring him in favor of arguing with Dwalin and Bifur over the battle with the orcs and goblins. Across from them, Dori was trying to put more food on Ori’s plate, who was trying to fend off the growing pile of greens. Nori was using the distraction to try to nick Dori’s food and laughed when Dori smacked his hand without even looking in his direction.

Movement at the other end of the table distracted him. He smirked as he saw Thorin and Bilbo, heads bent together as they talked and left the hall. It had been four days since they had been invited to stay by the Council, although Fili could see there were many who disagreed. Often times, Thorin, Balin and their hobbits had been pulled into a meeting by the council but now his uncle was taking advantage of a free evening.

“How long do you think we’ll stay, Fee?” Kili leaned over, capturing his brother’s attention.

Fili shrugged and continued to eat. “I’m not sure. I spoke with Thorin but something strange happened at the first council meeting. He hasn’t asked me to join him in any of them.”

Thorin had been rather tight lipped about their council meetings. Fili had managed to gather from him that there was a truth sayer amongst the Fae and Thorin had been forced to tell the council the truth behind their journey.

The blonde looked around the dining hall again, his gaze falling on a group of fae across the room. One of them sat on the outer edge of the group, their attention on the dwarves instead of the conversation among the other fae. Fili caught the sole silver haired fae’s eye and winked.

Kili nudged his brother once again. “Don’t let Thorin catch you wooing one of their women. Don’t
Thorin allowed himself a small grin as he followed behind his hobbit. They had left their company in the dining hall in favor of exploring the surrounding forest in the moonlight. In truth, Thorin was quite nervous as he thought of the small wooden bead in his pocket.

Bilbo hummed a tune, his face turned slightly to the moon. Thorin stopped breathing for a moment when the moonlight highlighted Bilbo’s smile.

“What do you think of the meeting today?” His hobbit turned to look at him, smile still adorning his face.

Thorin forced himself to breath again. “I think it went well. It is clear that Sigibert and a few other elders aren’t against our quest.”

Bilbo nodded, his eyes returning to the path in front of him to prevent any tripping. “I think that is because of their truthsayer. Had we tried to lie, I doubt we would have had as much favor with the council.”

“Well it is lucky that I had you by my side to recognize what she was.” Thorin chuckled as he let his hand brush against Bilbo’s.

Bilbo shrugged. “I only ever heard of them in the stories my mother used to tell me as a faunt. They are a part of our history, although of course everyone back home thinks they are myths.”

“Mayhaps now that they are aware of the Shire, there might be some contact between the two.” Thorin said thoughtfully. “It might completely upend the Shire.”

A warm feeling filled Thorin as Bilbo threw his head back and laughed.

“I can imagine that Lobelia would just about keel over at the improprity of the whole thing.” The hobbit responded, brushing aside a large fern.

Thorin chuckled in response. “That would be a quite a sight to see, I imagine.”

As their laughter faded away, Bilbo pulled Thorin along a smaller path to the side. “May said there was a field that had a night-blooming mock orchid. I haven’t ever had a chance to see one.”

“What is a night-blooming mock orchid?” Thorin frowned but allowed his hobbit to drag him through the trees.

“Well there is only one flower to each plant and they only bloom once every 40 years to release the seeds and then they wither and die. It is quite a sight to see.” Bilbo’s excited bounce in his steps were amusing to Thorin as they continued. “I doubt that any of the flowers are ready to bloom now but I still can’t wait to see them.”
Thorin was content to let Bilbo guide them through the forest, their hands still linked. Their silence was companionable as Thorin’s free hand rolled the wooden bead with his fingers in his pocket. Ten minutes later, there was a break in the trees and a moonlit field beyond.

Bilbo paused just outside the ring of moonlight, awed by the massive buds that littered the field. Thorin waited patiently next to Bilbo as he observed the field in some interest. After a few minutes, Thorin gently nudged his hobbit past the treeline.

“This is amazing.” Bilbo breathed as he approached the nearest bud. It was a dark color at the base and became lighter towards the top of the petals. The moonlight caused them to shine, lending an ethereal glow. Hesitantly, he reached out and ran his fingertips across the petal. “It’s quite soft.”

Curious, Thorin ran his own hand along the petal and was surprised to find that it felt like silk. “I can think of something just as soft to the touch.”

Bilbo looked at Thorin curiously and turned red under his heated gaze. His voice felt rather husky as he asked, “Is that why you wanted to tag along on this little jaunt in the woods?”

He felt his breath catch as Thorin smiled and moved closer.

“There is actually another reason.” Thorin took one of his hand and held it with both of his for a moment. Slowly he raised their clasped hands and gave Bilbo’s fingers a light kiss. Bilbo was suddenly aware that Thorin had placed something in his hand as he stepped back and let go.

Butterflies swirled around his stomach as he looked down to see a perfectly carved wooden bead sitting in the middle of his palm. It was a little difficult to see in the moonlight, but Bilbo was able to make out some of the small carvings that resembled the hills of the Shire. Bilbo looked up and realized that his silence had made Thorin nervous.

