Virtually Torn
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Summary

Emma Saved the world from being torn apart... but in doing so she is torn from her family and became a shell of her former self.... But fate is not done with her yet. 

Once again she falls from the sky....

This is a continuation of Virtually Faded, a Dragon Age fanfic, we highly, highly recommend you read that first

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Sarah couldn’t understand what was wrong with Emma. Her friend was . . . gone. Emma’s brother had had a heart attack on Emma’s couch and died in front of her and now . . . she was gone. She was there, physically, but her eyes and face were blank. Her arm was gone too, no-one knew how or why. But the paramedics had found her sitting calmly on her front steps, her brother’s belt wrapped around the stump of her arm to staunch the blood flow. They had found her brother laying on the floor inside, blood spattered everywhere.

The police ruled Damon’s cause of death as a natural heart attack. Apparently he had secretly been a druggie, no surprise there. The blood was all Emma’s, but Emma refused to say what happened to her arm and there was no sign of any crime. Or her arm.

But Emma was gone.

Sara squeezed her remaining hand in comfort and Emma blankly looked at her hand and at her before looking away without expression. The funeral director handed over the simple box of ashes and Emma smoothly slipped her hand out of hers to accept it, tucking it against her hip quietly.

“Em… If you need anything-”

“His will said he wished to be buried beneath a tree on the farm. I was to sing.” Her voice was monotone.

Sarah hesitated, she didn’t know how to handle this. Her friend was bubbly and emotional and cried and sang. But Emma was flat. Gone. She resisted the urge to hug her. “Alright. Let’s go.”

She didn’t sing.

Maddie shrieked as a trio of men stepped out of the alley way, a blade glinting in the flickering streetlight. She had taken Emma and Sarah out, trying to help cheer up Emma after her mysterious accident and her brother’s death, and now they were being mugged.

“Purses and phones. Hand them over.” The one with the knife snarled.

Maddie shakily reached for her purse strap, but then Emma was moving in a blur of movement. There was a cut off shriek, a groan, a splatter of blood as the one with the knife fell. The other two muggers turned and ran and Maddie watched in shocked horror as Emma straddled the fallen form of the attacker and drove the knife into his chest again and again. The stabs grew faster and more frantic, desperate breaths and grunts forcing themself out of Emma’s chest as she began to sob.

“Emma!” Sarah yelled in terror.

Emma screamed, loud and angry and painful, and threw the knife away from her. Just as suddenly, the emotion was gone and she stood smoothly, blood dripping from her hand.

“You… you killed him…” Maddie felt her mind reeling, shock and horror making her feel dizzy.

Emma turned blank, emotionless eyes onto her. “He was a threat.”
Oh god. She reached for her phone shakily. “I... I’m calling the cops.”

“Okay.”

“Miss Konstantina?”

The woman stopped gathering up her notes and looked at him blankly.

“May I speak with you?”

“You may.”

Her flat gaze and monotone voice unsettled him as always. “I, uh. I just wanted to let you know that you are advancing quickly in your Gealic lessons and that soon you will be levelling out of this course. There is a more advanced one in Ireland that I would like to recommend you for if you are interested.”

She blinked placidly. “I need to learn Gealic to translate my family records.”

Her brother had died, apparently the last of her family. Rumor said she had lost her arm and had a mental break down. Spent a few months in a mental health institute. Was her blankness from her medications? “I... will recommend you then? Will you need financial assistance?”

“No. My brother left money.” She said in a monotone.

“Okay. I’ll... email you the information.”

She turned and resumed gathering up her notes. She was a genius, but unsettling. Deeply, deeply unsettling.

“The trauma has caused an extreme dissociative state that-”

“And in the other corner, we have a newcomer: The Tranquil! This tiny one-armed fighter may look like an easy match, but she is as cold as ice with a ruthless streak bigger than she is-!”

“One of the deepest problems in modern physics is the problem of quantum gravity. The general theory of relativity is formulated within the framework of classical physics, whereas the other fundamental forces are described within the framework of quantu-”

“-seem to be doing better, Miss Konstantina.”

A small smile. “Thank you, Doctor Fannon. I’ve been focusing on studies and it helps.”

“I’m going to recommend a-“
“Emma, you’ve been locked in there for weeks. You need to come out and-”

“The spatial dimension of liminality can include specific places, larger zones or areas, or entire countries and larger regions. Liminal places can range from borders and frontiers to no man's lands and-”

“The Dread Wolf rises in the next installment of the Dragon Age Franchise-”

“-And The Tranquil wins yet again in a vicious victory against-”

“Emma, you’ve been playing that game for days now. Have you even slept? You have a match in two days-”

“Places that are linked by a portal include a different spot in the same universe; a parallel world; the past or the future; and other planes of existence, such as-”

“A match in England? Did your therapist agree? That’s-”

He paused in his tracks, signalling his company to halt as he scanned the dry rocky landscape before them. Something was happening. Something was changing the threads of the worlds. He felt a surge of something powerful moments before a thunderous crack of light split the air and something fell through it, hitting the ground with an audible thud. The light disappeared, leaving the aftertaste of magic tingling against his skin. Whatever that was was more powerful than anything he had ever encountered before.

He warily pulled his bow up as the figure on the ground began laughing, it’s voice high and clear as it shouted into the forest. A woman? An edain woman? “Solas! Ma’lath! Ar di ra!”

She stood unsteadily, still laughing brightly as she turned in a circle. Her laughter abruptly turned to a shriek of rage as an orc burst through the high rocks and a blade appeared in her hand just as suddenly. She threw herself at the beast with her longknife and he bit back a curse as he leaped to help her fight it off. She was no match for-

He almost tripped in his shock when the beast fell, blood spurting from it’s neck. She screeched again as another orc charged at her and she fell into a fighting stance, her left leg extended to center
her balance due to the fact that her left arm seemed to be missing. He slashed at an orc scout and sent an arrow racing after another as he tried to get near the strange human to protect her.

She said something in her odd language and he shook his head as he shot an arrow over her head and into an orc’s throat. “I cannot understand you.”

She let out a laugh as another orc fell beneath her blade, her eyes shining bright with elation. And madness, he would guess, as her laughter turned quickly to rage that she directed onto an orc’s skull.

There were far more orcs than he had been tracking originally, no doubt they had been summoned by the noise and light surrounding her appearance. A flurry of arrows darted from rocks behind them and felled what appeared to be the orc leader, it’s chest nearly covered by bright fletching. The girl kicked the body and shouted in her strange language in the direction of his soldiers. “mah sa den’emma!”

“And this is why edain women should not be warriors.” Thranduil grunted to himself as he parried an orc’s blade.

She whirled on him, her face and hand painted with orc blood, and with a flick of her wrist sent her knife whizzing barely an inch from his head. It landed behind him with a wet slicing sound.

“Tel’ditha ma ar tel’pen’el. Fenedhis ar lasa!”

He ducked away from the falling body of the orc she had just slain and moved to protect her as she had foolishly thrown away her only weapon. “I did not understand that, but I doubt it was flattering.” He said dryly, as he sidestepped a spear thrust and drove his sword into the orc’s temple.

She snorted and threw herself at another beast, her longknife suddenly appearing in her outstretched hand as she moved. How had she done that? The blade must have a powerful enchantment to return to her so. But she faltered and cried out as if in great pain, barely stumbling away from the beast’s sword strike. He drew his bow and sent an arrow through its skull before spinning away from the orc charging him. The girl was staggering to her feet, her teeth bared in a pained grimace as she chanted in her strange language under her breath. A crease appeared between her brows, which was all the warning he had before the threads of the world shifted and an unseen force flung away every orc still standing with enough force to shatter their spines. She screamed and fell to the ground, clutching her chest with her bloodied hand and sobbing loudly. Strange creatures, these Edain.

It was a matter of moments to dispatch the fallen orcs and he turned back to the girl. She must be wounded. But then her sobs changed to hiccuping laughter as she stared at her hand and he amended his thoughts. She must be mad. He couldn’t very well just leave her like this. She was giggling under her breath, tears still wet on her face as he approached her.

“How are you well?” He asked tentatively. How did he see that edain soldier comfort his kin? He frowned but reached out anyway to place his hand lightly to her shoulder. She shied away from him with a snarl of her strange language, “Tel’dera em!” and called her knife back to her hand and then immediately cried out in pain once more.

He did not feel like dealing with the strange thing much more and grabbed her wrist and pulled her to her feet. “Come.”

The tiny thing rolled her eyes. “Sol’din elvhen.” but seemed willing enough to follow him, though she kept trying to tug her arm from his grasp.
“My lord,” Gil’gallad’s Herald appeared from the rocks.

He frowned at the Noldor elf’s timely appearance. “Reduced to messenger are we, mellon?”

The noldor didn’t seem put off by his snark. He briefly wondered if there was anything to make the elf lose his ever calm facade. “The high king requests your report.”

“And he shall have it. Here.” He pulled the edain towards the Gil’galad’s herald. He would know how to deal with the tiny thing. “Since you are so fond of them.”

Instantly pain flared in his wrist and he realized that the edain had sunk her teeth into his flesh, and then her legs connected with the back of his knee and he was on the ground before he had the presence of mind to react. How humiliating. The girl brandished her knife at them and bared her teeth in rage. “Ar tel'girem rahn.”

“Peace, I mean you no harm.” The Noldor raised his hand holding signaling his soldiers to stand down as they all brandished their weapons at the edain and spoke gently in the language of men. “We cannot understand you.”

The girl narrowed her eyes before tilting her head and speaking slowly in Sindarin. “Wrong language. This is sindarin. Why are you speaking sindarin? It should be elvhen.” Her eyes drifted off to the forest and she spoke absently. “I made it here… why are you speaking the wrong language?”

He pushed himself from the ground and frowned at his wrist, that still held the imprint of her teeth, blood beading where her canines had cut flesh. “You are the one speaking a nonsensical language.” He paused and exhaled slowly. Why did she rile him so? “I think she might be mad. Possibly wounded.” He told the Herald.

“I am not wounded.” She snorted again, before rubbing her chest. “It just hurts to use my magic.”

Magic?

The high kings herald frowned, raising a hand toward the small edain. “If I may, child?”

“I'm not a child!” She snapped in sudden anger before her hand went to rub her head in frustration, “no, that's not right. That was concern. Not condescending. Sorry. May you what?”

He gave the Herald a ‘point made’ look before taking a step away from the volatile creature.

The herald looked intrigued rather than wary and gave the Edain a kind smile. “May I check you for injury?”

She jutted her chin out and cocked her hip before drawling in an atrocious accent, almost as if she was imitating someone other than herself. “I don't even have your name yet, hun.” Her face suddenly crumpled and she started crying again. “Where is he? He should be here! I was supposed to find him here! Ma'nas-ma-”

The herald reached for her again and she didn’t shy away, instead curling over her stomach and sobbing as he pressed his hand to her chest and closed his eyes before he suddenly snatched his hand back with an expression of horror. “She has an eldar fea… but… it is shredded… lashing out… searching. The bleeding and pain of a broken bond.”

He sucked in a breath of shock. A fea! An Edain? Broken bond? “How-” but he was cut off by the woman's hysterical cry.
“Broken? No! He can’t be dead! He was- He was-” The edain staggered backwards, looking around wildly. “I’m just- I’m in the wrong place. He’s fine, he’s fine. I’m just-” Her chest started heaving as her breath quickened. “They’re fine, not broken, not gone.” Her legs gave out beneath her and she fell to the forest floor in a pitiful heap, hugging her knees to her chest. “I was gone, not him. He’s fine- wrong language wrong-” She stilled, her breath halting suddenly as she sat as motionless as a carven statue. Slowly she looked up. “Wrong elves…” Her voice was barely a whisper. “You’re the wrong elves… who are you?”

The king’s Herald looked at her with pity in his eyes. “I am Elrond Per’edhel, child.”

“Elrond? The Elrond?” She seemed shocked. “Who is the king of men? The king of elves?”

Elrond clearly didn't expect this question. “There are many elven kings, child. The high king is Gil’galad.

She blinked and began muttering in her strange language, rubbing her chest with the hilt of her dagger as she looked around with calculating eyes. How her mood varied from moment to moment. He frowned as he saw the symbols of golden flowers wrought along the hilt. House of the Golden Flower? She looked back at the Herald with a frown. “If the elvhen recognized-” She squeezed her eyes shut and groaned. “I’m in the second age...” She pushed herself up and began stomping away into the trees, lifting her feet over the fallen orcs without care.

He did not feel easy, letting her wander off by herself. She was wounded in the most dire, if impossible, of manners. “Wait-”

“And who are you supposed to be anyway?” She whirled on him, “You shout orders, yanking people around, Steal kills!” The last bit she spat at him like an accusation.

He tried not to bristle at her tone… she was suffering after all, but couldn't help drawing himself up proudly. “I am Thranduil Oraph’er’ion.”

Her face paled then turned confused. “Oh you're- you look like the pie-maker but not quite… you’re still pretty…” suddenly tears welled up again. “you poor thing.”

What in Arda did that mean? He looked at Elrond helplessly. “We can’t just leave her out here alone.” The women started to laugh suddenly as she fell back to the ground and he winced. “Can we?”

“It… would not be kind.”

“I liked Kindness. Not as smart as Wisdom, but she had a nice voice. Pride was my favorite though. He likes sweet things.” She said absently, her shoulders suddenly curling in over a sob. “It hurts.”

He sighed and looked to Elrond who looked on with pity in his eyes. “It is no small hurt to lose one’s bonded, the heartache alone is too much for our people to bear. If they do not sail, they fade.”

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“There is no fade here. Not yet, theoretically.” The Edain rambled quietly.

Thranduil shook his head. What pain must the poor creature be suffering to completely lose her mind. “I will take her back to camp then.” He approached carefully and extended a hand to help her up. “Come.”

The woman looked up at him with red rimmed eyes, “Orders. Always orders from you lot. Come
with me, da’len. Hush, ma’lath. Sleep, ma’falon. Eat, drink, be merry for tomorrow we die, shemlen.”

Thranduil frowned at her strange words but amended. “Please, allow me to aid you.”

She deflated, suddenly looking exhausted, and nodded, sheathing her knife and placing her hand in his. He pulled her to her feet only for her legs to give out, forcing him to carry her. She suddenly seemed so light, thin, frail.

Her head lolled against his shoulder before something very lightly brushed his fea. The Edain jerked in his arms and curled away as far as she could, “No, wrong, not him. Not my pride. It’s wrong.”

He felt pity for the tiny creature as he walked. How long would she last, broken like this? Could an Edain fade?
The Strange Edain

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Thranduil deposited the strange Edain with his father’s healers as soon as they entered the camp, not that the Edain herself knew; she fell into an exhausted slumber shortly before reaching their destination.

Typically, Gil’galad had wanted a detailed report of not only his scouting mission but of the strange Edain’s appearance as well. The fact that she held a dagger of a long gone house was puzzling, as was her odd language and the words, ‘the wrong elves’.

He stepped out of the tent where the kings held council more annoyed than when he had entered it. Gil’galad had not liked his nor Elrond’s report of the edain woman’s appearance. His father and king Amrid hadn't believed the edain had just appeared and wrote it off as magic gone awry. They only seemed unnerved by Elrond’s account that the edain had a fea quite similar to the eldar.

Gil’galad wanted her brought before them as soon as the healers were done so they could evaluate her themselves, which everyone, including his father agreed to if only to sate their curiosity. But for some reason it left a bitter taste on his tongue. The creature was suffering yet he had been ordered to collect her for them to view.

The healers were gathered outside of the tent when he arrived, looking back warily at its flaps as if they were expecting its occupant to rush out at any moment.

“Why do you stand around while there are wounded to attend?” He snapped with no amount of patience in his voice. Six years this cursed war has dragged on and the seventh was drawing nigh. He feared the Great Greenwoods would not recognize him as the lighthearted ellon who left with its king to battle against the shadows.

The head healer, an elleth with striking black hair and emerald eyes, bowed her head in reverence of his station. “Forgive me, my prince, but the edain is wild and unpredictable. She threatened everyone who tried to help her, threw a pestle at my assistant when he tried to wash the orc blood from her face.”

“Did you ask her before hand?” Thranduil raised an eyebrow, trying to act like he knew what he was doing with the mad edain.

The elleth blanched. “Well… no, my prince. She was speaking in an unknown language. We assumed she could not understand us.”

Thranduil sighed heavily and waved them away. “I will see to her. Continue with your other duties.” As they all scurried away with exclamations of ‘yes my prince’s, he inwardly questioned his own sanity before pulling back the flap.

The edain was standing with her back to him, dipping a cloth into water before vigorously scrubbing her face, which had already taken on a raw appearance, as if she was attempting to scrub the skin off. She paused to lean against the worktable as her shoulders shook, her knuckles white with their death grip upon the wood.
He hesitated before speaking, wondering what mood afflicted her at the moment. “How are you?”

She rubbed her face and sniffled but didn’t look at him. “I spent two years cut off from my magic. Cut off from my emotions unless I fought—unless there was blood. I just got them back for real, and my bonds are shredded. What do you think, piemaker?”

He was stunned by her sudden clarity, well not accounting the bit about pie making. So he tried what he’d seen his father do too many times since this war had started. “You will reunite in Mandos’ Halls.”

“He’s not in Mandos’ Halls!” She suddenly whirled and threw the cloth at him. He sidestepped it and it landed against the ground with a wet slap. Just as suddenly as it had appeared, her anger left her. “I’m sorry. I’m… I’m trying to get—” She growled and shook her head. “I’m trying to get my emotions under control.” She leaned against the table with a defeated look. “There’s so many…”

Not in Mandos’ Halls? And if he had not sailed- But that meant... “Your bonded was an elf?”

“An absolute egg.” She lifted the stump of her left arm and stared at the absence where her hand should be. Tears fell down her cheeks again, but she didn’t wail as she had in the forest. “He grew his hair out for me.”

Before he could think of what to say, she dashed the tears from her eyes and inhaled. “I’m assuming I have to meet whoever’s in charge? Let them make sure I’m not a threat or whatever? Or just to see the edain dance.”

He nodded. “My father King Oropher, Amdir king of Lorien, and Gil’galad High King of the Noldor elves.”

“Crap, kings.” She pulled her wild hair from it’s tie and began combing her fingers through the tangled mess. Apparently giving up on the idea of leaving it down, she tried to twist it up only to fail in that as well. It slipped through her fingers and she growled and punched the work table, sending instruments rattling away. Then quickly swiped at her eyes. “Sorry. Sorry, I just- can’t.”

Thranduil shifted uncomfortably, uncertain how to help. He thought of calling in one of the healers maybe the elleth to assist, but he had dismissed them to tend to others. She growled under her breath and muttered. “Guess I’ll be putting on a show. Come see the wild edain! She had sticks in her hair and only one arm! Maybe she’ll do some magic for a treat!”

She… did not seem to hold a high opinion of elves. He wanted to object but had he not just questioned the same thing? He frowned and impulsively offered. “I can braid it for you. If… if you wished to be more… presentable.”

She looked up at him with wide eyes, only then did he notice their unusual silver sheen over the natural grey, like the firstborn. “You would do that? I thought touch was all—” she wiggled her fingers in a strange gesture in his direction.

He felt a blush color his cheeks and spread to his ears. “Ah, yes and no… in this case no.” But he was still the Prince of the Greenwood- he shook the thought from his head. No, she could not do it herself and was to appear before the greatest of the Eldar. It was a small mercy and comfort he could give, even if he must chance breaking protocol to give it to her.