“Are you going to ask the question or stare at me all night?” Bilbo teased, his smile straining his face.

Thorin chuckled, his nervousness fading away. “Bilbo Baggins of the Shire, will you give me your permission to court you in the ways of my people?”

“Of course.” Bilbo handed the bead back to Thorin and moved closer. “There has never been anyone else for me.”

With ease, Thorin quickly braided a courtship braid into his hair just behind his right temple. As soon as he finished, Bilbo threw his arms around Thorin’s neck and dragged him down for a passionate kiss. Thorin returned it with equal fervor as he pulled the hobbit as close to him as he could. In their bliss, they didn’t notice the bloom beside them begin to open as the moon reached its peak in the sky until one of the large petals gently pushed them aside.

Breaking away from each other, they watched as one by one the petals opened until it fully bloomed. Sitting in the middle of the blossom were three small white pouches.

“This must be a sign of good luck.” Bilbo beamed at Thorin, his excitement torn between his love and his awe of these ancient flowers.

Thorin looked skeptical. “Are you sure?”

“What else could it be?” Bilbo bounced on the balls of his feet.

Thorin stepped back in alarm as the three pouches burst open and released a powder into the air. He dragged Bilbo back just as a gust of wind blew it directly into their face. Thorin shooked his head,
feeling lightheaded.

“Still a sign of good luck?” He slurred as he reached for Bilbo.

Bilbo’s response was lost as the two collapsed on the grass.

“My Lady.” Galadriel turned from her window to face the Marchwarden, Haldir. “We have prepared your horses.”

Galadriel nodded. “And what of your preparations to march north?”

“I believe that we will be able to leave within a fortnight.” Haldir answered.

Galadriel moved closer to the table that held her own traveling supplies. “The extra supplies for the dwarves?”

“Our stewards are still calculating what we will need to bring with us to supply the Dwarves and still supply our own people.” Haldir shifted slightly, the only sign of his unease. “With it being so close to Winter, it is difficult to determine if our troops will need to stay in Erebor or the Greenwood, or if they will be able to make their way home. Since it is late in the season, we do not have a large store of extra supplies.”

“We shall do what we can.” Galadriel frowned as she studied the items before her. “There are too many decisions that need to be made, I cannot see the outcome of the battle. Prepare enough supplies for our troops to stay away for the winter. If need be, we can help secure the mountain.”

Haldir hesitated for a moment. “As you wish my lady.”

Galadriel’s gaze froze him to the spot. “Securing the mountain and the East is more important than the discrimination our peoples hold against one another. Before this is over, we must all come together if we are to survive Sauron.”

Haldir bowed. “Of course, My Lady.”

“Send Elrohir to me. I wish to see him before he returns to Imladris.” Galadriel turned back to her table as Haldir briskly left the chamber.
Bilbo groaned as he sat up and rubbed his aching head. He blinked and looked over to see that Thorin was stirring. “Thorin, love, are you alright?”

Thorin’s blue eyes opened a sliver. “You and your signs of good luck give me headaches.”

Biblo chuckled and winced as a sharp pain shot through his head. “I do have a tendency to tempt fate, it seems.”

Thorin’s groaned in response as he rolled onto his side and gingerly sat up. “Where are we?”

Bilbo frowned and then looked around only to find that they were not in a field but in front of a hobbit door. The deep boom of metal on metal could be heard and lamps were lit in the windows. “I’m not sure.”

The door opened, sending the pair scrambling to their feet. Bilbo grabbed Thorin’s wrist as the dwarf tried to unsheath his sword. Thorin stopped and looked at him curiously.

“Thorin,” Bilbo patted his hand before drawing away. “This is the Lady Yavanna.”

Thorin’s jaw dropped as quickly as his hand. “I apologize, My Lady.”

Yavanna’s bell-like laugh sounded as Thorin hastily bowed before her. “Worry not, Thorin Oakenshield. Come inside.”

Bilbo followed her without hesitation, leaving Thorin stunned and scrambling to follow behind him. “How did we get here?”

Yavanna sighed as she guided them down the long hallway. It was clear that the smial was a mixture of dwarves and hobbit workmanship. The halls and the doorways were in the traditional rounded tops but carved into the wood were the geometric symbols favored by the dwarves. Here and there, metal and gems were inlayed into the designs. They came to the sitting room, where there was comfortable furniture and various metal work displayed along the walls.

“I do apologize for calling you here in such a manner. Please, take a seat and tuck in.” Yavanna gestured for them to sit in the chairs around the fireplace. “My husband should be in any moment.”

Bilbo sat down and waited for Thorin to join him before turning to the goddess. “My Lady, what manner are you talking about?”

“Do we not have much of our power left so I took advantage of the hallucenogenic nature of the night-blooming mock orchid to summon you here.” Yavanna said in a matter of fact tone.

Bilbo’s jaw dropped. “Hallucenogenic?”

Yavanna’s laugh chimed once more. “Yes, did they not tell you that when they told you they had a field of the orchids?”

“No! Of course they didn’t!” Bilbo sat back, stunned. “They only said that they didn’t expect the orchids to bloom any time soon.”

“Well, that would be because they tend to host rather large parties for the adults to enjoy the effects.” Yavanna leaned over and poured them each a cup of tea. “By their calendar, it isn’t due to happen
for another five years or so.”

“So is any of this real?” Thorin frowned, shifting in his seat.

“Yes.” Yavanna lost the jovial expression as heavy footsteps sounded from the hall. “That would be my husband.”

A moment later, a dwarf somewhat shorter than Thorin entered the room. Bilbo noted that this dwarf had more braids than even the Ri brothers, though his hair was tied back while he was smithing. Thorin stood quickly to greet Mahal, and Bilbo followed suit.

“Boys, please sit.” Mahal’s deep voice resembled the strong, rumbling tones of a horn that offset the twinkling lightness of his wife’s. “I shall join you in a moment.”

Bilbo and Thorin returned to their seats and their attention to Yavanna. She sighed and leaned back in her own chair.

“I brought you here because this was the only way for me to let you know what occurred. When we spoke before your return, Bilbo, I told you that only you and your company were going to be the only ones to receive your memories.” Yavanna clasped her hands in her lap. “Mahal and I combined our powers to do just that with Eru’s permission. What we didn’t realize is that because of how long you held the ring, Sauron was very familiar with your soul.”

“Familiar?” It was Bilbo’s turn to frown as he grabbed Thorin’s hand. “What does that mean?”

“It means that when your soul was sent back in time, Sauron was able to follow and return with his own memories.” Mahal answered as he stepped back into the room. He settled himself into the final open seat. “When we realized what happened, Eru agreed to send more souls back.”

Thorin’s hand tightened around Bilbo’s. “Why send more of us? You could have simply alerted us about Sauron instead.”

Mahal and Yavanna exchanged a look, worry set deep in their faces. Mahal leaned forward and rested his forearms on his thighs. “When Sauron was defeated for the final time, he was sent to the same prison that held his former master, Morgoth. By being connected to Bilbo’s soul and following him back, Sauron was able to open the Door of Night and allow him to escape.”

Bilbo felt a shiver of fear run down his spine as he remembered the entries that had been written about the fallen Ainur in Rivendell’s extensive library. He swallowed a few times, his throat dry.

“So, it’s my fault.” Bilbo uttered, dismayed.

“No.” Thorin growled. “You are not to blame.”

“It is certainly not your fault.” Yavanna interjected before Bilbo could continue his argument. “In trying to correct one wrong, we created a larger mess. There was no way to know that Sauron was able to follow your soul back. The Valar were the ones to cast Morgoth into the Timeless Void but Eru has declared that since we petitioned to allow the dwarves to prove themselves again, that Mahal and I are the ones that need to find Morgoth and cast him back before he gathers his full strength.”

“You don’t know where he is?” Thorin ran a hand through his hair.

Yavanna shook her head. “We are unable to set foot on Arda so we are doing what we can to search for him through our children. We were able to convince some of our Brethern to aid us and were able to send more souls back to help you finish your own task.”
“There is the possibility that he is not longer on Arda.” Mahal added. “He interferred with the creation of Arda so he is familiar with it’s formation. It is possible that he was able to escape and find a similar world.”

“What do we do now?” Bilbo’s face was pale, his mind racing.

Yavanna leaned forward and grasped Bilbo’s free hand. “Nothing. There is nothing that you can do for the moment regarding Morgoth. We have tasked you with destroying the ring and that you must complete. Sauron is Morgoth’s right hand and the more immediate threat. It will weaken Morgoth further to destroy Sauron again.”

“If there is nothing we can do about Morgoth, why did you summon us here?” Thorin said through clenched teeth. “Why did we need to know any of that?”

“There is another matter that is more immediate that you needed to know but reaching you takes a lot more power than we can spare.” Mahal answered. “Had you managed to cross the High Pass successfully, you would have run directly into scouts from Mount Gundabad.”

“What are they doing?” Bilbo asked, incredulously.

“Child, they are preparing to march on the Shire.” Yavanna answered.

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“What happened?” A feminine voice asked frantically.

The voice was familiar but he was treading between consiousness and the abyss. He felt as though he was riding the waves as he tried to remember just who he was.

“He just collapsed.” Another voice, male this time, responded. “He hadn’t started practicing yet.”

“He didn’t hit his head on anything?” Another brisk female voice asked.

He could feel fingers lifting his head and moving it gingerly to the side. He tried to move it himself but couldn’t. He tried not to panic when his body didn’t respond.

“No.” The male voice answered. “He was wearing his helm even.”

The examination went on for a few minutes as he concentrated on his hand. Finally, he could feel his hand twitch.

“He is waking up!” The first female voice announced. “His hand moved, I swear it.”

“Gimli.” Ah yes, that’s what his name is. “Can you open your eyes?”

Straining, Gimli changed his focus and slowly opened his eyes, wincing at the bright light. A murmer sent one of the persons scurrying to partially cover the lamp before Gimli tried again. Finally he opened his eyes and remembered.
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