The girl frowned as if she didn't quite believe him, but nodded before holding out a ring of odd cloth. She seemed amused by his expression. “It’s a scrunchy, it stretches. You just wrap it around the hair a few times to hold it.”
He took the ‘scrunchy’ from her outstretched hand and motioned for her to turn. She obeyed meekly, immediately making him wary. He hesitated before gathering some of her hair in his hands, the rich nut color reminding him of his beloved forest as he soothed out the worst of the tangles. He decided to forgo the ‘scrunchy’ in favor of his own leather ties, and deftly arranged the hair into a simple, serviceable braid, refraining from the odd temptation of adding embellishments.

When he handed the ‘scrunchy’ back to her, her face fell. “You used a leather tie, didn’t you?” She seemed lost in some memory, her eyes flickering silver as she stared at the odd fabric, pain flashing across her features. He seemed unsure what the significance was to her.

“I am afraid your…’scrunchy’ was unfamiliar to me.” He said stepping back and away in case she turned volatile again.

A little giggle escaped her. “You say scrunchy funny.”

He shook his head in disbelief of how quickly her mood shifted but then decided that it was time to face Gil’galad and his Father. “We have tarried too long, if you would follow me?”

She sighed and straightened her shoulders. “Vin. Nadas.”

It sounded like acceptance so he exited the tent. She followed him, her footsteps barely making any sound against the earth. She was strangely light footed for an edain. Many of the elves in the camp stopped to stare as they passed by, but she did not even seem to notice them. Instead her eyes scanned the area with an odd sadness. “Din’esha’lin el ithast.”

“What is that language you speak?” He indulged his curiosity to ask.

“Ancient elvhen. Or-” She stumbled over her words. “Maybe new elvhen right now, or not yet, or never. Things are a bit… uncertain.”

She was surprisingly self aware for a mad woman. He paused outside the council tent of the kings and turned to see if she was prepared in time to see her straighten her spine, fix a polite expression onto her face, and the silver light flicker out of her eyes. She folded her arm behind her back in a casual, yet polite position and it was as if she was a different person.

She tilted her head with that small smile. “Shall we, pie maker?”

He forced himself not to stare in shock at her transformation, and raised the flaps with one arm and gestured her forward with the other. She bowed her head in thanks as she passed him. He followed behind her, letting the tent flap fall behind them and waited to be addressed by the council of kings.

They were acknowledged and he bowed in the customary manner before he thought that he had forgotten to instruct the edain in the proper greeting. But she stunned him by easily bowing in the manner of elves, her fist curling over her heart and bending to one knee in a graceful motion. She rose after barely a heartbeat had passed, obviously used to being of equal rank to those she bowed to. His father raised his eyebrows in curiosity.

“You are the edain that Thranduil Oropher’ion found behind our enemies’ lines.” Gil’galad spoke his words coldly, clearly trying to intimidate the strange edain.

The girl remained silent, the same polite expression fixed on her face. Gil’galad frowned. “Well?”

“Oh, I was waiting for a question.” She said as if surprised and paused just long enough to not be rude. “Lord.”
Amdir suddenly barked a laugh while his son, Amroth, smirked from his place behind his father's chair.

Gil’galad rose from his chair, just shy of being a throne, and paced towards the girl until he was directly in front of her, looming over her. She craned her neck back once to look on his face before focusing on the pendant hanging from his neck. “Where do you hail from?”

“Virginia.” A small wistful smile pulled at her lips before it disappeared behind a polite mask.

Gil’galad circled her slowly, hand idly laying on the hilt of his sword, the threat obvious. “Virginia?” When she did not elaborate, he turned to his Herald. “You said she suffered from a severed bond, yet I see no evidence to her supposed maddening pain.”

Elrond opened his mouth to speak but was cut off by the edain’s quiet yet cold whisper. “Not everyone likes to bare their wounds for all strangers to see. Lord.”

“We need to see the truth of your situation. It is a dire time, edain. You must understand our mistrust.” Gil’galad came to a halt behind her.

The girl stood motionless for a long moment before she bared her teeth in a grin that looked more like a warning snarl than a true smile. “Very well.” Instantly her posture relaxed and her eyes flickered silver. Thranduil took a step away from her as tears flowed in silver lines down her cheeks and the threads of the world shifted. She clutched her chest with a cry of pain and then… her fea… exploded and all he could sense and feel was pain, loss, pain, grief, pain so deep it felt as if his soul was tearing itself apart. Just as suddenly it ceased and the girl gasped before collapsing to the ground, clutching her chest as she sobbed.

Gil’galad had fallen back, his fingers white around the hilt of his sword and a stricken expression on his face. Never before had Thranduil believed he would see the great king of the Noldors gape like a fish, yet here he was. If the others in the council had not been sitting he would chance a guess that all who were bonded would have lost the strength in their legs to stand.

The girl sniffed and shakily stood to her feet before proudly turning to stare at the High King, tears still wet on her cheeks. “Are you ‘satisfied’, lord?”

“Her injury and grief makes her moods unstable, my king. She cannot help it.” Elrond sounded concerned as he approached with his arms out and palms up towards the girl. “Man was not meant to bond in the manner of elves, and thus not meant to suffer the pain of a severed bond.”

“I am no man.” She suddenly burst into giggles before breathing slowly a few times, “Forgive me, that will make sense in a few hundred years…” she then scrunched up her nose in thought. “Or is it thousands? God, I hope not.”

“Are you a seer?”

“No...yes...no...I don't know anymore.” She giggled again. “I just like to read.” A look of wonder crossed her face. “Oh god, I like to read!”

Oropher stood from his seat, casting Thranduil a considering look before approaching the edain. “What are you called, child?”

“Ma’tarlen, EmTi, Lil’bit, Ma’lath, ma’falon, ma’elgar’asha-” her voice cracked and she looked away, taking a deep breath before continuing. “My name is Emma. Emma Konstantina. Daughter of Reece and Esther Konstantina and Valerie-Keen and Chase Theron.”
“Four parents? How is that possible?” Amroth questioned from his place behind his father’s chair.

The girl giggled again. “Well, when a man loves a woman and a man and a woman—”

“Enough!” Gil’galad scolded, his skin having yet to return to its normal shade. “Elrond Perehdel, in your evaluation of her, do you see her as a threat? Has the dark lord left his mark upon her? Is she an Easterling?”

Oropher frowned at the Noldor king in disapproval. “Do you believe my son not capable of telling friend from foe?”

Gil’galad look as if he was trying very hard not to roll his eyes. “Your son’s capability was never in question, my lord. Only that Suaron is increasingly cunning.” He then turned to the girl. “What happened to your arm? Accident? Battle?”

The girl gave him a scathing look. “Another wound to be picked at? My love cut it off to save my life.”

Thranduil felt the blood drain from his face. What curse or injury was so dire to require cutting off a limb?

Her words gave Gil’galad pause, but the High King continued to press. “Why would he do that?”

The edain smiled and raised the stump of the missing appendage. “It was tainted, eating away at me faster than we could fight it. So he removed it.”

“Poison.” Elrond concluded, nodding his head as if he understood. “You agreed to this measure then?”

“Magic. Magic that should have been ours, but was stolen and corrupted. But yes, I agreed. He didn't want to but I asked him to.” She took a shuddering breath and hugged herself with her remaining arm. “Can I- please can I stop talking about him? It hurts.”

Oropher nodded before Gil’galad could answer, earning an annoyed glance from the Noldor king as he gently laid a hand on the girl's shoulder. “Yes, Child. I sorrow for your soul’s loss.”

The girl turned from the High King and bowed to Oropher. “Ma serannas. I… I knew a spirit of Compassion once. He would have liked you, I think.”

Oropher graced her with a gentle smile before turning to regard Amdir. “If my Lords are in agreement, I sense no guile, and find no harm in letting the girl stay within our camp.”

Amdir bowed his head in agreement, giving the edain a pleased smile. “We could use her fire.”

The edain looked at him with silver eyes. “My fire is unstable, tarlin.”

“Clearly.” Amroth mumbled under his breath.

“Unfortunately, we cannot simply let her wander off by herself.” Gil’galad stated, paying the prince no mind and seemingly determined to have the last word on the matter. “And so, I charge you, Thranduil Oroph’ion with her care until we can find a more permanent accommodation.”

Thranduil stiffened as the charge was laid on him, looking to find his father’s disapproving eyes on Gil’galad, but he did not contradict the Noldor king, so he merely bowed his head in acknowledgement.
The girl snorted and as the kings’ eyes fell on her she made a sawing motion with her hand. “Can cut the tension with a knife.” She frowned. “Speaking of, where’s my knife? Someone took it while I was out. It was a family heirloom.”

The house of the golden flower was a family heirloom? That did not make sense. “I will see it is returned to you.” The healers probably had set it aside.

“If it’s not locked up I can call it back.” She rubbed her chest with a wince. “But I’d rather not if I can help it. Sometimes things break.”

A knife that returned when she called was indeed valuable. Thranduil nodded and turned to bow to his father, purposefully angling away from the Noldor king. “By your leave, Adar.”

The edain curtseyed elegantly, sweeping imaginary skirts open with her remaining arm. “Your majesties.”

“Come, Esther’ien.” Thranduil said as he pulled back the flaps once more for the edain, who scrunched up her face with a sour expression as she passed through.

“Yeah, no. It's Emma or even lil’bit but not... that.”

“As you wish… Emma.” The name was not one he was familiar with, but at least was pronounceable.

She faltered and he felt her fea brush his once again with pained longing before she forcibly called it back with a muffled whimper. Her hand going once again to rub her chest as if it were something she could somehow physically soothe.

She followed behind him without protest and he wondered why she seemed so willing when not a few hours ago she was attacking him with her teeth. Gil'galad was pressing the kings’, and his own, patience when he assigned the edain’s care to him, a prince and general under Oropher. But his father hadn’t spoken against it; Thranduil had to wonder as to his father's reasons for allowing the Noldor to order him as if he were under his command.

The edain broke his thread of thought as she started giggling and then started laughing through tears, wheezing as she tried to speak. “If-ifyou try to-” He stopped to turn and frown at her. “To lock me up indoors, I can’t- can’t promise not to chew the furniture.”

She almost ran into him, too preoccupied with whatever had caused her such laughter to notice he had come to a halt. “What are you talking about?”

She blinked up at him before her eyes focused on his face and pointed, almost poking his face. “That one is perplexion and that one is disdain.” He raised an eyebrow at her, wondering what she was babbling about, and she giggled before gasping. “Valerian. I think I need some Valerian. And chamomile. Lavender if you have it.”

He pinched the bridge of his nose, wondering if Eru was laughing at him right now. “Lavender. Because of course we have carry lavender to battle.” What was he to do with an edain? A female at that? He briefly wondered if he should escort her to the camp of the Gondorians, and wash his hands of her. But to do so would be a direct disregard of orders. Even if those orders had come from the Noldor king.

She frowned and her gaze wandered to the sky as she began rambling about the uses and virtues of lavender. A background in healing then? “You should. Lavender can ease stress which lowers blood pressure, which slows the loss of blood from wounds. It’s calming. Can also ease night
terrors.” She suddenly clutched her head with an expression of dread. “Oh no! Oh no! What if I get night terrors now? I’m magically unstable enough when I’m awake!”

He stared at her before shaking his head in disbelief. Did Gil’galad hate him? “You… are afraid of sleeping?”

“What? No, I’m afraid of having a magical outburst in my sleep that might accidentally start a forest fire. Fire is kind of my first instinct, and that was-” Her rambling trailed off with a devastated expression and tears welled up in her eyes. “Damon’s…” She looked so lost and heartbroken that he reached out and touched her shoulder in comfort. She immediately seemed to calm, taking deeper breaths.

“I… believe I have some tea among my things.” Tea was supposed to be relaxing for edain. Elrond had suggested it to ease battle fatigue but the mixture had tasted vile, so it remained relatively untouched. “It was given to me but I never cared for it.”

She let out a sob and clutched her chest and Thranduil shifted uncomfortably. What had he said? “It is only tea?”

“It’s- It’s just- just a memory.” She appeared to be trying to control her breathing. He pulled his hand away and she immediately crumpled to the ground with a keening noise of grief. He looked around to find several of his soldiers watching her with mixed expressions of interest and pity. He stifled a sigh as he lifted her up to her feet. Unfortunately, she was under his care and at the moment he had to put aside his title and dignity.

“Come. Let us get you inside.” He gripped her elbow to help her rise and practically had to carry her to his tent and set her on his bed. Grimacing at the thought of how this would look, and making a mental note to request a tent to be set up for the edain, or if one was not available, to find an elleth willing to share a space.

She seemed unaware of her surroundings as she curled up around herself, pulling her knees to her chest when he stepped back to straighten his clothes.

“You’re pretty nice, pie-maker.” She sniffled, fingers tracing the stump of her missing arm.

He sighed wearily as he crossed over to his wash basin. “I’m not a pie-maker.”

“No. I guess not. But you have the eyebrows of one.” She giggled wetly before laying back on his bed and murmuring. “I wonder if I can sleep the great sleep.”

Thranduil closed his eyes and prayed for patience before dipping a clean cloth into the water and offering it to the edain. “Wash yourself, I will return shortly.”

The edain took the cloth, looking as if the gesture was as shocking as an orc drinking tea. “Are… you leaving me here alone?”

“Yes. I will not be long.”

She started to look panicked, “That… probably isn’t a good idea.. I have a bit of compulsive tendencies and mood swings, with magic and trauma… no benign spirit to ease the transition.”

Practically everything she said sounded insane. He resisted the urge to rub his temples. He could not have her shadowing him everywhere. “I will not be long, surely you can occupy yourself for a moment, while I procure you some clothes and shoes?”
She looked around the tent with wide eyes. “Y-yes… but I-”

“Good.” He didn’t wait for her to finish before he left the tent, breathing deeply to calm himself before seeking out this captain. Gwathren was a dark haired ellon with nearly coal colored eyes, his silven heritage shone proudly in every feature. And he was Thranduil’s personal decision to name him his captain. Gwathren was the first ellon to befriend him when his father had moved them from Doriath to the Great Greenwoods, and they had remained fast friends throughout the centuries.

“Gwathren.” Thranduil called out to gain the ellon’s attention as the elf was overseeing a sparring match between a silver haired elleth and red headed Ellon that seem evenly matched to his trained eye.

“My Lord,” Gwathren turned and gave a crisp salute. “How may I serve.”

Thranduil waved him to follow as he continued to walk, not wishing to have the following conversation in front of the soldiers. “I need a set of clothing, for an elleth, but easily adjustable… to fit a child almost.”

Gwathren hesitated. “For the edain? I had some things prepared when word reached me of her arrival. I’ll have them delivered where you command.”

Because of course everyone in camp would have heard. How could they not have? He forced himself not to rub his eyes, to present the poised picture of a prince. “She will also need a place to stay.”

Gwathren winced. “My lord, I took the liberty of asking among the elleth if any would share quarters with her, but…” He glanced at the council tent uneasily. “Whatever happened in there affected everyone outside as well. The elleth would rather not share quarters with her, though they will if ordered.”

He filed that little bit of information away to analyse at another time. “I assume you tried to procure a tent for her, then?” He wouldn’t force any of the elleth to bunk with a madwoman.

“One is being crafted for her, but it will be a few days.”

“Lovely.” Thranduil sighed wearily and looked back at his tent. What was he supposed to do with her? He couldn't throw her out. But in his tent?! Yes, he could definitely hear Eru laughing at him. He finally gave in to the urge to rub his eyes. “Send the things to my tent then. And please let me know as soon as her tent is ready.”

Gwathren inclined his head. “Yes, my prince.” the elf was smart enough not to comment about the place of delivery, and for that he was eternally gratefully.

Next was a stop at the store wagons to obtain a bit of lembas, he was in no mood to eat with his soldiers tonight and the edain would have to make do with the elvish bread. Not that he ever heard a mortal complain, but if one ever did he wouldn't doubt that it would be this one dumped into his lap.

He finally made it back to the tent, pausing just a moment before he ducked through the flaps with trepidation at what mood the edain might be in. Thranduil came to a halt when his eyes landed on the edain. She was standing at his washstand, her knife clutched in one hand as she stared at her reflection in the water. She bent over the basin and her knife darted up, towards her neck. He reacted before he fully realized what she was doing, dropping the lembas and lunging for her,
barely managing to catch her wrist and twisting hard enough for her to drop the blade before it went too far.

Her reaction, in hindsight, was understandable but it did not take away the sting to his pride as he found himself once again on his back with her foot on his chest. Her knife flew to her hand and she spat at him in her strange language. “Tel’dara em.”

He raised his hands slowly between them, “I know you are in pain, but I cannot allow you to throw your life away.”

She blinked at him before snickering, quickly dissolving into laughter that had her collapsing to the ground with the force of her mirth. “I- I was- was going to cut my hair.” She laid back on the ground, still laughing. “I- was going to cut my hair! And you came out of nowhere and- and grabbed me!”

Thranduil let his head fall back to the ground with a ‘thud’. ‘Her hair.’ The edain was going to cut her hair. “And for what purpose would that serve?”

She wiggled her fingers around the hilt of her knife. ‘One hand. Can’t braid. My love and my brother.... are gone. Slip slice, problem solved.’ She made a sputtering noise as a strand of her wild hair landed in her mouth.

Thranduil frowned at the unruly mane, “You took out the braid.” For some reason the fact that she would rather cut it than wear the braid irked him.

She looked away. “You used a leather tie.”

Thranduil sighed and pinched his brow before pushing himself up off the ground. “I fail to see the significance.” He muttered before scooping up the lembas from where he had dropped it, grateful for the leaf wrapping.

“All aboard the braid train.” She let out a soft hooting sound. “Braid trains and cuddle piles in the desert.” She paused in her rambling and looked at the leaf packets in his hand. “Is that lembas? I’ve always wanted to try it. I’ve got ten bucks it tastes like baklava.”

“Do I dare ask?” He sighed as he handed her a small square. “One bite, wait a full minute before taking another.”

She deepened her voice as if she was mimicking a man. “One bite is enough to fill the stomach of a grown man.” She tilted her head. “Does that mean just edain? Or Eldar as well?”

“Both.” He quickly broke off the edge of his square. “Though, edain tend to need nourishment more often than us.” He popped the piece into his mouth and set the rest aside for the morning.

She paused with a corner of lembas halfway to her mouth, a speculative look on her face. “What time of the day is it?”

“Near evening.” He answered as he pondered where he was going to put her for the night. He did not relish the idea of relinquishing his cot, but also could not expect her to take the ground.

“Interesting.” She popped the lembas into her mouth and closed her eyes as she chewed. “Shoot. It’s pound cake with an aftertaste of magic.”

“Magic has a taste?” He quirked an eyebrow at her as he gathered a fur from the bed to stretch out on the floor.
“Different for everyone. Mostly a sound, sometimes a taste, sometimes a chill up your spine. Mint and old books. Cold and spiced like chai. Scowls says mine is like being set on fire from within, but my brother says it looks like stars.” She waved the lembas packet in the air. “Whoever made this tastes like bergamot.”

He just nodded, only half listening, he decided he would wait and see where she chose to lay. There was a rapping on the tent post as he laid another sheet down. “That should be your clothes.”

She frowned and looked down at herself. “I don't have clothes.” She narrowed her eyes at him. “You better not be trying to put me in a dress. No way am I wearing a dress in the middle of a war. The hair is bad enough.”

Thranduil smiled despite himself. “And have you resemble a proper lady? Perish the thought.”

She made a rude noise with her tongue. “It’s hard to fight in heels and skirts that weigh more than you do. Trust me, I’ve done it, not fun.” She paused again as if something just occurred to her. “How much do you weigh? Is the snow thing just a dimensional magic thing or are you, like, bird boned? Because, in sheering and walking pressure alone, it just doesn't make sense if you’re the same weight as an average human.”

_Bird boned? Sheering?_ He shook his head, deciding it best not to answer and went to the flap. Gwathren stood stiffly outside the door with a bundle of clothing in his hands. “Your request, my lord.”

He accepted the bundle, but before he could dismiss the ellon, the wild haired edain popped up by his elbow, her eyes focused vacantly on his captain.

“Who are you?”

His captain bowed, curling a hand over his heart in an elven greeting. “I am Gwathren, my lady.”

“Shadow.” She whispered to herself thoughtfully. “Shadow with eyes of shadow. I knew a shadow once.” She teared up and Gwathren’s eyebrows flew upwards when they trickled down her face in a trail of silver. “Shadowed by a shadow.”

Thranduil moved in front of her to hide her from view. “Thank you, Gwathren. That will be all.”

“Yes, My Lord.” Gwathren said before he bowed his head and quickly made a retreat.

Oh, if only I were so lucky. Thranduil went to turn around to hand the edain the bundle of clothing, only to freeze when her arms wrapped around his waist. “What a-”

She shushed him and appeared to try and lift him, thankfully she almost instantly gave up and released him. She stepped back and gave her head a satisfied nod. “Magic, okay. Good that would have been weird.”

Thranduil closed his eyes and breathed deeply through his nose, trying to remind himself that this insane behavior was very possibly not the edain’s fault, and brought on by grief. “Here.” He said as he deposited the bundle into her arms, before grabbing a clean shirt and breeches for himself. “Get changed, I will return shortly.” He didn't wait for an acknowledgement before he ducked out the tent flaps.

He allowed himself a smirk when he heard her yell after him as he headed for the ellon’s bath tent. “I’m not wearing a dress!”
He took his time washing, pointedly ignoring the other ellon’s unsure glances. He rarely graced the
tent, having his own available due to his status. Finally free of any remnants of orc blood, and their
stench, he made his way back to the tent. He found her sitting cross legged on the ground, her legs
almost completely exposed as she cut at something with her knife. She had apparently cut the
bottom part of the new dress off at the knee, and then cut slits up all the way to her hips. He
averted his gaze from her exposed thigh, when he saw the remnants of one of his shirts beside her,
and a pair of his trousers with the lower part of the legs cut off.

“What are you doing?”

“Not wearing a dress.”

“You know I am a prince?” He thought maybe this bit of information might just get through her
madness.

She paused with her blade still in the shreds of his shirt to level him a silver look. “I have not
listened to gods, kings, or men since I was able to walk. I’m not about to start with a prince.”

The first thing on that list gave him pause. “Gods?”

“Yup. the spiky rotten ones and the handsome hipster ones. Middle finger to the face, as Damon
would say.” Her cheerful words trailed off into sadness at the mention of this ‘Damon’. She
inhaled and seemed to force herself to smile as she deepened her voice comically. “Kneel to me,
usurper.” She pitched her voice higher. “Sword to the trebuchet!” She giggled and finished cutting
a strip off of his shirt.

He had to look away again as she stood up, uncaring of her exposed legs, to pull his trousers on and
and tie them up with the strip from his shirt. He spotted the remnants of the skirt she had cut off. “You
could not have used the dress you had already maimed for that? You had to ruin my shirt?”

She giggled again. “Making a point.”

“Which is?”

She gave him that level look again. “I will listen, I will try my best to control myself, but I will not
be ordered or controlled.”

Thranduil rubbed his face with his hands. “This is madness.” He said wearily, mostly to himself.

She chuckled. “‘Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t.’ Shakespeare's Hamlet.”

He frowned as she picked up the remains of his shirt, and began cutting this too into strips. “Now
what are you doing?”

“Scandal. Though I guess it isn't so much of one here.” She laughed before her face fell serious. “I
don't wear shoes. Can't stand them anymore. Wrap your feet, gives support while toes still grip
earth.”

He blinked at her before forcing his voice to stay level. “How often do edain need to sleep?”

“About eight hours for every twenty-five hour period.” She frowned at him. “That’s a hint. Not an
order, but a big fat hint.”

“Yes.” He said dryly crossing over to his trunk, laying his soiled clothes aside and waved towards
the beds. “Choose.” Her eyes narrowed and he amended. “If you please.”
Blessedly, she moved to the palate he had laid on the floor.

She sat cross legged and put her hands with her palms facing upwards and her spine straight. She half closed her eyes and he tilted his head curiously. He knew that edain laid down and closed their eyes to rest. “What are you doing?”

“Hush. I’m meditating. Gotta try to get the old emotions under control.”

He was not used to being told to ‘hush’, were all edain women this confusing and frustrating? If so, it was no wonder the edain lifespan was short. He shook his head and blew out the candles as he made his way to his cot. He had just laid down when they flared back to life again.

“I need to pee.”

Chapter End Notes

Check out the next part of the series :)

Virtually Separated for Damons Side
Despite the edain’s statement about their sleeping needs, she did not seem to rest for more than a handful of hours, and by extension that meant neither did he. He rose from his meditative state only to find her gone. He stifled a groan as he got up to check her makeshift bed. Cold. She had been gone for some time.

Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, he found her quickly by following the sound of shouting.

“Come on! If I had half the willingness to spout profanity as Damon I’d be calling you so many names right now! Somebody fight me!” The edain was standing in the center of the makeshift sparring ring his soldiers had thrown together, hand planted on her hip, staring down his captain, who looked like he was ready to resort to climbing a tree to escape.

“I do not feel it is wise-”

“To what? Fight a girl? Fight a human? Fight someone with one arm?” She waved her arm around in the air. “Listen, prisspants, I was a champion professional fighter, I know how to take a punch. I need an outlet! Now somebody fight me before I resort to setting things on fire!” She threatened and narrowed her eyes.

Gwathren’s eyes alighted on him approaching and he visibly relaxed in relief. “My Lord, I have tried to tell her, Edain are not-”

“‘Not as strong or as quick as elves, you will be putting yourself at great risk of injury’. The Edain pitched her voice high, mockingly quoting his captain. She rolled her eyes. ‘Look, just… try to hit me. Just once. Just once, and if you land, I’ll leave you alone.’ Gwathren opened his mouth clearly about to protest and she let out an exasperated huff of air. “What do I have to do? Insult your mother? Cause I’d rather not, I’m sure she’s a lovely woman uh… elf….elleth?, but I bet she is also a hamster and your father smells of elderberries.”

There was suddenly a few snickers from those outside the ring, simply over the absurdity of her words. Gwathren gave him a helpless look and he sighed. “She has agreed that if you land a single hit she is unfit for sparring.”

The edain glared at him. “Fine. If that’s the way it’s gotta be. You hit me, I’m out of the sparring ring. But!” She held up her finger. “If I land you on your back like a turtle, I get to spar anytime I want to, with no complaints.”

Gwathren cast him one more pleading look, but he simply nodded. If she wished to humiliate herself, she was free to do so. Perhaps then she would be easier to handle. “Do as the lady requests, mellon nin.”

“Finally!” The edain smiled and lowered herself into a fighting stance. It was actually quite impressive: the stance made allowance for the missing limb so she remained balanced.

Gwathren shook his head, clearly disliking the situation, but settled into an easy stance. And then they just stood there. Clearly she was waiting for him and he was expecting her to attack first as her impulsive nature would suggest.

After a few minutes of them staring each other down. The edain growled. “Not getting any younger
over here, turtle boy!”

Gwathren blinked. “I beg—”

“Not yet but you will.” The edain grinned cheekily, clearly goading his captain.

Thranduïl was surprised by the amount of soft laughs from those around them. One, the silver haired elëth he recognized from the night before, crossed her arms and smirked. “Are you just going to stand there gaping, Gwathren?”

His captain narrowed his eyes and reached for the edain, easily capturing her one arm. He lifted his other hand, clearly intending to lightly tap her for his hit. Thranduïl realized what was about to happen an instant too late. She yanked her body weight backwards, and when he tightened his grip, she lunged forwards while he was slightly off balance and swept his feet out from under him, using her small size to jump on top of him as he fell and land on his stomach, driving the air from his lungs.

Everyone watched in shocked silence as she shook her head as if disappointed. “Really? You went for the most obvious weakness? Did it even occur to you that I would have moves to counter that, turtle boy?” She laughed and hopped off of him, extending her hand in an offer of aid. “Seriously, everyone either goes for the last arm or the missing arm. Everyone.” She rolled her eyes, a happy smile bright across her face.

Thranduïl frowned as he approached her to hide his own shock, although if he were honest with himself she had already twice planted him on his back in so many days. “Now that that is out of your blood, will you return to make yourself presentable? My father will wish to speak with you after breaking his morning fast.”

She wrinkled her nose at him. “That fight lasted like, less than three seconds. How would that get anything out of my blood? Blood takes, like a whole minute to circulate throughout the body.” She sighed longingly at the sparring ring. “But kings are everywhere, so pretty me up, piemaker.”

He ignored the looks of shock at her flippant attitude and accursed ‘nickname’. “My name is Thranduïl.”

Her eyes flickered silver and she quietly looked up at him. “Thranduïl, Vigorous Spring. Only son of Oropher, King of the Woodland Realm. Born during the first age and lived in Doriath prior to the Second Kinslaying. He traveled east with his father and the Sindar at the beginning of the Second Age and Oropher founded Greenwood the Great.” She blinked the silver away and gave him a faint smile. “Piemaker.”

While none of that was uncommon knowledge, it made him feel uncomfortable to have it laid out so… simply. She had claimed she was a Seer, of sorts. “You know my past well enough, but what have I done to earn such an epasse? I have never made a pie.”

“Your eyebrows.” She began following him absently, as a piece of paper in the wake of a bird.

He touched one of his eyebrows in surprise before dismissing the mad words and continuing towards his tent to allow her to prepare to meet the king. She listed after him, and began humming under her breath before suddenly the sound cut off and she flinched and blinked before breaking into a run and dashing into his tent.

He sighed heavily, he would have to procure her her own tent, sooner rather than later. He found her sitting on her pallet, rocking and taking deep, shuddering breaths. In for a measured count, out
for a measured count despite the shaking of her hands.

“Are you well?” He felt foolish for asking as soon as the words had left him. Of course she was not.

She shuddered. “I didn’t sing for him. Couldn’t. Ashes beneath the oak, without a song to keep.” She began to rock back and forth, arm wrapping around her knees. “I was colorblind again.”

He shook his head, none of her words made sense. “I… will inform my father you do not feel able to meet with him.”

She blinked and abruptly stopped breathing before jumping to her feet. “No. I’ve disappointed enough. As long as he doesn’t mind if I sparkle.” She gestured to her face where her tears ran silver.

Oropher listened to the child as she recounted the statement she had given the day before, sometimes spiralling into poetic ramblings that held some deeper meaning than he could untangle. She seemed honestly trying to answer his questions even when her answers were nonsensical. At her third muttering of ‘virginia’ as the place she hailed from, he leaned back in his seat, satisfied. “Your answers remain consistent.”

The edain shrugged easily, unconcerned that he had revealed he had been questioning her honesty. “I’m not lying. Not to you anyway.”

“Not to me? Why me in particular?”

She looked at his son and her face looked uncertain for a moment before she looked back at him. “I… The woods. I like the woods.”

Oropher looked at her thoughtfully, she seemed… trusting of his son. He smiled softly. “I heard you gave my son an Epesse.”

She suddenly snorted. “You have a nightingale?” Her face fell again. “I lost mine… My nightingale, my crow, my hawk.”

“A bird did not tell me. Many of the ellon are… amused.” He glanced at his son and smiled in amusement at the way he colored. So proud. Perhaps this experience would be good for him.

“Reputation.” She nodded with a small laugh. “Never been good with those. Mine get all… tangled.”

He didn’t question her response and only moved forward with his soft interrogation. He had seen the pain in her fea before, when she spoke her name. A deeper meaning was attached to it that triggered her pain. He had thought of a solution. “The name you gave, pain is associated with it… would you like another?”

She touched the stump of her arm and gave a tiny nod. “As long as it isn’t calling me a divine messenger. I don’t want to deal with that again.” She chewed her lip before shrugging. “One of you may name me, as long as it isn’t to name me yours. I… was…” She trailed off with a cut off sob. “His.”

She felt the loss of her bonded keenly. He held out his hand to her in an offer of comfort and hid
his surprise when she accepted it without hesitation. Her hand was so small in his. “Miwen, it suits you.”

She laughed brightly. “Always with the little with you lot. Very well, Miwen I am.”

He smiled at her easy acceptance of the epasse, of the flash of true joy that came with it. He glanced at his son, who was watching her with pity in his eyes before turning back to the edain. “Can you find your way back to my son’s camp, child?”

She winced. “I can, but I’m a bit impulsive and scattered so I can’t make any promises that I’ll actually make it there. I’ll try though, I can hear an elf make a hint a mile away.”

He laughed, amused by her flippant opinion of the eldar, and patted her hand as he would an elfling. “Very well, I must speak to my son. After I will send him after you. Try not to lose yourself too well.”

She stood and bowed as if to an equal. “I’m afraid I’m already lost, tarlin.” With that she wandered from the tent. Tarlin. She had said that before in the council, to Amdir. He made note to ask her what it meant if he could without distressing her.

Thranduil stepped forward as soon as he was certain she was gone. “Ada, I cannot continue to watch over her. Allow me to escort her to the Gondorian camp, they-“

“No.” He did not hesitate in his answer. This edain was not as the others… she was more eldar than edain. His son was still young and could not see it.

“No?” Thranduil was visibly surprised.

“She was assigned your charge, Ion nin.” Oropher said as he rose from his seat.

“By the Noldor King.” Thranduil argued, his fea fiery as his mother’s. “Who’s own Herald is a fosterling of kinslayers.”

Oropher sighed and placed a hand on his son’s shoulder. “Ion, regardless of who issued the order, you will fulfill it.” He smiled at the way his son looked away, clearly unhappy. “You will, in time, rule the Greenwoods after I sail, Ion nin.” When Thranduil looked back at him he patted his shoulder. “If you cannot care for one edain, how can you hope to care for a kingdom?”

Thranduil woke to fevered mumbling. Miwen was tossing on the pallet, hair sticking to her sweat soaked face. He couldn’t make out a word she said but nightmares were not unknown to him.

“Miwen.” He spoke softly as he rose from his cot, easing his way closer but far enough away so if she woke in a panic she would not injure either one or both of them. “Miwen, you need to wake. It is a dream.”

Miwen began to shake and her thrashing became worse. “Sol’s…maera...’slen.”

“Miwen. Wake up!” He spoke louder, putting command into his voice, hoping to startle her out of her dream.
It worked, her eyes snapped open. However she dissolved into tears almost immediately. He sighed heavily and resigned himself to lose rest tonight, as he laid a hand on her shoulder in an attempt of comfort, then froze as she shot from the pallet to bury her face into his shoulder, twisting her fingers into his tunic as she sobbed. "Is'var haim, ra nuem!"

He sighed and sat back, allowing her to cling to him as he was at a loss as to what else to do for her comfort. "I cannot understand you, Miwen. But it was a dream."

Her fingers tightened in his tunic and her fea brushed his before withdrawing in a flash of loss. "Memory." She whimpered. "Memory is worse."

“You can't wake up from a memory.” He tried to soothe her but felt terribly out of his depth. Manwe’s tears! What was his father thinking?

Her fingers convulsed in his tunic and she shuddered. "No. You can't. There's a hole where my heart rested, and my dreams are alone."

He closed his eyes at the reminder of her broken bond and knew that he could not begin to imagine her pain. “Tell me, what did you dream? It could help to speak of it?”

"He used to show me things, in my dreams. Take me to ancient balls and laugh at my questions. Now it's just memories." She whispered through her tears. "I learned to bow like the She Wolf should in his dream." She shuddered and curled into herself. "But tonight I dreamed of the day they were torn away from me. I felt Damon follow me, he always followed me, but his heart was gone."

She broke into another round of painful sobs and there was nothing else he could think to do other than hold her. After several minutes she seemed to gain control of herself enough to speak.

“I couldn’t mourn…. couldn’t cry…. I wanted to but I couldn’t…. couldn’t sing. Not even when asked by a dead man.” she sniffled into his shirt. “I felt nothing… until I had blood on my hands. So I fought… to feel for a few moments at a time.” she started sobbing harder. “Oh God!… I made people hurt so I could feel.”

Thranduil held her as her sobs became more forceful and her tears soaked his shirt. He didn’t know what to do until a memory of his younger self, distraught of the death of his rabbit, surfaced. His father had held him much like he now held Miwen. He let himself start humming the soft tune his father had sung that day and many nights after. The tune was without words, but carried a soothing rhythm.

Slowly, her sobs quieted to hiccups then finally to slow breaths of sleep. He didn’t dare move for fear of her waking but allowed himself a sigh of relief. She was suffering. Wounded. She needed care.

‘If you cannot care for one edain, how can you hope to care for a kingdom?’ His father had asked him. He allowed his arms to loosely hold her as he made up his mind to help her heal….. if that was at all possible.
“My prince! Please, come quickly!” An ellon barely bobbed out a bow before speaking. “The edain, she’s- she is out of control.”

Thranduil set aside his reading and followed after the ellon, who scrambled towards the edge of the encampment. He heard her before he saw her, furious screaming carrying through the air and making him wince. An ellon scurried past him with a bleeding arm and he picked up his pace. She was throwing things, the air around her crackling with power and her eyes molten silver as she grabbed anything within reach and hurled it at anyone who came near, shrieking in her strange language.

A cluster of grasses caught fire when she stomped her foot and Thranduil signalled to Gwathren to distract her. Gwathren bravely stepped forward with their hands raised peaceably and the edain screamed in her unknown language at him, angry tears flowing in silver tracks down her flushed cheeks.

Thranduil leaped at her the second she was turned away from him, pinning her arm to her side and lifting her so that she could not reach the ground to pull her favorite trick of knocking the balance out of anyone who tried to take advantage of her small size. She screeched in fury and struggled, but he kept a tight grip on her, even as the ground around his feet smouldered. “Calm yourself, Miwen.”

She shuddered in his grip and sobbed a string of words in her language, but the fires about her went out. He carefully lowered them so that she could kneel on the earth, still keeping her contained as she cried, great heaving sobs that seemed too large for her tiny frame.

“Ma’lath, ma’lath, asanalan’en annar’ala athem, asanalan’en annar’ala dan’latha. Ar danal, ma’lath, ma’nas’danal.”

She suddenly curled against him in his arms, burying her face into his chest as she shook with the force of her grief. Gwathren cautiously moved around them, putting out small fires and setting things to right as Thranduil constrained her until her violent mood had passed.

She murmured quietly, her voice raw from screaming. “Dina, Era; Era, nere era…” Her fingers twisted into the fabric of his shirt and her fea brushed his before retreating quickly. “Ir felas. Ma serannas mar halani.”

“I cannot understand you.” He said quietly, not daring to loose his grip on her just yet. Not until she could speak in an understandable language.

She sniffled. “I- I said, I am calm. Thank you for your help.” She tested his grip gently. “You- you can let me go now.”

“You injured someone.”

She shuddered. “Ir abelas- I mean, I’m sorry. I can- I can fix it. I’m sorry.”
He looked up at Gwathren. “What happened?”

“The hunters were returning and she flew into a rage at the sight of them, my lord.”

“Ma’fen.” She whimpered, somehow curling tighter against him. “My wolf.”

Gwathren frowned at the edain and Thranduil shook his head at him before he questioned her quietly. “You knew the wolf?”

“No, my wolf loved wolves. My brother too. He had wolves. Three of them, named after his gods. They followed him everywhere. My wolf as well, four wolves, one in the clothes of a sheep. Pride and the Demon with teeth in their smiles and softness in their eyes.” She rambled.

Thranduil sighed silently. After two weeks he had yet to be able to parse out the meanings within her mutterings, if there was even meaning. “Make sure that she is not around whenever the hunters bring in a felled wolf.”

Gwathren nodded with a salute and moved off.

“The… the person I hurt. I can- I can heal them so it doesn’t leave a scar. If they want. And I need to apologize.” Her voice sounded as small as she was.

Thranduil shook his head, she was in no condition to try. “The healers will see to him, you may apologize after you have rested.”

She suddenly laughed but it was a bitter, grieved sound without a trace of mirth, “I’m a wolf without a pack, Piemaker. No cubs, no mate, no den to return to. How can I rest without my pack at my side?” She held out her small, empty fingers in front of his face. “I do not even have his bones. His ashes feed the oaks he loved while my mate runs alone. Who will howl over his grave while I hunt for the remnants of my pack?”

Thranduil sighed. Would she never make sense? “You are no wolf.” He tried to reason with her. “You are hurting and you must rest.”

She was quiet for a long moment before she spoke. “Will you release me?”

He hesitantly let her go and she stood and stepped away from him, then gave him a sharp smile before the threads of the world shifted, silver energy swirling around her and she… disappeared. In her place was a wolf, larger than natural and with shining silver eyes, fur lush silver and white, not mottled or blighted as one of Sauron’s creatures. It yelped as if in pain, staggering before it sat before him and looked at him in what could only be amusement.

The wolf was large enough that it was as tall as Miwen, even sitting as it was. He had heard of the skin changers but… this? “Miwen?”

The wolf nodded its massive head, then lifted it’s muzzle to the sky and let out a mournful howl that seemed to shake the fabric of the world with its grief. Silence fell after the sound, and then in a flash of silver and shifting threads, Miwen fell from the wolf’s form and collapsed onto the ground.

He pushed himself through his shock, making himself move, and picked her up and her head lolled limply as she looked at him through half closed eyes. “Ir fen.” Fen. Wolf. With that, her head fell back and her eyes closed as she fell unconscious.

He didn’t waste time in taking her to the healing tents, intending to have her checked. What he did not intend was to run into the Noldor King’s Herald.
“What has happened? Was she attacked? We heard a wolf’s howl as if it was within the camp.” The Noldor followed him as he laid her on the cot.

“She was not.” He kept his words clipped. “She is a skin changer.”

The Noldor startled, then put his hand on her head, closing his eyes with a frown as he searched out her fea. Thranduil bit his tongue that wanted to dismiss the ellon. He was well known for his healing abilities.

“She is… drained.”

She had been proving a point, proving him wrong. “She was distraught at the hunters’ fell. A… wolf.”

The Herald frowned, then removed his hand from her, staring at her as if she were a puzzle. “She is unharmed beyond the wounds from her bond. She needs rest.”

He nodded. “Very well,” he swiftly gathered her up again, wanting his charge away from the Noldor. Another could need the healer’s tent. He found his mind troubled as he carried her to her pallet. A wolf. A wolf untainted by the shadows. She truly was a wolf, a wolf that had lost her pack. Her family? Had she had to build a pyre for her family? Was that what she had meant by no bones to keep? ‘Ashes beneath the oaks’. She had mentioned it twice now. Her madness had method to it, as she had said the first day, he just did not have the context to understand it.

He sighed. The Noldor King would no doubt demand to speak to her once again once his Herald reported this. He laid her on the pallet and moved to sit on his heels, giving in to the urge to rub his temples to ease the tension in them. A skin changer. A mad skinchanger, who had only revealed the ability to prove him wrong.

She let out a quiet whimper and curled tightly around herself as if wounded. ‘A wolf without a pack’

He remembered seeing a group of edain hunters with a pack of hunting dogs. The dogs had slept in a great pile, noses and legs touching each other. Did wolves sleep so? Had she slept so with her… pack? A pile of limbs and contact? He hesitated, but reached out and rested his hand on her shoulder. Slowly, she eased beneath the touch.

His prediction was correct, Gil’galad did indeed demand her presence in the council tent. He had delayed as much as he could, insisting as much as polite that she needed rest, but eventually he had wetted a cloth and touched it to her face to rouse her. She blinked blearily at him, a slight furrow between her brows, and her gray eyes without their silver sheen.

“Piemaker?”

“The High King would speak to you.” He tried to keep the irritation from his voice, though whether it was from the epesse or the Noldor’s impatience he did not know.

“Ah. Wolf’s out of the bag.” Her eyes fluttered as if they would close again as she smiled. “But not the cat.”
“We must go.” He swiped the wet cloth over her face once more.

She made a quiet whining noise in the back of her throat, a sound he had often heard but had not connected until now as the sound a displeased canine would make. “I’m tired. Too much too soon.”

“We must. I delayed as long as I could without offense.” He said quietly.

“Kings.” She made a growling noise and uncurled sleepily. “Ugh. Fine. Carry me. If he says anything just drop me in front of him and say you warned him when I fall.”

“I-

“No. S’the best way t’ deal with kings. Make them deal with their own demands.” She sleepily waved a hand when he hesitated. “C’mon. He made me your problem, now make me his.”

That… had an appealing ring to it. He sighed but picked her up and she remained limp in his arms as he carried her before the council. He bowed as best he could while holding her and made sure his expression remained smooth when he saw Gil’galad’s irritated expression. He did not miss his father’s quirked brow.

“Why do you hold her so? Is she unable to stand?”

“Yes. I sent word that she was exhausted and needed rest.” He kept his tone polite. “But if my carrying her distresses you, I will set her down.”

Gil’galad narrowed his eyes at him but Thranduil ignored him as he carefully lowered her legs to the ground and Miwen gave him a sleepy, impish smile before pushing away from him. “You wanted to see me?” she asked as she splayed, then began to fall. He barely caught her before she hit the ground, but she pushed his arms away and sat there in the dirt, holding herself up with one shaky arm. “Forgive me, sir, I am unable to stand.” Her eyes drooped in exhaustion. “But here I am. Ask away.”

Amdir cast Gil’galad an irritated glance. “Surely, whatever it is you have on your mind, Gil’galad, it could have waited for the child to regain her strength. You did not need to have her dragged here in this state.”

Gil’galad ignored him and fixed Miwen with a pensive look. “They say you are a skin changer.” He paused and seemed to remember her last reaction to a non-question. “Are you?”

“No. I am a shapeshifter. I am me in this form and that, a different shape but still the shape of me. I am a wolf and the wolf is me.” She started to fall backwards, her eyes rolling back and Thranduil quickly caught her shoulders. She blinked as if it took a monumental effort to open her eyes and patted his hand before easing herself to lay on the ground. “But the wolf that is me is too much too soon, and I need... “ She yawned. “To rest…”

"Wolves are Sauron’s creatures.” Gil’galad accused with narrowed eyes.

Miwen let out a sharp laugh. "All of them? Every single one? Is a man cursed and driven away for catching a cold? Does that mean he is a foul creature? Nope just sick… needs healing." She hummed and sleepily shook her head before raising her hand. "Nevermind, your skull’s too thick. Lock me up, I'm obviously a spy who decided to show off.” She suddenly snorted. "I'm a wolf, not a bull.”

Thranduil felt quite ridiculous standing over Miwen as she lay on the floor and rambled, more
asleep than awake, but Gil’galad was red faced from the edain’s insult, and it was… satisfying.
Gil’galad se emed to collect himself and stood, accepting a small brown bag from his herald. “Do you recognize this?”

Miwen turned her head sleepily, and then struggled to lean on her elbow with desperate suddenness. “It survived! It’s mine. Please-” She reached for it shakily with the remnants of her lost arm. “Please, give it back.”

Gil’galad raised a brow, looking pleased at her reaction and reached into the bag, pausing a second as she made a sound as if being gutted, before pulling out a metal box. “We were unable to open this without resorting to destroying it, to see if it contained any threat.”

“No!” Her voice was shaking and desperate as she pushed herself up further, still reaching for the box, tiny and weak in his shadow. “Please! Give it back!”

“Will you open it for us? Prove that it does not contain a threat?” Gil’galad asked, watching her with narrowed eyes, and Thranduil curled his fist at his deliberately causing her undue stress. She had been with them for weeks without suspicion, had proved herself mostly harmless unless taken by a fit.

Her lips curled back like the wolf she was, silver tears in the corners of her eyes. “Still you wish to pick at wounds. Do you wish to see the drawing done by my dead brother’s hands? The letters my dead father wrote to his wife? Do you want to drink wine while you read my dead mother’s diary? It would be easier for me if you just cut the pain straight from my chest, lord .” She accompanied the ruthless words with a fumbling attempt to begin unlacing the oversized tunic she wore. “Allow me to bare my heart to you, oh star of radiance.”

“Miwen.” Thranduil knelt and grasped her wrist to keep her from baring herself.

She keened in pain and then slumped in his grip. “Please,” She whispered, her head rolling forward in exhaustion. “I cannot- I cannot open it for you. I would rather you cut me open than ask me to sort through the remnants of my past for you to see. Kill me if you must, but do not make me show you.”

“Enough of this, we can speak to her about this when she wakes.” His father stood from his seat as he addressed Gil’galad before turning to him. “Thranduil, return her to her tent.”

“The box.” He looked up from Miwen’s bowed head. “I would ask you to return her things to her. She is not Sauron’s. There is no reason to keep her possessions from her.”

“We do not know yet if she is a threat, she has kept powerful secrets and reveals them with no way of knowing why-”

“She was proving me wrong.” He snapped, ignoring the shocked expressions of all save his father. Miwen startled in his grip and leaned her head back to look up at him. “I said that what she was saying was not true, and she exhausted herself to prove me wrong.”

Everyone was quiet as he lifted Miwen from the ground and turned to leave. “Where are you-?” Gil’galad started but Thranduil turned back to level the high king with a cold glare.

“You entrusted me with her care, my lord.” He ground out. “Do you wish to rescind that order?” No one moved or spoke but he could feel his Fathers eyes on him like a physical weight as he turned and carried Miwen away. “I will send someone for her possessions. She needs to rest.”
Ma’lath, ma’lath, asanalan’en annar’ala athem, asanalan’en annar’ala dan’latha. Ar danal, ma’lath, ma’nas’danal - my love, my love, ten thousand years separated, ten thousand years to grieve/to weep. I am breaking, my love, my soul is breaking.

Dina, Era; Era, nere era - To die, to sleep. To sleep, perhaps to dream (from Hamlet)
Elrond found the tiny edain… unsettling. Despite the fact that they had found her spitting curses and attacking with her teeth, she was… mostly docile. So long as you did not touch her or harm a wolf or command her or- Mostly docile. She spent most of her time following Thranduil like a lost puppy… or wolf apparently. On the rare occasions when she was not trailing him or wandering away in distraction, she would spar with his captain, Gwathren, or, as she was now, would follow him. It made Gil’Galad’s ‘suggestion’ he keep an eye on her easier but...

She had not blinked for several minutes now, instead staring at him while he tried to read a missive. Did not Edain need to blink several times a minute?

“May I help you?” He finally gave into the growing urge to speak, though he knew it would begin her own spiel of words.

She shook her head, but finally blinked. “Thank you. For bringing my stuff back.”

“It was yours.” He tried to subtly dismiss her thanks, and hopefully her. He was to keep an eye on her, but perhaps it would be better to observe her from a distance and not within… hugging distance. She did that often to unsuspecting elleth’s and Thranduil. Even Gwathren once. So far he had been able to escape the… affection.

“Yeah. Still.” Her brow furrowed as if confused. “You’re a lot less… verbose than I expected. Prettier too.”

He looked over his missive at her and raised a speculative eyebrow. She had claimed to be a Seer, of sorts, but to see him? “You had expectations?”

“Well, yeah. You’re Elrond.” She said his name as if it held some great significance. “I’m like, in fansquee mode here.”

“‘Fansquee mode?’”

She let out a short, high pitched squeak that made him flinch, her expression delighted. “That’s even better than how Piemaker says ‘scrunchy!”

Ah yes, her unusual, if humorous, epesse for Thranduil. Thank Eru she had not ‘gifted’ him with one. “You say that as if you are excited to see me.”

She blinked again, silver flickering lightly through her eyes as she murmured. “The face of Elrond was ageless, neither old nor young, though in it was written the memory of many things both glad and sorrowful. His hair was dark as the shadows of twilight-” She paused and winced, blinking the silver from her eyes. “Sorry.”

“Very eloquent. It is just as flattering as it is unsettling.” She often spoke such things, distant and silver, as if reading from within her mind. Sometimes things common knowledge, sometimes things with unknown meaning, and a few times, things that no one should know.

She hugged her stomach with her arm and looked away, her ears slightly pink. “Sorry. Too much in my head, broken filter. Facts leak out. But, yeah. Excited to meet you.”
He frowned and set his missive aside, she was extraordinarily determined once something caught her attention. She would not leave him in peace if he was what had caught her attention. “Thank you, but we have been in acquaintance for weeks now.”

She nodded, then frowned again. “Weeks? Already?” She started counting on her fingers before raising her eyebrows. “Huh. My sleep schedule is messed up.”

“You tend to sleep for extended periods after you cast.” He confirmed for her as he stood to retrieve paper for correspondence.

“Yeah, my spirit is all torn up, so it requires more effort to do simple things.” Her mouth twisted as she tried to gather her thoughts. “Like trying to run after breaking a leg. I used to be a healer able to seal chest wounds in seconds, now skinned knees give me trouble. How the mighty fall. And break a hip, and have to call life alert because they can’t get up.” She suddenly giggled then immediately tried to stifle them as she followed him. “Sorry, that wasn’t funny.”

He decided to be blunt, wary of her flying into one of her fiery fits of anger around his papers. Sudden bursts of amusement and hysteria generally forewarned of her moods shifting. “Is there a purpose to you being here instead of with Thranduil?”

“Besides the fact that you’re Elrond?” Again that odd emphasis on his name, similar to their first meeting when she had declared him ‘The Elrond’. She shrugged. “Gil’Galad is super suspicious of me, but I don’t like hanging around him, so I’m hanging around you so he gets the knowledge of me he needs without me… actually having to talk to him.”

And there was another reason she was so unsettling. She had these bursts of extreme awareness where she saw through the intent and subtleties around her, but then managed them in unexpected ways. “You are not fond of him.”

“Nope.” She shrugged. “I’m not fond of kings. Arrogant, too used to talking over my head. Like, I know I’m short, but that’s no reason to talk to whatever guy is standing behind me instead of me. Men do it a lot, but mostly kings. Hindsight is nice.” She scrunched her face up. “I think I got sidetracked? Oh, no, was making a point, which is, he’s looking for the guy over my shoulder telling me what to do, and I don’t feel like kicking his shins to make him look down and see it’s just me. So… here I am!” She grinned. “No shin kicking for you.”

“Because I am Elrond?” She claimed familiarity with kings in passing, and then in a rambling, meandering manner claimed not to be a spy, while acting as if he was the person she was most honored to meet in an encampment full of great kings.

She sighed happily. “Because you’re Elrond.”

Flattering, and unsettling.

Things felt different after her revelation of her wolf and her outburst before the kings. Her madness was not as irritating now that he was aware there truly was method to it, even if beyond his understanding. Less a trial and more a puzzle, a riddle to attempt to unravel as he collected the pieces of knowledge needed to decipher. She began casting more often, though small things would weary her and she would be forced to sleep for long periods.
Thranduil continued running his company, and discovered that while she was difficult to understand, she was a boon to his company’s strength. She was a trained fighter and deadly with her longknife, and on the days she was not exhausted she could sense approaching orcs before most of them could even hear them.

She, however, had that terrible habit of running off that, she did not seem to realize, made him worry for her. They were not in safe lands, and though she was a fierce warrior, she should not be alone in her unstable state.

She had once again run off and Thranduil found her kneeling by the stream. She was stacking lines and lines of little stones on end. He approached quietly and waited for her to finish. She placed one final stone and sat back on her heels.

“Say you knew that in a few thousand years or so, a great evil would arise. An evil so powerful it seems there is no hope and it will consume the world. And that that evil, against all odds would be defeated.” She gently flicked over a single stone so that it fell against the next stone, and the next, all of her neat lines of stones falling over until they reached the end and felled a great stack of stones. Her eyes flickered silver as she watched, and then with a pained grimace, she waved her hand and the stones stood back up into line.

“Each stone is an event. A tragedy, a birth, a book, a ring dropped. Each event leads up to the defeat of the great evil.”

He understood the logic she presented, but did not understand why she spoke of such things. She seemed to be in a fairly stable mood so he simply knelt in the grass beside her to listen.

She reached out and plucked a single stone from the line. “But, some of these things are terrible. Would cause you grief and pain if allowed to come to pass. But… avoiding them…” She flicked over the first stone, but the line only fell a little ways before it reached the gap and stopped. The towers of stones at the end stood tall. “Could change everything.” She shrugged and began setting the stones to right. “Blade’s edge… Or it could not. There’s no way of knowing.”

She looked at him with those strange silver sheened eyes, tears wet on her cheeks. “Would you let the terrible thing happen, knowing it could cause yourself thousands of years of heartache, but knowing that the evil would be defeated for sure? Or would you stop the terrible thing, and hope that the great evil would still be defeated?”

He looked over the twisting lines of stones and considered the question. Would he be willing to allow painful things to happen to ensure the defeat of a great evil? Would he knowingly allow himself to suffer for the sake of others? The sun had begun to set by the time he decided. “I would suffer the pain so that I could ensure my people would survive the future evil.”

She let out a shuddering breath and closed her eyes tightly before reaching out and touching his shoulder gently. “As you wish.”

He frowned at the strange words as she stood and walked away, leaving the stones she had stacked where they stood. He eyed the stone towers with a sense of unease before he reached out to pluck the stone she had removed from the line. It was a pale river stone, and on it she had drawn the simple outline of a broken crown. He wasn’t sure why he pocketed the thing, but it felt... significant.
Thranduil was enjoying a rare but blessed moment of quiet, near the small stand of trees they found to camp by. The last few trees they would see as they drew ever closer to the dark lord’s lands: Mordor, the barren and volcanic waste. Alas, it did not last long for Gil’galad’s Herald broke the precious peace.

“Where is Miwen? It has been rather… quiet.” The Noldor asked as he glanced around.

It had been quiet. Too quiet, now that he thought about it. A quick glance around confirmed she was not nearby. He sighed and rose to his feet. "I will find her." Hopefully before she set something on fire. Again.

The Noldor nodded, his gaze scanning the small forest’s edge. “I was hoping to speak with her, when you find her.”

Thranduil frowned and considered the ellon. The edain seemed to like him somewhat, certainly more than the other Noldors. “If she is agreeable to it.”

Gil’galad’s herald gave a small smile. “Of course.”

Satisfied, Thranduil set out after his wayward ward. She was not within the camp, but an ellon pointed towards the woods when asked if they had seen her. He rubbed his temples in irritation. Of course she had wandered into the forest. Again. Nearly every stand of trees they passed, she had wandered into. He hoped he could find her before she found trouble.

He began tracking her with a surprising amount of effort. She barely left a bent blade of grass, unlike most heavy footed edain. Every few paces however, he would find an out of place pebble. She was leaving a trail on purpose. He followed the trail to the end, but did not see her. He was about to give up and call to her when he yet again felt her damaged fea brush against his and then retreat. Upwards. He looked up in consternation to find her perched on the thick branches of an ancient tree, her hand pressed to its trunk and her eyes closed.

He shook his head, wondering if Eru was enjoying his laugh at his expense, before he swiftly climbed to her, fearing she would startle and fall if he called her name. He reached for her, intending to carry her to safety, when she whispered.

"Listen. Can you hear them?"

He strained his ears, listening for danger, but she grabbed his hand and pressed it to the tree. "No, listen."

He was about to protest that he had no time for her madness, but then her fea somehow grasped his, shocking him with the casual act of intimacy, guiding it to the tree. "Like this. Listen."

It took a moment, but then he heard it. A song, an ancient song that had been before him, full of knowledge and memory that was flowing through the tree’s heart.

"Each tree is connected through their roots. Follow it." She murmured, pressing his hand firmly against the rough bark beneath his palm, still guiding his fea with hers.

He did as she asked and stretched his fea, fumbling with the unfamiliar task. He had not known such a thing was even possible. He followed the endless song down to the earth, through the deep, sweet darkness, and to the next tree. And the next. And the next, until he felt her fea press against his, longing and then pain bleeding through before it was ripped away suddenly, shocking him back to himself. He looked at her in wonder, how had this edain learned to do such a marvelous feat of magic?
"Listen." She swiped at her eyes quickly before she pressed her forehead to the tree and her breaths slowed as her fea extended into the tree. He watched her for hours, trying to observe, to sense the way she reached out with her fea, until slowly, she began humming, low and vibrating in her chest, her fea mingling with the sound. Her humming grew louder until she was singing into the tree, a song without words but full of ancient magic. The tree creaked beneath them as she sang, and a branch curled towards her. His hand drifted to his knife at the movement, but she did not stop singing. The branch moved to her and began twining around the stump of her missing arm, curling and flexing until it creaked and detached from its parent tree. Her singing grew quieter and the branch slowly formed into an arm. She flexed the wooden fingers with a smile and then pressed her head to the tree. "Ma serannas, sa’shan."

He found he could not find his tongue. She… had sung herself an arm… like the- the valar sang. She had taught him to hear the song of the trees, and she had sung with them. Was she a Maiar? As… Thingol and Melian? She had muttered before that she had lost her nightingale, had not sung to keep the trees.

"Did you find the stones?" Her absent question pulled him from his whirling thoughts.

"The trail?"

She hummed in affirmation and began swinging gracefully upwards through the branches. His heart leapt to his throat as she reached the thin and weak branches at the top. He followed her, fearing she would fall. She balanced precariously on a slender limb and extended her wooden hand to catch an acorn that fell as she reached for it.

"Miwen, please return to the earth." He couldn't keep the strain from his voice as she let go of the branches, balancing on her feet as she cradled the acorn in her hands as if it were a precious jewel.

"I have to plant it. Somewhere with good sun and plenty of water." Her voice still held the traces of the thrumming song she had sung.

"We can do that on the ground." Later, he would deny that he yelped in fear when her legs gave out beneath her and she toppled off of the branch and into the air.

He caught her around the waist and pulled her close, his heart pounding as she giggled and her eyes met his, her eyelids drooping as she smiled. "Y-you caught m-me."

And then she fell unconscious. He took a moment to press his face to her hair and breathe himself to calm. Her wooden arm twisted up onto her shoulder, arranging itself like an ornate pauldron, the acorn held within its twists. He hefted her over his shoulder and began the much too long climb to earth.

He arranged her into a more dignified hold for the trip back to camp, and the way her head lolled against his shoulder made his chest tight with unease. Elrond was waiting by his tent and Thranduil made for him urgently. Miwen preferred him to the other healers.

"I found her atop a tree, casting complicated magic. Then she fainted and I had to catch her." Thranduil explained as he hurried into his tent.

Elrond’s eyes widened and he followed in through the flaps and pressed a hand to the edain’s chest, frowning as he focused his abilities into the tiny thing. His shoulders relaxed slightly as he pulled his hand away. "She is simply exhausted, yet again. She stretched herself beyond what she could endure. Again. What feat of magic did she perform this time?"
Thranduil set her down on his bed and gestured at the intricate tangle of branches on her shoulder. “She… sang herself an arm from a tree. She… sang with it, and showed me how to listen to them.”

Elrond paused and looked at him, and then at the branch curled on her shoulder. He reached down to touch the wood, but it shuddered and spines and thorns bristled protectively from its twists.

Thranduil wondered at the thorns, they had not appeared when he had carried her. “Is she Maiar?” He asked quietly, part of him afraid of the answer he might receive. “She… sings as one.”

The Noldor hummed to himself before moving to Thranduil’s wash stand, wringing out a cloth before whispering a few words in quenya over it before answering. “I do not know what she is. Neither fully edain nor fully eldar.” He spoke quietly as he returned to the bed to place the cloth over his edain’s face and neck.

Miwen sucked in a breath as if shocked. “Cold!” She pushed at his hand to get the offending material away from her, earning a chuckle from Elrond.

“Welcome back, Miwen.” The Noldor said gently but bore an amused smile.

His edain groaned and somehow formed the branches back into the shape of an arm to cover her face with the wooden limb. “My head hurts, all stretched out. And you made my nose cold.”

Elrond studied the arm a moment before answering, his mouth quirking in amusement. “My sincerest apologies to your nose.”

Miwen snorted suddenly, before turning as if she intended to burrow into his sheets like a woodland creature. She inhaled deeply through her nose before suddenly sitting up with wide eyes. “Thranduil?” She looked down, grasping at her shirt before relaxing. “Oh, thank god! Why am I in your bed?”

Thranduil cocked his head at her. Had she… recognized his scent? How much of her wolf carried into her edain form? “You fainted.”

“Oh?” She frowned as if trying to remember.

“In a tree.” He supplied at her blank stare.

“Oh! T he trees! I was asking-” She began patting her shirt again before the branches of her arm rippled and the acorn appeared in the center of her palm. “There it is. They wanted me to- Is there a stream nearby? Maybe a pond?” She swung her feet off of his bed and tried to stand, but her knees gave out under her.

“Pala.” She began tearing up. “Wh-where is Damon when you need him, huh? He's the one who hears the trees.” She tried to take another step and Thranduil caught her before she could fall to the floor. “Trees liked him.”

“You need to rest.” Elrond admonished, stepping forward to placed his hand on her chest again, head cocked slightly to the side curiously.

She shook her head and tried to pull away from Thranduil’s hands. “I have to plant it. It’s- I need to.”

She pushed against him again even as her legs wobbled beneath her and he grit his teeth in exasperation before hooking his arm under her knees and lifting her up easily. Even in his short acquaintance with her, he knew that she would crawl to her goal if she was determined. “Fine. I’ll
take you to the stream so you can be done with this. And then you need to rest." He decided to ignore the Noldor’s raised brow.

“Okay.” She sniffled and turned so her face was pressed against his shoulder. He suppressed a sigh. At least she wasn’t weeping.

The Herald watched with a thoughtful expression as Thranduil carried her out of his tent and towards a nearby stream beyond the cluster of trees. The Noldor followed quietly as the edain hummed in his arms, playing with the acorn sleepily. He found a spot with good sun near the stream and carefully set her down. “Is this place sufficient?”

She nodded and he stepped back and away to put some distance between them as she began to hum, digging a small hole into the earth with her fingers. Elrond had no such qualms as he moved forward and knelt softly beside her. She didn't protest as he placed a hand on her shoulder, just kept humming a soft melody as she tipped the acorn into the hole and covered it with soft soil. Her eyes closed and her humming took on the thrumming sound he recalled from the forest. Elrond’s grip on her shoulder tightened and his eyes widened in shock as a small, green sprout sprang from the earth beneath her fingers. She continued humming until a trio of leaves formed, and then sat back heavily onto her heels.

“It is done.” She swayed slightly.

“What is?” Elrond asked quietly as he helped her stand, bearing the majority of her weight on his arm.

“My end. A bargain…. they know where the water is now. Young trees are thirsty.” Her legs gave out yet again and Thranduil cursed before pulling her from the Noldor's grasp and picking her up. Her head lolled against his shoulder as she fell unconscious yet again.

Thranduil sighed heavily at nothing in particular as he turned to carry her back to camp, only to be stopped by Elrond’s voice. “I would like to test something, with your permission.”

Thranduil turned to regard the ellon suspiciously, “Test what?”

Elrond stepped closer. “In your tent I checked the state of her fea while she rested. It was still in chaos, I checked again when you supported her.” Elrond paused as if he were unsure how to continue.

“And?” Thranduil prompted, allowing some of his annoyance to sink into his tone.

“And… it was calmer. Not healed or mended, but definitely not lashing out wildly in desperation. It… settled.” He then looked back at the tree sprout. “I wondered if perhaps if was the physical contact that soothed, but then as she worked her… spell, I tested again with myself… it was the same as before.”

Thranduil looked down at the slight thing in his arms, her face was peaceful, her breathing and heart in normal rhythm. He, however, lacked Elrond’s gift of healing and could not see into her fea. Though after Miwen’s lesson with the trees he could not help but wonder if he could learn. “So you… wish to test her fea’s reaction to… me?”

“Yes.” Elrond said simply. “There may be some reason she reacts to your contact but not others.”

Thranduil was unsure how he felt about that revelation. He had noticed on the occasions when he had had to either restrain or calm her that she had seemed more reasonable and articulate during these moments. “Then test it.”
Elrond nodded sharply before stepping forward and laying a hand over her chest once more. His eyebrows furrowed as he concentrated, then he nodded sharply. “I am unsure as to why, but while she is in contact with you her fea is settled.”

He frowned as he considered that. “Her… her fea keeps reaching for mine when she is distracted.”

Elrond looked thoughtful at that. “Our fea is unique to each of us, but…” he paused as if unsure how to voice his thoughts. “If your fea is similar enough to the one she lost…” the rest remained unsaid as the implications dawned on Thranduil.

“Oh.” He looked down at the tiny edain, who was curled against his chest even in unconsciousness. “Oh.”
He had come as soon as the news had reached him. An edain woman who spoke a tongue no one knew, with a dagger carrying the symbol of his house. The hope was too painful to bear, and he had left before the messenger had even closed their mouth. He had ordered his lieutenants to remain with Isildur’s youngest son and wife and had ridden as swiftly as possible, stopping only to rest his mount.

He had arrived at the camp it was said the edain was kept, leaving his horse with the ellon that greeted him, and heading for the high king’s tent with all haste, when he heard a girlish giggle, followed by an exasperated ellon shouting.

“Miwen! Stop!” He heard footsteps approaching rapidly and the eldar muttering, “Why are you so fast?” just as a tiny edain came to a skidding halt before him, her mouth open as she stared up at him. She was smaller than any other edain he had seen, with only one hand, her brown hair wild and tangled, her eyes grey, with a distinct silver sheen he never thought to see again, the light of Telperion.

“You… you look just like him.” She breathed and he felt her fea brush his tentatively. “His hair and eyes were darker, but your face... He’s dead now. I had to bury him.” Her face fell at her words.

Who had she had to bury that looked like him? He could hardly draw his gaze from her eyes, had no one else noticed? Surely The Lady Galadriel would recognize Telperion’s light.

The ellon chasing her appeared around the corner, and instantly his posture straightened to one of wary respect. His armor and cloak marked him one of the Greenwood. “Forgive her. She grieves as the eldar do and it has driven her mad.” He stepped towards her in concern, but she was still staring up at him, unmindful of her keeper.

“You eyes…” He didn’t know how to frame the question.

The edain gave him a smile that held deep grief “His were gold. Glowing gold.”

Laurelin? His fea spiked in hope. Could it be? Then just as suddenly the hope was crushed. She said she had buried him. Maybe she spoke of another.

He frowned down at her, taking in her wild, unkempt form, her oversized and haphazardly modified clothing, only for his eyes to land on his dagger. Her dagger. Pain of a freshly healed
wound being ripped open once more sliced into his fea. “Where… how came you to have that?” He pointed, hoping his trembling was not evident to the wary ellon watching them sharply.

She didn’t answer, her eyes focused on something not before her as she began to sing in the language of men. The ellon inhaled sharply as she sang. “What do you do with an old, old fae

The elder kind, eyes bright as day
You take them home and give them soup
Tend them well and wrap their wounds
You bind them to your bedroom
With lines of salt, cold iron too
That’s what you do with an old
Old
Fae”

He felt sudden irritated fondness at the familiar, terrible words. He had hated that song, had begged Beth not to teach it to their children. But she had persisted with a mischievous grin to sing it to each of their children. To hear it here, now, from an edain carrying her dagger… She reached up, standing on tiptoe to reach towards his face, but she didn’t touch, instead staring through him, her eyes shimmering with Telperion’s light and welling tears as her voice began to tremble.

“What do you do with a golden fae
If it should give you its true name
You give your name and gold thread too
For the elder fae are ever true
If you love a fae and it loves you
Your bond will be ever true
What do you do with an old, old fae?
You love it for all
Your
Days.”

“He of the golden hair.” Her eyes slowly focused on him and her finger touched his jaw, and then his cheek curiously. “Laurefindil.”

His fea shuddered, no where near how it would shake for Beth, but still it responded to the name he had set aside on his return.

“How-” He turned to the watching ellon and ordered sharply. “Leave us.”
He bristled, stepping forward in a protective way that he recognized within himself, but he glared at the ellon, desperate for privacy. “She will come to no harm with me. Leave us.”

The ellon hesitated, his gaze fixed on the edain, who was still touching his cheek, but he nodded sharply and turned on his heel. Glorifindel waited until his steps were inaudible before kneeling to see the edain’s tear streaked face. She was murmuring to herself, silver tears streaming down her face.

“How do you know that name?” He said gently. It was obvious she truly was mourning, he could feel her fea screaming its loss.

She pulled the knife from her belt and showed it to him. “This is the marriage knife of Beth and Del. I have hers in my bag, it’s not… I can’t fight with it.”

Beth’s name was carved into the hilt. He could see it from between the tiny edain’s fingers. “What-what are you called?” He desperately wanted to touch it, hold it as if somehow the blade would bring her back to him.

She swayed again. “Our family had three rules. ‘Don’t give your full name to a stranger’, ‘don’t trade knives with a foreigner if he don’t know what it means’, and ‘always tie your hair back before a fight or a-’” She blushed and sheathed the knife, but he knew how that rule ended. That twice damned Shunmahayr had said it oft enough. “You never went to Mando’s Halls, did you?”

He shook his head, his breath still in his chest, he had told no one of Beth, of the second life Iluvatar had blessed him with. They all had assumed this was his second re-embodiment and he had let them, unwilling to bare his pain. How could she know this? Who was she? “Please, who are you?”

She took a shuddering breath. “I am Emma Gloria Theron-Konstantina-Fen’Harel. Your descendant.”

He felt the weight of what she had just shared and looked around to be certain there was no one to hear. Her name, her full, true name. She had not hesitated to give it to him. True, most here knew not the power that lay in names, as he had not. The last of what she had said caught up to him and he stared at her in hopeful awe. “My-?”

Before he could finish the question she suddenly collapsed to the ground. “Oh god,” She gasped, her voice ragged with pain. “I’m the last. The last for ten thousand years.”

His heart stopped in fear but he had to know for certain. Was all they had built together gone like chaff in the wind? “The last what, child?”

“The last of the line of Laurefindil.” Her voice shook and he felt his hope crumble. They were gone, his children, grandchildren, gone. He forced himself to remain upright as she continued, crying out in her own grief. “My brother is dead, our parents are dead, my bonded is gone, my children-” She keened, a high, tortured sound as she clutched her remaining hand over her heart. “My children.”

He knew her grief as sharply as his own, but he still had a purpose to drive him on, to keep him here until Iluvatar was through with him.

She had collapsed completely to the ground, curled around herself as if mortally wounded, and if her wails for her bonded and her children were to be judged by, she was. They matched his own fea’s cry. He took care to be gentle as he gathered her into his arms and headed in the direction her
caretaker had gone. She curled against him, sobbing openly into his tunic. He found her apparent keeper quickly, the ellon pacing uneasily, then starting towards them in concern, his gaze locked on Emma’s wailing form.

“How do you calm her?” He asked desperately, hoping his voice did not tremble. Surely her keeper knew how to soothe her. “Where does she stay?”

The sindarin ellon frowned, his eyes flicking from the edain to him with an odd flash of possessiveness but it was quickly tamped down. “Follow me, if you would. She is likely to exhaust herself from one of these fits.”

A ‘fit’. Yes, that aptly described the grieving of ones bonded. He thought to himself sarcastically, another trait he had apparently picked up from- no he would not dwell on his memories now. Emma, or as the ellon had called her, Miwen, was still sobbing into his tunic.

But the ellon, who he had yet to get a name for, was still talking, his tone taking on a thread of urgency. “You will need to set her down if she begins to sound angered, and quickly before her fea lashes out. She could accidentally hurt you if her mood shifts to rage. She would never forgive herself if she hurt you in her madness.”

‘Her fea’. That was another thing, a bit of his being still lived on after at least several generations. He had feared… No, don’t think of it now.

“Madness? This is sparta.” She murmured in the language of men into his chest, her sobs interrupted by giggles as she continued in Sindarin. “Oh… probably shouldn’t joke about falling from cliffs.”

He felt a smile tug at his lips as she had tried to lighten the mood even as she struggled with her grief. “It is alright, many good things came of it.” He replied in Beth’s language, ignoring the ellon’s shock at his knowledge of her language.

“Oh. I haven’t heard Gealic since my great grandmother died. I had to re-learn it while I was trapped in order to read the family records.” She replied in Beth’s language, the sound of the long remembered language sending fresh pain through him, though her accent was not as curling as Beth’s had been, and pulled away from his chest to look up at him earnestly. “I fell too. From a castle wall.”

He gave her a small smile to hide his horror at the thought of her falling from such a height. “Well, it seems you inherited your grandmother's size and my luck.”

She giggled again, snorting indelicately. “Well at least I know who to blame that on now.” She paused and grief passed over her face. “He got your size and your face. So tall he could put his elbow on my head.”

He hated seeing the smile slip from her face but knew the weight she carried. “Not hard to do if you think on it.” He continued, hoping for the smile and joking to return. It would help, help ground her, help her survive.

“Da’asha, Miwen, Lil’Bit, da’len, pintsize.” Her gaze and tone wandered, and then she seemed to notice the ellon, who was watching them with open curiosity and... was that jealousy? Her eyes brightened and she switched back to sindarin. “Piemaker! You didn’t catch me. I’m getting faster.”

‘Piemaker?’ Glorfindel felt himself smile. Had she somehow endeared herself to this ellon? Not
that she was in any condition for a new relationship. Her bondtear was still fresh but he hoped she had enough edain blood to survive it, possibly even heal.

“And yet you are returning to where I needed you to be.” The ‘piemaker’ said in dry amusement.

“You had to get help and my hair still isn’t braided.” She giggled, then gasped and began wiggling, struggling against his hold and seemingly uncaring of how far from the ground she was. “I need to- I need to get my bag. I have to show him-”

He quickly set her down lest she injure herself and watched as she dashed into the tent ‘piemaker’ had lead them too. Her head popped back out and she gestured urgently. “Come on, both of you. You can see too if you want, Piemaker.” She wiggled her fingers impishly despite the tears still wet on her face. “Secretsssss.”

‘Piemaker’ ran a hand over his face, but ducked through after her. Glorfindel followed and saw her pulling a worn bag out from under a blanket. She grabbed ‘Piemaker’s sleeve and tugged him down to sit on the blanket, then waved to him eagerly as she sat next to the ellon, pressing against his side easily, though the ellon looked uncomfortable, yet resigned. “Come on.”

He eased himself down beside her, and she grabbed his tunic, pulling him closer so his arm was against hers. He caught another jealous, possessive look from the other ellon, but then she was opening her bag and pulling out a metal box. The ellon looked shocked when she set about fiddling with a mechanism on the front of it before it unlatched, revealing a thick paper envelope, a cloth bag, a thick packet of some sort of shining material that crinkled when she touched it, and… his dagger. The one he had unknowingly taken from Beth so, so long ago. She handed it to him slowly, running her fingers over the worn, aged handle. “Careful, it’s brittle from age.”

“How old?” His throat was tight as he held Beth’s blade. Did time pass differently between the realms?

“Three hundred years.” She shrugged one shoulder as she held the box between her knees to reach into it. “Give or take.” So time did pass differently.

She slid the crinkling packet open with her fingers and began pulling out odd squares of paper that had images so clear on them it seemed as if the subjects had been imprisoned in the paper itself.

She handed a square to him, showing an edain woman with fiery red hair and familiar black eyes, and a much taller man with black hair and a scar across his mouth. “That’s my Aunt Gemma, she was one of yours, and my Uncle Chase. He used to call her spark because she was so short and had a temper. Uncle Chase couldn’t hear, but he loved to sing anyway.” fresh tears fell unheeded down her face. “Aunt Gemma died, her… her heart was sick, and Uncle Chase followed her. They raised me like their own.”

She took the picture from him far too soon and handed it to ‘piemaker’, but quickly replaced it with another image of a pair of edain, a man in green and tan clothing with close cropped blond hair and a dark haired woman with laughing eyes so much like Mirwa. “Those are my parents. Esther and Reece. Esther was one of yours too.” She traced the line of Esther’s face, so similar to her own. “A drunk man killed them both when I was young. He was a soldier… a warrior. She was a healer.”

“Miwen…” The ellon said gently, but she shook her head and pulled out another image.

“No, this is a good hurt. A stretching, not a picking. I won’t let them be forgotten.” She said in Sindarin as she pressed the picture to her chest before laying it across her knees so they both could see it. She switched to Beth’s language to continue. “This… This was my brother.” Her voice
shook. It was a tall edain, so tall that the image of Emma, who had both arms at the time the image was made, did indeed come only to his chest, with his eyes closed and mouth open in laughter. He was dressed in odd, tattered black clothing decorated with shards of metal and chains that left his arms bare to the shoulder and revealed a large expanse of his chest. His eyelids were painted black and he had long black hair that was braided back out of his face so that he could not see if he had inherited Beth’s wild curls. He had golden skin, but it was covered in what appeared to be complex paintings. His arms, chest, shoulders, and even a patch of the skin of his thigh exposed by the strange garments had the paintings on them. He had several earrings in each ear, and metal through his eyebrows and nose, and, by Eru, his tongue? But behind the metal and images, Glorfindel could see the resemblance between them. To Cody…. his Cody.

Emma pulled her hand away from the image and clutched her chest as she spoke in Sindarin for her ‘piemaker’s benefit. “Damon. My brother. He… he was a great leader. A great warrior. People listened to him, followed him. He was powerful, his eyes glowed gold. But above all, he was smart. He was kind. He was gentle. He protected.” She shuddered and the other elven placed a hand on her shoulder gently. “He… his heart-” She sobbed, then shook her head. “When we were separated from our children, and our- our-” She keened again before continuing. “His heart failed him. He couldn’t- live without her.”

“What happened to his face?” The elven said, rudely in Glorfindel’s opinion, but she laughed suddenly and amicably.

“He did. He said he was too pretty not to decorate.” She laughed. “You should have seen him in party clothes. Looked like he had rolled in a pile of black paint and needles. He loved it, head and shoulders above pretty much everyone else, stomping around in heavy boots…” She sighed, then sang quietly in the language of men. “He was a poor boy, loud boy, playing in the streets gonna be a big man someday. Mud on your face, you big disgrace, waving your banner all over the place.”

She sniffled before speaking again in Beth’s language. “I don’t… have any pictures of my children or my husband. I never had the chance to get any before… before I lost them.”

Glorfindel cradled the dagger in his hands as if it were a child as Emma spoke, her gaze distant and her tales wandering, all of them in Beth’s language. Oh how he had missed the sound of it. “I had five children, two of my blood. Danielle, the oldest. A gifted witch and brilliant, so, so brilliant. Ash, my darling stabchild. He couldn’t speak, but he never met anything he wasn’t willing to fight. Gealathe, my first. He was so smart, so solemn, but then he was born in blood and snow, so of course he would be. My girls, the twins. Iselan and Emmaera. They-” She shuddered and reached up to point at his ears. “They had their father’s red hair and eldar ears, but they had my eyes.”

Five children. A brother. He grieved for the family he had never known until they were gone.

He mourned them silently as she spoke in Beth’s language. How many years had it been since he had heard it? Occasionally, she would slip into sindarin for her ‘piemaker’ as she rambled, her words slowing as her eyes grew heavier and she leaned against him in apparent exhaustion.

Within a span of minutes she was curled up against his side and falling asleep when she murmured again, this time in the language of men. “You’re not s’posed to be here. You weren’t at the great battle. If you’re there, things might change. You can’t be there.” With that, she was asleep.

“She’s a seer.” The elven said quietly. “Of sorts. Most of her words are hard to decipher.”

Glorfindel couldn’t help a sigh. Of all the traits for Beth to pass down, the Sight had to be one of them. “I grieve for her. Knowledge of what is to come can be a painful burden.”
“Who are you to her?” Again that flash of possessive, protective jealousy.

Glorfindel petted her hair, smoothing it away from her ears like he had with his own children. But they were rounded. Generations later the eldar trait had disappeared. Perhaps her life among the atan had been easier than his own children's. Perhaps she had not been hunted. "She knew me, knew of pains I have never shared before." He glanced at the blonde ellon. “Who are you to her?”

The ellon grimaced. “I… was charged with her care by the High King Gil’galad. I was the one who found her, screaming at the skies.” His eyes focused on where Glorfindel was stroking her hair. “She… my fea is calming to her. She recognizes it somehow.”

He couldn’t help a grim laugh, remembering sourly the way Shunmahayr had recognized him and manipulated him into his past. “Careful. If she is like what I suspect, her recognition could be a complicated thing. A wrong word, an unthought action, and you could find yourself in a tangled snare of emotions and expectations.”

The ellon gave him a fierce, offended look. “She has not a malicious bone in her body. She does not manipulate or scheme, has not the inclination or desire for it.”

“Peace, I mean no offense.” Glorfindel shook his head and rested his hand on the stump of her arm and the odd wooden armor covering it. “I mean only that sometimes, those who see much, lose sight of what is before them, especially when blinded by grief. A thing that means one thing to you, can mean something quite different for her.”

The ellon put his hand over his pocket thoughtfully, but his eyes were focused on where his hand rested against her armor. Glorfindel could see the jealousy, as masked as it was. “You care for her.”

His eyes flitted up to him and his face smoothed into a mask of indifference. “She is unwell and requires care.”

Glorfindel allowed his hand to soothe her hair back again and began to gather it into a simple braid as Mirwa had preferred to keep her own hair, once upon a time. “That she does.”

Elrond had assumed the worst when he received word that Glorfindel was riding towards them, alone, with all haste. For Glorfindel to leave his post… something terrible had to have happened.

He had hurried towards his Captain and friend as he had jumped from his horse and practically ran towards the council tent, and had neared him in time for Glorfindel to freeze at the sight of Miwen, who was staring up at him with the same awed and stunned expression. At first he had assumed it was the usual reaction of edain towards his friend’s appearance, but Glorfindel had kept his stricken, hopeful expression as Miwen had… touched his face and begun to sing.

He paused in his approach, confused by the pair’s reactions to each other, to the way Glorfindel had sent Thranduil away sharply. He was not close enough to hear them clearly, but… Glorfindel knew her. Elrond found himself stunned when his friend gathered Miwen into his arms when she began to wail her loss and moved after Thranduil, without a trace of hesitance at the contact.
He hovered. He was willing to admit it. He hovered, waiting for Glorfindel to emerge from Thranduil’s tent, and it was many hours before he did, looking as if he had been weeping, but also had found something precious.

“Glorfindel.” He called out quietly so not to disturb Thranduil or Miwen.

Glorfindel paused at his voice before he slowly turned towards him, his shoulders tense. “My Lord Elrond.”

Elrond studied him before speaking slowly, carefully. “Has… something happened? Why are you here?”

“I-” Glorfindel looked incredibly grieved before straightening. “I had to see her, see if she was who I thought.”

He had not expected his letter to cause the ancient warrior such distress. “And is she?” He asked carefully.

“No. But still… important. Surely you have seen her light?”

“Yes, but I know not how or why she has it. Who is she? She appeared as if from nowhere.” Elrond would admit to a slight excitement at possibly finding Miwen’s mysterious origins. How did Glorfindel know her? Who had he thought she was?

Glorfindel closed his eyes and let out a shaky breath. “She is… one of… I am bound by an unbreakable oath to protect her, my lord.”

Elrond frowned in confusion, “This is… why she carries a dagger with your sigil.”


Elrond was concerned over his friend’s uncharacteristic vagueness, but nodded his head. “Then rest, we may speak more in the morning.”

“Thank you, my Lord.” Glorfindel bowed his head and moved off in search of a tent or to pitch his own.

The explanation, such as it was, was troubling, and King Gil’Galad was not pleased by his report of Glorfindel’s statement that she was important, important enough to race from his duty to see her. Elrond kept Glorfindel’s admission of the Oath to himself, feeling that he had been entrusted with the edge of a great secret. He did not try to order Glorfindel to return, but only in order to observe Miwen’s interactions with the ancient warrior.

And his interactions with her were… confusing. He treated her almost as if she was his child and she clung to him almost as much as she did to Thranduil. They spoke a language no-one else did, conversing for long stretches of time, Glorfindel watching her with a rapt, and almost understanding expression as he brushed her hair or let her ride on his shoulders, or any other outrageously ridiculous thing she asked of him.

Through it all, Elrond was discomfited by the possessive, jealous way that Oropher’ion watched them. By the amused expression Glorfindel wore when he looked at the younger ellon, as if he knew a secret the other did not. Miwen flitted between them, oblivious to the tension, and Elrond feared Oropher’ion’s temper would force the two into a confrontation.
A confrontation that would leave Miwen more lost than she already was.

Who was she to Glorfindel?

Thranduil did not like Glorfindel. He did not like the way the balrog slayer touched Miwen’s hair, how he allowed her to lean on him, to ride on his shoulders. He did not like the way they would speak in that unknown language of theirs. He did not like the way they would hold each other and weep, or the way that Miwen would touch his face and murmur in their shared tongue.

He did not like that she had opened her precious box of memories for him, had spoken in that language he did not know over the images she kept within it. He did not like that she sang for him.

He did not like the surprise on Glorfindel’s face when she used her wooden arm. He had been there to see her sing it into being.

He did not like the uneasy way Elrond would glance between him and Glorfindel, but would not say what was on his mind.

Most of all, he did not like the amused way Glorfindel would look at him when she would catch sight of him and brighten, calling out that terrible epesse she had given him, as if he had been charged with her care.

She had wandered again, and the balrog slayer had insisted he be allowed to accompany him on his search. He could not deny the aid, especially this close to danger.

Music was how they found her. Tinkling, chiming, mournful music, and weaving through it, her voice. Breathless, soft singing. “Dancing bears, Painted wings, Things I almost remember, And a song someone sings, Once upon a December.”

He found himself drawn to the beautiful, grieved sounds, silently stepping through the rocks as the music swirled in the air. She was dancing, her arms holding empty air as her eyes glowed, silver tears dripping down her face. Glorfindel’s breath caught but he remained blessedly silent.

“Someone holds me safe and warm, Horses prance through a silver storm, Figures dancing gracefully, across my memory.”

Her eyes closed as her bare feet seemed barely to touch the dirt, sparkling trails of magic following her as she moved in the ghost of a dance, her arms achingly empty. He dared not take that final step out of the high rocks, fearing to startle her, loathe to break her from her memory of beauty.

“Someone holds me safe and warm, Horses prance through a silver storm, Figures dancing gracefully across my memory.”

Her voice was pained but strong and he felt her loss entwined in the beautiful display of heartache, magic, and grace. She had danced before. Danced with someone she had lost.

“Far away, Long ago, Glowing dim as an ember. Things my heart used to know, Things it yearns to
remember.”

The music faded away as she slowly spun out, then dropped into a low, slow curtsey, one of deep respect to the lost figure she had danced with.

“And a song someone sings, Once upon a December.”

Her voice faded on the mournful notes and fea reached out, longing, pained, bleeding. It brushed against him and retreated just as suddenly. She stood slowly, pressing her hand to her chest in pain. She inhaled and closed her eyes, tears still on her cheeks. “Hello, Thranduil. Care to dance? I find myself in the mood.”

Everything in him wanted to accept and indulge her but… Thranduil shook his head, they were not alone in the woods or by a stream or even in a tent. He had to keep the appearance of propriety with the Balrog slayer watching on. “I grieve for you.” The words slipped out without his intent to speak.

She faltered and looked at him, the strange silver gleam of her eyes seeming so ageless to reside in such a tiny edain. She curtseyed again, holding out imaginary skirts as she dipped low, respectfully in a way she never was with anybody. “Ma serannas, ma’tarlin.” A full ten heartbeats passed before she rose, speaking quietly to Glorfindel, who had watched her curtsy with an understanding expression. “How about you, babala? Would you dance?”

"Ai, pashteh." Glorfindel’s voice sounded grieved as he stepped forward and accepted her hand, beginning to lead her in a simple dance.

Thranduil bit his tongue against his protestations and forced himself to stay rooted still as he watched them move gracefully among the rocks. Miwen craned her head back and said something in their shared language and Glorfindel laughed, drawing a smile from her.

They parted and bowed to each other, then Miwen looked at him, her face unusually peaceful. “I will return with you.”

He inclined his head and offered her his arm, relieved when she left the Balrog slayer’s side and took it.

As he led her back to the safety of the camp, he couldn't help but feel that something terribly significant had just transpired without his understanding yet again.
Dominoes

Chapter by AntlersandFangs

Thranduil watched her for some time as she repeatedly picked up a stone with her magic, spun it around, and carefully set it back down. Each time, she whimpered and tears sprang to her eyes. Using her magic pained her greatly, but yet, here she was purposefully and repeatedly hurting herself.

“Why do you cause yourself pain in such a deliberate manner?”

She bit her lip as she magically lowered the stone to the ground. She gasped before answering. “To keep it from atrophying.”

He frowned. She seemed to be in a lucid mind, but the answer was puzzling. “What do you mean?”

She gave him a long, sad look before explaining. “If you suffered a severe burn, and you wrapped it up and waited for it to heal, the muscles and skin would atrophy. Would shrink and become rigid and locked, and if you forced it to move at that point, you would tear the scarring. You have to do stretches every day as it is healing, even though they hurt, so that you can move naturally after it’s healed.” She pressed a hand to her chest. “I’ve… been shredded magically. Injured. But if I don’t use it, don’t stretch it a little each day, it could heal malformed or weakened.”

He felt pained for his edain. “Miwen… that type of injury… it does not heal.”

She was quiet for a long moment before she stuck her tongue out at him. “Better safe than sorry, piemaker.”

He frowned as she again lifted the stone and was just about to try to order her to cease when a runner found them and dropped to a knee. “My prince, King Gil’galad requests your attendance in the war council. It has been decided. We strike at Dagorlad on the morrow.”

His Edain grew very, very still, the stone frozen in the air before her. She reached out and pulled it from the air and stared at it, before whispering. “Dominos.” And allowing the stone to fall from her fingers. It clattered to the ground and a thread of the world shifted as it shattered into several pieces.

The runner gave her a curious look that was laced with pity and Thranduil impatiently dismissed him. He did not like it when the Ellons under his command stared at her. His edain fixed her silver sheened eyes on him, a crease between her brows. “Where will you be?”

Thranduil shook his head, “That will be decided at tonight’s council.” He frowned at the shattered stone. How casually she used her magic should unnerve him, yet it didn’t, it was a part of what made Miwen her. “Come, you are still under my charge and as such can stay by my side. Gil’galad will not protest his own decree.”

It did not seem to comfort her. Strange, with her normal insistence to not be left behind. She hugged herself, calling her wooden arm into form to do so. “Shoes drop too soon.”

“You… do not wear shoes.” He smiled, trying to humor her.

She shrugged and studied the ground, her feet still shifting nervously. “They pinch. I never learned how to enchant fabric.”
Thranduil walked over and offered her his arm. Elrond said contact seemed to help, and he had been finding himself doing it a lot more often to get glimpses of the bright mind behind the pain and madness. She was terribly clever when she could see through her grief to think clearly.

She relaxed slightly under his hand and her mouth quirked up in a half smile. “I used to wear enchanted fabric wrapped around my feet. It was considered extremely scandalous.”

“Scandalous? You?” Thranduil chuckled when she tried to pinch his arm but only caught the fabric of his sleeve. “But come, I must attend the council.”

She sighed and her grip on his arm tightened as if she were grounding herself. “I’ll… try not to chew the furniture again.”

“Yes, let us try and avoid that in front of guests, hmm?”

She gave him a teasing smile, showing her brilliantly white teeth. “No promises.” It was small moments like this that he could believe she would recover. These moments of lighthearted clarity. They were brief and inconsistent, but they were there.

He considered her frame of mind at the moment, weighing the chance of her having another ‘episode’ in front of the kings. It seemed less likely now than before. “If you wish, you could accompany me?”

She bit her lip, and worried it between her teeth, a habit he was beginning to find endearing about her, before she nodded. “Yeah… I’ll come but… don’t ask me questions.”

“No promises.” He parroted her words back, earning another attempted pinch.

Glorfindel had never been fond of the delicate, strictly polite conversations among those in power. He was too straightforward. But he had been invited to listen in to the Kings plan the battle for tomorrow and advise, so here he sat, wishing he was instead outside with his… grand daughter. He would have excused himself somehow, but Gil’Galad’s patience with him was thin because of how he had left his duty and he did not want to strain it until he was ordered to return.

He heard a quiet murmur pass through the Atan men and looked up to see Orophor’ion entering with Emma clinging to his arm in nervous fear. Orophor’ion paused and glanced around before continuing in, leaving her clinging to his sleeve. She looked frightened when one of the Gondorian guards stepped into their pathway. It was the first trace of fear he had seen in her, and he wondered why the atan affected her so. Had she been hunted after all? On Orophor’ion’s arm she looked like an Eldar child, with her hair loose, covering her ears. Slight and delicate despite her warrior’s form, graceful how the atan surrounding her were not.

“Thranduil. My son, you are late.” Orophor said with a pointed glance at the guard.

“My apologies, Adar.” The Guard bowed and stepped back so Thranduil could brush by him with a slight, curious expression at Emma, who was shrinking against his side, away from the guard.

Glorfindel caught sight of the Noldor king watching the pair narrowly as they bowed and greeted the assembly, never once did Emma release her grip on his sleeve as Thranduil led her to his place behind his father’s seat. She grimaced and waved her hand, calling a seat from the dust for herself and perching on it, still clutching Orophor’ion’s sleeve as she sat gracefully and tucked her feet up
under her thighs. He wondered idly how she used the power of her fea before it was torn. It must have been a sight to behold.

The Gondorian king stared openly at her, no doubt in unease at her easy use of her power. He was comforted with how Oropher greeted his granddaughter, though he had not made their relation known, patting her knees as if greeting a child and smiling, an expression she returned from behind the curtain of her hair. She must have allowed Thrandruil to brush it for her.

Gil’galad’s Herald cleared his throat, drawing the atan’s attention from his granddaughter. “As we were saying… a coordinated strike against his forces at Dagurlad could weaken Sauron enough to force him out of his tower and into the field.”

The conversation moved to strategy and the kings began arguing, politely of course, among themselves, but Glorfindel found himself more interested in watching his granddaughter as she finally released Oroph’ion’s sleeve and began drawing, a task that entertained her for hours. He realized what was about to happen as soon as her hand absently moved to her hair. He wished he could stop her, remind her to keep her ears hidden as he had reminded his own children so often, but she tucked her hair behind her ear and the king of Gondor trailed off in the middle of his impassioned sentence.

“Why are you keeping a human in your camp? War is no place for women! Should she not be with her own people?” Isildur spoke suddenly from behind his father.

Emma froze and shrank back, letting her hair fall back into her face and over her ears. He frowned at the edain prince.

Oropher raised his hand, halting his son who seemed to be about to rise in her defense. “She came to us, grievously injured. We are helping her back to health.” He spoke matter of factly before smiling again at Emma.

“Then let us take her back to her family.” Elendil offered. “My men will see to her safe return. Surely she is of high birth.”

His granddaughter straightened up, her eyes sparking silver and terrified. “Tel’bora em ve i esh’ala. Sathan.”

He did not know the language, but he could glean the meaning from her fear. She did not want to go to them.

“Why do you not ask her what she wishes?” Oroph’ion said sharply, his body angled slightly in front of her as if to shield his granddaughter from the eyes of the assembly. “Surely you do not think we are keeping her against her will?”

“Of course not.” Elendil said smoothly. “Come, child, we can return you to your family.”

“I’d rather not die, if it’s all the same to you.” She said absently, scooting back a bit so that she was half hidden behind his arm.

Ciryon, Isildur’s son, rose with his face flushed with anger and Glorfindel subly readied himself to stop the atan if he made any threatening move towards his granddaughter. “We would not harm her, why would she think of us so?”

“Her family is gone, is what she means.” Oroph’ion said. “Her words tangle with her meaning.”

“So you speak for her?” Ciryon spat at Oroph’ion.
“I speak for the trees.” His granddaughter said in a deep voice, before giggling and covering her mouth with her hand. “Sorry.”

Gil’galad sighed and made a slight, dismissive gesture. “You can have her, if you-”

“No!” The threads of the world shifted and her eyes flashed pure silver as a powerful magic solidified between her and the kings. His hand fell to his sword on instinct but nobody moved. Thranduil was within the barrier with her and was clutching the arms of his chair as if frightened.

“No. I speak for me, and I do not wish to go with the shemlen.” Emma shook her head, face twisted in pain. “Humans. Men. Mortals. I will not.”

He watched as Thranduil reached out and rested a hand on her forearm. “Miwen, it is alright.”

She paled and crumpled against his chair, covering her head with her arms as she began to cry quietly. The barrier dissipated into the air. “Ir abelas. Tel’bora em ve i esh’ala. Ir abelas.”

“She is a mad witch.” Ciryon frowned as he moved back and away, apparently now losing interest.

Glorfindel was quickly losing patience with the dismissive way they spoke to and treated Emma, as if she were chattel. He saw Thranduil smooth his thumb over her wrist, casting dark looks at the atan prince and Gil’galad in equal measure. He found himself grateful she had found a protector in the ellon.

He was about to speak, to claim her, when Elendil spoke gently. “Child, why do you fear us? We will not harm you.”

Emma shivered before she lifted her head and fixed the human king with silver eyes. “You cannot understand.”

Elendil was quiet for a heartbeat before he tilted his head in question. “Would you not rather be among your own people?”

“You are not my people.” Her voice was quiet and distant. Suddenly tears were falling down her cheeks yet again, and when Thranduil went to place a calming hand on her shoulder, she turned and buried her face into his shirt. His hands hovered awkwardly and his ears flushed red as he cast his father a helpless glance, but at a sound of disgust from the atan prince’s direction, his jaw clenched and he deliberately let his hands come to rest on her back, setting aside his pride to comfort her.

“She is my granddaughter.” Glorfindel said clearly enough for all assembled to hear him. He had to fight the upward quirk of his lip as Gil’galad paled, and Oropher’ion’s mouth fell open in sudden shocked understanding. Elrond looked quite like someone had dumped a bucket of ice water over his head.

Emma giggled and lifted her head from her ‘piemaker’s’ shirt, a distant, silver smile on her face. She spoke in Beth’s language. “Well, that’s one way to knock a fae over.”

He sighed and replied in kind, knowing the shared language would convince others of his claim. But that twice damned word followed him yet. “We are not fae.”

Gil’galad knew better than to question his word but it did not stop him from looking between him and Emma in obvious disbelief, an expression held by most of the assembly. He stood and moved to stand by Oropher’ion, resting a hand on Emma’s shoulder. “She is my descendent, my people. But we are not gathered here to discuss her lineage, are we?”
“I believe we have come to a decision, my lords.” Elrond declared loudly, and Glorfindel smiled at his friend and Lord in thanks. My King Gil’galad has had refreshments provided. Please let us enjoy the meal while we can.”

“Eat, drink, be merry.” Emma whispered and Thranduil looked concerned at her words.

Oropher stood and looked at him for permission, and when he nodded, reached out to tip Emma’s chin up to make her look at him. He smiled gently, “Child, you will not be taken against your will. This I swear before Eru.”

Emma sniffled but smiled. “Ma serannas… Thank you.” She corrected herself from the strange language, the language of her lost bonded, but her grip on ‘piemarker’s shirt didn't relax.

Glorfindel knew he was expected to follow Gil’galad so he smiled and reached over to press her shoulder. He nodded to Orophë’ion before he followed silently behind Elrond. She would not come to harm under the ellon’s eye.

Thranduil watched as his father inclined his head and swept off with the other kings. Miwen stared after him with a sad expression until the tent was empty and it was just him and the edain. She looked up at him. “Thank you. For… for asking what I wanted.”

Thranduil wondered what she must have suffered to believe her wants and needs would not be considered. “Of course.” He looked down to where her fingers were still twisted in his shirt. “This is however one of my last shirts.”

She snorted, but untangled her fingers and sat up, her cheeks flushing red. “And I still maintain that was entirely your fault. I warned you.”

“That you did,” he chuckled before offering her his arm once more. She was speaking clearly and he was loathe to give up their conversation just yet.

She considered it with a tilted head before taking it, draping her wooden arm over it as naturally as her flesh arm. “Did you know, that it was once assumed that I was in a relationship with my lover, my brother, my brother’s wife, and about thirteen others?”

He stopped mid stride to the entrance and turned to regard her. Her face was completely straight before an impish grin broke through her facade. “You are teasing me.”

“Yes. But it’s also true.” She giggled. “And I didn’t even find out until someone asked me about it at a very public ball.”

He raised an eyebrow at her. “You attended balls?”

“No, my brother attended balls. I was dragged to them in pinchy shoes and my knives hidden in-”

She paused and blushed again. “Hidden.”

Thranduil laughed. Her tale sounded fabricated, yet there was no guile in her eyes, and despite himself he could see her among his father’s court, dressed in fine fabrics and dancing under the stars at one of their feasts. She had that bearing about her, he had seen the grace with which she danced. And yet... She was Glorfindel’s granddaughter. He had not known the balrog slayer had
bonded, let alone had children. How had she fallen from his eye? Their interactions with each other made more sense now, but why had the balrog slayer waited until now to claim her?

He shook the thought from his mind and focused on her. “Careful, little edain, now that I know you can attend balls, I may drag you to one myself.”

Her face fell and her grip on his arm tightened. “When you feel like dancing, I will happily oblige.” then her mouth twisted into a mischievous smirk. “Mor’elvhen.”

Again, a hint that sorrow was coming. He rolled the stone in his pocket between his fingers and pointedly did not ask. “What does that mean?”

“You call me little human, I have the right to call you big elf.” She laughed as he held back the flap for her as she ducked through.

He followed, only to come to a complete stop at the sight of Ciryon standing just in their path. His edain stepped back and put herself behind him. Her hand immediately clutching the fabric of his shirt.

“Oroph’ion, I’ve heard much about your prowess on the battlefield.” Ciryon said by way of greeting, very pointedly ignoring the girl’s retreat.

“Ciryon.” Thranduil nodded his head but his tone left little doubt that he did not wish to speak to the edain prince. He went to maneuver his edain so they could move past the Gondorain prince.

“They say you are deadly with a bow but favor twin swords.” The Gondor prince continued moving to walk on his opposite side.

His edain had gone from easy smiles to nervous silence in a matter of seconds and he cursed the Gondor prince for undoing the progress he had made with her.

“Yes.” He said simply, almost lengthening his strides to get distance between them but stopping himself when he realized she would struggle to keep up if he did. She was currently practically curled into his back, her face, and ears, hidden from the edain prince.

Ciryon hummed and was silent until they reached the pavilion Gil’galad had had prepared, ever the extravagant host. No matter that they were at war, he still enjoyed the comforts of a king. While his father and Amdir made do with simple soldier’s trappings. His father had once said that the people under your command needed to see that their leader was willing to make the same sacrifices as they were asked to make. How else would they know you were a king worth following?

His edain frowned up at the large tent, peeking around his elbow as she murmured. “Pride cometh before a fall. I fell before my Pride.”

Ciryon frowned at the girl. “I am curious, my father is under the impression that elves are ‘pure’ beings and do not have dalliances. Yet, here a woman clings to you.”

She began giggling, turning her head to hide her face in her shoulder as she laughed. Finally she threw her head back in mirth and laughed loudly before turning to face Ciryon, her fingers still entwined in his shirt and her face bright with amusement. “And so it goes again and again, you look but you do not see.”

Ciryon colored, either from embarrassment or anger Thranduil could not tell, but he couldn’t help but smile at the fact his Edain was able to put the Gondor prince in his place. She seemed pleased by her own words and began skipping lightly beside him. The edain prince gave her a disgusted
look. “You know where her family is. Do you keep her for entertainment, amused by her mad ravings?”

“Mad as a hatter, but the hatter was right.” She giggled before coming to a halt with a frown. She looked at Ciryon and tilted her head. “Kindness is foreign to you. That makes sense.”

Thranduil couldn’t help the smile as Ciryon sputtered before giving up on words to turn and walk towards where Elendil was conversing with Amroth and his father.

“Well done.” He said quietly, patting her hand, proud that she was able to overcome her unease and speak for herself.

“He never once spoke directly to me. Damon says—” She faltered, her face falling before she inhaled. “Damon said you can tell a lot about a person by who they do and don’t speak directly to.”

Thranduil nodded. “Rudeness is a weak man’s substitute for strength, don’t begrudge him when he has so little.”

“Ooooh! Burn!” She laughed loud enough for Gil’galad to look in their direction.

Thranduil met the Noldor’s disapproving stare evenly, challenging it with a raised brow. He had charged him with her care, he could not send her away without insulting Oropher and bringing his own judgment into question, or risking offending the Balrog Slayer.

He found an empty seat next to his father and motioned for her to sit, waving to one of Gil’galad’s pages to bring over a plate. Glorfindel had chosen a seat nearby so that he was within speaking distance.

She sat elegantly, if nervously, and looked around the table before whispering. “Can I just, like, eat in a corner? I’m going to spill something on my shirt I just know it.”

“Nonsense,” he sat down next to her and leaned in to whisper. “There is not an edain within miles that could match your grace.” He tried to ignore Glorfindel’s knowing smirk as the balrog slayer engaged his father in conversation. The expression was not as.. Ire invoking now that he knew their relation, but it was still irritating.

She cast a sly glance towards Ciryon, who was leaning his elbows on the table, and speaking around the food in his mouth. “I don’t have much competition on that front. I’m more worried about the elvhenan, I mean, the eldar.”

He considered her as she absently lifted her drink, her fingers spread elegantly around the stem of the goblet. She really was quite graceful despite the feral wolf in her. “I believe you have nothing to fear on that count.”

She smiled at him and sat back to watch as the kings began rigidly polite conversation amongst themselves. Thranduil was drawn into a conversation about siege weapons with his Father and Glorfindel. Glorfindel suddenly fell silent at the same moment that Thranduil heard his edain softly humming as she deftly twisted her napkin into the shape of a swan. It was not loud, he doubted any of the edain could hear it but surely all the eldar present could hear the soft tune.

“Do you sing, child?” Amdir asked gently, his voice soft despite the distance between their seats.

His edain froze and set the cloth swan aside so she could fidget with the hem of his sleeve nervously. “Um. A little? Not… well, compared to-” She flushed and ducked her head so that her
hair covered her face. “Yes, I can sing.”

The High King set aside his goblet with a smile that Thranduil did not like. “Then you must sing for us! What better way to spend the evening before battle than with song?” At her nervous glance at the Edain in the room, Gil’galad pressed. “Surely you would not deny the soldiers this pleasure.”

Glorfindel’s jaw tightened and his eyes narrowed on The Noldor King, looking very close to speaking up before his father leaned towards her with a tight smile and patted her hand gently. “You do not have to sing if you do not want to, child.”

His Edain hesitated before looking up at his father with a sad expression and grasped the back of his hand with her wooden fingers. “For your sake, I will sing, my king.” The significance of her words were not lost on him. She had claimed his father as her king… the others she named lords, and not even ‘her’ lords.

She glanced around nervously, her eyes flickering silver and grey. “I… I need to be higher. I- I can’t sing for real on the ground, and I want to sing for real for you.”

Her words were met with amused chuckles from the Edain and Gil’galad, but Amdir just tilted his head curiously. Glorfindel spoke quietly. “Very well. What would work best for you, pashteh?”

“A… a tree is best. But-” She called her wooden arm back so that it curled around her shoulder like an ornate pauldron. “I can just… stand on a rock. I’m- ir abelas…”

Thranduil glared at the younger of the Edain in the room, who had begun to laugh at her jumbled thoughts. He rose from his seat, picking up the chair to set it on top of the table in front of them. “Will this suit your needs?”

She gave him a grateful smile. “Yes.” She jumped lightly onto the table and stepped onto the chair, never once disturbing a dish or using her arm for balance. She stood and closed her eyes and began humming softly, slowly gaining volume until the threads of the world shifted around her and her voice rang through the tent in a clear, ringing tone purer than silver bells. “I hear your voice on the wind. And I hear you call out my name "Listen my child," you say to me. "I am the voice of your history. Be not afraid, come follow me. Answer my call and I’ll set you free” Her voice rose in volume and she held out the last note till it seemed to mingle with her breath. Her eyes opened and they were shining like molten silver as the threads of the world rang with her song.

“I am the voice in the wind and the pouring rain, I am the voice of your hunger and pain. I am the voice that always is calling you. I am the voice, I will remain, I am the voice in the fields when the summer's gone, The dance of the leaves, when the autumn winds blow, Ne'er do I sleep throughout all the cold winter long. I am the force that in springtime will grow. I am the voice of the past that will always be. Filled with my sorrow and blood in my fields.

“I am the voice of the future, Bring me your peace” She rose onto her toes as she breathed out the words and called out her wooden arm so that she could reach out with her palms up, as if offering aid. “Bring me your peace and my wounds, they will heal. I am the voice in the wind and the pouring rain. I am the voice of your hunger and pain. I am the voice that always is calling you, I am the voice…”

She shuddered but finished her song. “I am the voice in the past that will always be, I am the voice of your hunger and pain. I am the voice of the future, I am the voice,”

She inhaled and sang the last words of the song with poignant power, the notes echoing in the air long after she had ceased singing. Once more, she sang the words, quietly, painfully. “I am the
voice…”

It was eerily silent as silver tears ran down her cheeks, tracing the line of her jaw before she opened her eyes and curtseyed atop the chair at Gil’galad. “Does this please you, lord? I can dance as well for your amusement.”

It was Amdir who spoke. “That was beautiful, child. But enough entertainment for the evening.” He directed the last part to at Gil’galad, who took a sudden interest in his goblet. Glorifindel lifted his hand to assist her down.

She accepted his hand with her flesh one and lightly stepped to the ground. Instantly, the threads of the world stopped ringing with her song. She touched her chest with her wooden arm and closed her eyes in pain. “Every soldier in the camp heard, lords. I hope it gives them peace.”

“I think it best if we retire for the evening.” Oraphor suggested. Thranduil leaped at the chance to get his edain away from them, swiftly bidding the assembly goodnight as he led her away and toward his company’s fires. He noticed some of the ellon and elleths on watch had soft, wistful smiles on their faces. After effects of her song? Glorfindel was following closely and his own eyes held a softness in them.

“I’m tired.” She spoke suddenly, her voice laced with weariness and suppressed tears.

“We are nearly to your tent and you may rest.” He assured her, wishing he could carry her the rest of the way but dared not with the balrog slayer following behind. Instead he lightly held her elbow to be certain she did not trip in her exhaustion. Once again she had shown the power of her song, had brought peace and beauty with her voice. She was the Voice, she had sang. In her song… ‘bring me your peace, and my wounds, they will heal’ Was part of her madness from the wars raging about her?

“No… No, I can’t.” She stopped and stared up at the stars in the sky. “I… I had children. Once. or still do… I don’t know where they are. I still… I still wake and look for them in the night.” She hugged herself. “My brother had terrible nightmares. I would sing to him so he could sleep. I still search for him in the mornings, waiting for him to bring me his hairbrush. I… I would dance with my love in my dreams. But I cannot find him. My father, my sister… my pack is gone. And I can not rest. My arms are empty. I lost my children.”

Thranduil reeled under these new revelations, she was a mother, who could not feel the threads connecting her to her children. Lost bonds. Again he wondered how she withstood the pain. Impulsively, he pulled her into a loose embrace, one she could easily pull away from if she wished. Then he felt it again, her fea. Searching, reaching, brushing his before being yanked away.

His edain shuddered, and let out a small keening sound as she twisted her fingers into his shirt tightly, then pushed away and covered her face. “He’s not him.” She whispered, not meant to be heard, but by the slight intake of breath from Glorfindel, she had been.

Thranduil watched quietly as she crossed the rest of the way to her tent alone, sensing her need to be alone. He stood there for, how long he did not know, before he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned to find the concerned faces of his father, Glorfindel, Amdir, and Amroth.

“How is she, my son?” Oropher asked quietly.

“She used to sing for her lost brother.” He kept the knowledge of her children to himself. That was a pain too deep for him to share. “Tonight brought back memories of all she has lost. I should not have brought her.”
“Nonsense.” Amdir growled. “The evening could have been a relief for all if not for Gil’galad’s pride. Even his own herald disapproved of his dealing with the girl.”

“What does he have against her?” Glorfindel asked, his voice betraying his frustration with the Noldor King. “Surely he does not find fault in her grief?”

“He is suspicious of her, she appeared from thin air and bears the form of a wolf. After some time though… I believe he is wroth that his plan to inconvenience Thranduil with her care has come to naught. In fact, I believe he is disappointed that he missed the chance to claim her as his own. She is… quite fearsome in battle.” Amroth pointed out. “He seems reasonable until she or Thranduil are around.”

Oropher was silent for a long moment, his eyes lingering on his edain’s tent, before he spoke. “What do you make of her fear of the Edain?” He asked quietly. “She… I have never seen a magical protection near as powerful as the one she cast about herself and my son when Gil’galad tried to send her to them.”

“She said ‘tel’. I know that means ‘no’.” Thranduil offered. “And ‘sathan’ means ‘please’. ‘Ir Abelas’ is an apology.”

“She was pleading.” Amdir said quietly, distaste in his voice. “And he still tried to send her to them.”

Glorfindel stiffened before he excused himself and then turned on his heel and stalked away, anger in every line of him.

It seemed ill conversation the night before a battle, and Thranduil’s gaze kept being drawn back to his edain’s tent. Oropher again placed a hand on his shoulder to gain his attention, he searched Thranduil’s eyes before sighing heavily. “You care for her.”

He paused, shocked at the words that leaped to the tip of his tongue. ‘Of course’. When had that happened? His edain. When had she become his in his own mind? His silence seemed to be answer enough for his father, who hummed in thought. “I will merely urge you to be cautious with your heart. She was bonded once before.”

“I expect nothing from her, Ada. She is hurting and I can help. That is all.” Thranduil said quietly, noticing that Amdir and Amroth had moved off to give them privacy.

Oropher nodded with a small smile. “It is often hard to tell just who you take after. You have your mother’s temper but my wish to mend that which is wounded.” He pulled his hand away to look up at the stars. “Edain are not meant to linger. Their mortality is Eru’s blessing to them for the passing of time is not kind to them.”

His father walked away and Thranduil heard the warning in his words, he truly did… But his edain looked but past a child. How could she have had children, multiple children, if she was so young? He knew the edain matured quickly, but… How old was she? And how many years did she have left?

He left an ellon outside her tent to bring him word if she exited and went to finish his duties as a prince for the evening. The rituals of kings meeting were finally drawing to a close when he saw the ellon he had left by the tent approaching with a nervous expression. “My lord?”

Thranduil frowned, it was not like his soldiers to leave their posts. “What is it?”

“The… the Balrog Slayer… he…” his soldier shifted nervously, “He took Miwen.”
He could not leave her with them, with the demeaning coldness of his king and the atan. Not during the battle he was not to be present for, not supposed to participate in. She had begged and Gil’galad had ignored her, and he had seen that none of the others were surprised at his treatment of her.

It had been simple to gather her few things and carry her out of her tent. The ellon were used to his presence beside her, and her shield and song had thrown her into her deep sleep of exhaustion. The ellon had thought nothing of him carrying her until he had mounted his horse.

She didn’t stir once as he guided his horse through the camp. He was almost at the outer edge when he heard his name shouted, and sighed. Of course it would be her ‘piemaker’.

"Glorfindel! Where are you going?" Thranduil asked as he caught up to them, but he could see the way his eyes shifted to Emma curled in his lap that was not his true question.

"I am taking her back to Imladris with me, as my right as her guardian." He spoke matter of factly and spurred his mount on.

But the ellon did not accept that as he gripped his mount’s bridle to halt them. “And she agreed to this?” His pale eyes were desperate.

Glorfindel sighed as he looked down at the ellon who so obviously cared for his granddaughter yet did not know it himself. That the mere thought of allowing someone else to care for her distressed him was evidence of his affection.

He spoke his next words quietly but put weight behind them. “Oroph'er'ion, she said neither she nor I are to be present tomorrow." He saw Thranduil's brow furrow and continued. "I cannot leave her here when the Atan and kings care so little for her. Especially during a great battle."

“I can-“

“No, you can not.” Glorfindel shook his head at the ellon. “Are you willing to risk her safety? She has the gift of foresight, think of what were to happen if she were to fall under Sauron's gaze.” He saw understanding dawn in the ellon's eyes and he continued quietly. “The safest place for my granddaughter is in Imladris, with me.” He hesitated at Thranduil’s torn expression and added. "For now." He heard voices and let his urgency into his voice. "I need to leave before Gil'Galad can try to command me to remain. I am oath bound to protect her, even from him."

Thranduil hesitated but with a forced nod he released the bridle and stepped back, his eyes betraying his inner turmoil. Glorfindel gave him a hopefully reassuring nod before spurring his mount on. He needed to escape shouting distance and quickly. He did not want to match the bonds of his oath to Beth to protect her descendents against his bonds of duty. He already knew the outcome of it.

He rode through the night and not once did Emma stir from her exhausted slumber. Not until he had to stop to allow his mount to rest did she crack her eyes open with a sleepy, "Piemaker?"

“No. Hush, child.” He pulled his cloak tighter around her, remembering how easily Beth had felt the cold.
"Where's he?" She slipped into the language of men, something he noticed she only did when utterly exhausted. "He's going t' need help."

"He is with his father. Preparing for battle." He said spoke softly. "Rest."

"Tell him to give him a hug while he can." She murmured before falling back to sleep.

Glorfindel paused at her words. ‘While he can’ Was Oropher to fall in battle then? He shook his head, it was out of his hands. They had traveled several more hours before she stirred once more, frowning and cracking her eyes open to look up at him in confusion. “Babala? Wha-“ she stopped and blinked. “Why am I swaying?” She frowned. “That’s a horse. I’m on a horse. Why are we on a horse?”

“I am taking you back with me to Imladris.” He said simply hoping she would accept it easily and fall back to sleep.”

Instead her eyes flew open and she started trying to untangle herself from his cloak. “No! Thranduil is- He’ll be alone! We have to go back!”

He let go of the reins, trusting his horse to remain on course and held her still, which took much more effort than it should have for someone so small. “Emma, you can not.” She still struggled against him and he sighed. “Emma, it is not your place.”

She got very still and he had a brief flash of hope that she was willing to listen to reason before she let out an angry hiss and disappeared from his arms. She reappeared an arm’s length away with an agonized cry, clutching her chest and staggering in both pain and exhaustion.

“Shit!” He jumped from the saddle and moved to gather her up. “Emma?”

“My place!” She screamed, and began beating his chest angrily despite her exhaustion. “Not my place?! This whole fucking world is not my place! I’m stuck here for ten thousand years before I get to my place and He’s alone and the kings and-” She dissolved into gasping sobs. “Oh God! His greatest fear… he’s alone. He’s alone and I can’t- I can’t-” She let out a pained cry before curling tightly around herself. “My Piemaker is about to lose everything, just like me, and I need- He can’t be-“ she collapsed in angry sobs.

“Ai, child.” Glorfindel sighed as he pulled her to his chest. Her pain was so great, her wounds so deep, and still she wanted to comfort others. Her tears did not seem to lessen, so he wrapped her tightly in his cloak and resumed their journey, humming the lullabies he had sung to his children as she exhausted herself with her tears.

They arrived at Imladris a few days later, she had not spoken to him once since, remaining silent even in her tears. He had tried to explain why he had taken her from the encampment, but she was resolutely ignoring him. When they arrived, the moment he let her down from the horse she had taken off, climbing the first tree she reached. Ah. Definitely Mirwa’s descendent.

She was still up there, despite the lateness of the hour, and his offer of supper. He waited for her, sitting at the bottom of the tree with his back pressed against the trunk.

She finally addressed him, her voice tight with pain. “Please stop that. It… it hurts.”
He looked up through the branches to see her hanging from one of the limbs with her wooden arm, her face shimmering and glowing with silver tears. “Stop what? I am simply waiting.”

“That! You’re not Damon! He’s dead and he’s not waiting for me ever again!” She inhaled shakily. “Will you move if I come down?”

He nodded and moved away from the tree a few paces. She looked at him with a heartbroken, lost expression when she reached the ground before looking away and covering her face with her wooden fingers. “That’s a mind trip and a half. Good thing you’re blond or I’d think I was worse off in the head than I already am.”

He sighed and sat down on one of the benches close by. “Did you know I bonded with your grandmother?”

“Course you did, you’re Eldar.” She snapped angrily, then paused. “Oh. I’m sorry. How… how do you cope with it so well?”

He patted the seat next to him and she hesitated before moving to sit stiffly next to him. “Emma… I am not… coping. I am surviving.” He picked up her flesh hand and extended his fea towards her, allowing her to see what he hid from all others: The torn and scarred remains of his fea.

Her eyes fell and she slumped at the sight of his pain. “You aren’t setting things on fire or… or punching your grandfather. I’m… sorry for that.” She hugged herself tightly. “I’m unstable and it’s not getting better.”

He nodded. “I never had your temper, you inherited that from your grandmother. But it took me many, many years to be able to not weep at the thought of her. It… is still difficult, but I have to endure.”

“So many years…” She murmured. “Till you find the Fellowship to help them.” She closed her eyes and inhaled for a measured count. “Theoretically… I will see him again.” She held up a finger. “Not in Mando’s Halls. I’m hungry.”

“I had supper prepared for us.” He stood and offered an arm to lead her knowing how easy it was to get lost in Imladris’ twisting halls.

“Ma serannas.” She murmured. She looked up at the sky before exhaling sharply. “How long are you keeping me here?”

“Until it is safe to leave. I… swore an unbreakable oath to your grandmother to protect her descendents.” He admitted. “I dare not risk having to defend you from Gil’Galad.”

“The last king of the Noldor falls at Sauron’s hand.” She said quietly before shaking her head. “You Noldor and your unbreakable vows. You’d think you would have learned after Feanor and his sons.”

He closed his eyes in grief over the knowledge of Gil’galad’s foretold death. “And Elrond?”

She smiled. “Doesn’t become king, but is respected as the wisest among elves for thousands of years. Forms the white council, the fellowship. Saves the world eventually.” She paused and looked at him with a frown. “I’m not divine touched or whatever. Not a prophet.”

He smiled and pulled her into a loose embrace. “No… just a woman with a heavy burden.” After a moment he pulled away and began walking her to the now cold supper.
Something about what she said sat ill with him, Oropher and Gil’galad, she said both would die. “What of Amdir?”

She looked down at her hands. “He falls… with- with Oropher.” Her shoulders began to shake. “Thranduil…. He- he’s the last… the last Elvenking.”
“Have you seen Emma?” Glorfindel asked Erestor as he passed him in the hall. It had been much, much too quiet. Normally she flitted after him like a shadow, alternating between crying and talking as the mood took her. But now it was silent.

Erestor pointed towards his room and he thanked them before hurrying in that direction. It had been a month since their arrival at Imladris, news of Oropher and Amdir’s fall in battle reached them not a day after and Emma’s outburst of rage and grief had lasted until she had collapsed from exhaustion. He had taken to giving her broth to drink instead of water, so often did she spend herself and then collapse into her deep sleep, that she was beginning to grow gaunt, unable to eat while unconscious.

Celebrian, Galadriel and Celaborn’s daughter took a stack of folded dresses to Emma. Emma had thanked her but pointedly refused to wear a dress, sticking to her oversized tunic and trousers that she had apparently cut from her piemaker’s belongings when he had tried to give her dresses. He remembered Beth’s fights with Fiabh over dresses and quietly suggested Celebrian provide altered men’s clothing instead. Emma was a warrior despite her small size.

Galadriel had agreed to meet his granddaughter when he told her of Telperion’s light, and Emma had clasped her hands, both flesh and wood, over her heart with an awed gasp when she saw her. Galadriel had started to smile, and then had blinked in consternation. “What is that song?”

Emma had winced apologetically. “It’s the ‘stay out of my head please’ song. Uh, tarlen.”

“You know of my abilities then?” Galadriel look at his granddaughter in surprise, it was a rare thing to see her so.

Emma had nodded eagerly. “Yeah! You’re Galadriel! Total fan.”

Galadriel laughed brightly and her eyes found his, her voice clear in his mind. (She indeed shines with Telperion’s light.)

Emma’s eyes narrowed. “What did you say to him? Am I being examined? Cuz I know a song that everyone hates.”

Galadriel once again looked at her in surprise then winced. “Are… you going to sing that song long?”

“Yup! I managed three days straight when Damon-” Her expression faltered and Galadriel looked horrified before Emma breathed in and closed her eyes. “And that’s why the song stays.”

She avoided Galadriel mostly, but Celebrian… Celebrian would seek his granddaughter out, sometimes dragging Emma behind her out into the gardens. There, Celebrian would brush and braid her hair, and often coax a song out of her. Always on the ground though. Once Emma had sung ‘for real’, standing in a tree as she sang, and the power of her voice had brought the tree to bloom, and then she had fallen.

Celebrian had been guilt ridden but no true harm had come to Emma, a bruised side that healed quickly, nothing more. Though Emma had laughed for days about the ‘family habit of falling’.
Emma returned both of the Wedding Daggers to him, stating that now she knew their stories and journeys she could not continue to fight with them. He had commissioned a pair of daggers for her the same night, his sigil in each hilt, and when they were ready, had gifted them to her as he had given each of his children their own. She had clutched them to her chest in tears of joy, and he never saw her without them on her hip, even within the house.

She had taken to feverish fits of writing, drawing strange symbols and lists and hanging them from the walls of her room, using string to connect different pages together until her room looked like the nest of a colorful spider. She would write and murmur, and sometimes would clutch her head and laugh. At one point, she had burst from her room and tackled him into a flying hug, laughing brightly about ‘the tree! The white tree! The Harts! It all tracks! Spirits that fade and return! Reimbodied! Out of time but not place!’ During her fits of writing and muttering was the best time he found to slide food in front of her for her to consume in her distraction.

She did not seem to be able to rest, only catching snatches of sleep when he or Celebrian would hold her, and then she would wake with a pained cry and would either go train or write or simply curl into herself and weep. Her moods varied from laughter to rage to despair, and Glorfindel grieved for and with her as she struggled with her pain.

Damon. Solas. Neria. Loghain. Ash. Danielle. Iselan. Emmaera. Gaelathe. Cassandra. The names of the family he had lost before he had known of them were stark in his mind, burned there by her fevered cries in the nights her exhaustion finally forced her to sleep.

News had just reached him of Sauron’s defeat at the hands of Isildur, and he was eager to share this news with her. The door to his room was open and he winced as he saw papers scattered across the floor of his room. She must have had another ‘breakthrough’.

She was standing in front of his spinning wheel, her fea screaming in loss though she was still and silent. He approached her quietly just as she reached out and shakily touched the black wool he had been spinning into yarn, a pastime he had not been able to set aside after losing Beth and his home. She let out a broken whine and fell to the floor, hugging herself tightly as she began to cry.

"He- he made our son a hat with horns like his. A wolf’s ears for me. Flowers for-” She sobbed. “Always knitting.”

He closed his eyes against the screaming of her fea, taking a breath before lowering himself down next to her, pulling her into his lap to comfort her. “Ai, shhhh, child.” She turned and sobbed into his shirt as he rubbed her back, using his own fea to soothe hers, and keep it from lashing out.

Once her tears quieted he looked down at her and wiped the tears from her cheeks. “Sauron has been felled.”

Her fingers twisted into his tunic before she quietly murmured. “Can I go see him now? He’s… alone.”

Ah… her piemaker… newly King of The Great Greenwood. “Do you think it wise?”

“My name is stubborn, not wise.”

He chuckled and rubbed her back, “Eat, bathe, and sleep. Once you are rested we will travel.”

Her face lit up with excitement and she swiftly uncurled and pressed a kiss to his cheek. “Thank you, thank you!” She shot from his lap and out the door and Glorfindel was reminded once more of his children.
He pushed himself from the ground and began gathering up her fallen papers, pausing when he saw his name, circled and with lines leading to other names. He closed his eyes and made himself look away, to gather her papers without reading them. Maybe it was a weakness, but he did not want to know more of all he had lost before he had even known them.

He had failed… the ring was there, at the fires of Mount Doom, and he had failed. Isildur was beguiled, the ring had survived, and he had failed. Because he could not strike down Isildur, for he would not relinquish the ring of his own will, he would have had to kill him. Elros’ descendent. He could not. He was weak. And in his weakness, he had failed.

Elrond turned Vilya around with his fingers; Gil’galad had entrusted it to him. For all the elf’s faults, his king and friend had cared… his treatment of the edain however… had not endeared him to the other kings, and Elrond suspected that because of this, they had fallen. Disregarded the plan Gil’galad had laid out so carefully.

“My lord, a rider approaches.” A soldier addressed him, pulling him from his thoughts.

He sighed and slipped Vilya onto his hand, immediately feeling its power’s caress as he stood and exited his tent.

The rider rode slowly towards him and he caught sight of familiar golden hair before the rider’s cloak began squirming and suddenly Miwen slipped out and off of the horse, stumbling and running towards him. “Elrond!”

She looked… ill. Gaunt and with dark circles beneath her eyes, eyes that were shining with heartbreak and concern. “Miwen. How-“

She shocked him by attacking him in a hug, squeezing his waist tightly as she murmured. “It is not weak to refuse to kill family.”

He was shocked, did his fea radiate his grief and guilt so? He looked up at Glorfindel, who still sat on his mount, watching them with grieved eyes.

“Miwen, you—“ he tried again but she cut him off again, leaning her head back to look at him. “It’s not over, but it will be okay. Isildur’s heir will be strong enough, will resist.” Her words rang with certainty. He gave her a small smile and let his hand come to rest on her shoulders. She was a Seer, of sorts.

“Thank you.”

“You want me to let you go, don’t you?” she mumbled, though her grip around his waist still had not loosened.

He chuckled, amused despite the grief. “When it is agreeable to you.”

“I’m hugging Elrond.” She muttered. “Never gonna be agreeable. But okay.” She released him and stepped back, looking up at him in concern. “You alright?”

He smiled. “I will be, Miwen. Thank you for your concern.”
She stepped towards him, then stopped. “No more hugs. For your sake. But-” She looked around. “Where’s Thranduil?”

At the name, Elrond found it hard not to let his countenance fall. Thranduil’s grief was fierce. “Miwen… he is-“

“Miwen?” Thranduil’s voice called out from behind them, grief and hope within it.

Emotions too fast to read flitted over Miwen’s face before she turned towards Thranduil and bowed. Dropping to one knee, her fist over her heart, head bowed. She stayed for a full ten heartbeats before she spoke quietly. “My king.”

Elrond had never seen her bow so before, not to any of the kings, not to anyone. Thranduil was frozen, his eyes taking in her form, his expression unreadable. But then Miwen was moving and she threw herself at him and embraced him tightly around the waist. “Oh, Piemaker. I’m so, so sorry.”

Thranduil’s eyes closed and pain flitted over his features before his arms went around her, curling over her and pressing a kiss to her hair. “You came back.”

Miwen sounded muffled with her face pressed into his shirt, but the words were still vehement and true. “I would have crawled back if I had to.” She laughed slightly. “Babala brought me back, though. Faster.”

She was incredibly loyal to Thranduil, had been even upon their first meeting once she knew who he was. The last of the elven kings. Had she known beforehand? He had seen Thranduil staring at a stone in his hand after the battle, as if it held answers. One of her stones perhaps, she was often lining up stones and knocking them over.

Thranduil looked up from where his face had been pressed to Miwen’s hair to Glorfindel. “Thank you.”

Glorfindel inclined his head, then dismounted and began untying the saddlebags from the saddle. “Where should I put her things?”

Miwen was curled into his side, the first comfort he had had since his father’s death. He had another cot moved into his tent, hang propriety. He just got her back, he was not letting her from his sight again so easily. Glorfindel was… agreeable, not even raising an eyebrow to the placement of the cot, simply laying her things on top of it.

She was gaunt, her delicate wrist bones prominent and her eyes sunken. She looked as if she had not eaten or rested her entire absence. He made note to remedy that as soon as he could, but right now she slept, deep breaths relaxing as he held her.

Glorfindel set a flask beside him, speaking quietly. “Broth. She… She has not fared well away from you. This is the first true rest she has had in… some time.”

Thranduil couldn’t help but hold her tighter to himself. “Elrond said she is more settled in the presence of my fea.”

The Balrog Slayer smiled in amusement. “Yes. I can say that is definitely true. I lost much to her
fires.”

He found himself chuckling at the thought of the great Balrog slayer having to stomp out her odd silver flames. Glorfindel laughed quietly before sighing. “I… packed her papers. She spent many hours creating them, but… I would not read them if I were you. There is… much pain in knowing.”

Thranduil soothed his thumb over Miwen’s arm and nodded. “I will not look at what she will not show willingly.”

“She will show them willingly, especially to you, will talk about things…” Glorfindel sucked in a breath, looking haunted. “She has tens of thousands of years within her mind. I would not look or ask.”

He looked down at Miwen’s lax face, and wondered how could an edain’s mind hold so many years? Was this another cause of her confusion? “I understand.”

Glorfindel nodded then paused. “I will be returning to Imladris after she wakes. Would you help remind her to write? She said she would, but time slips from her. I will visit as oft as I can.”

Thranduil looked up at him in shock, he had been prepared to argue, to plead for Miwen to remain with him, but Glorfindel was willingly leaving her in his care. “Of course.”

Glorfindel seemed to catch his surprise because he smiled wryly. “I know better than to try and match a stubborn woman of Shunmahayr’s blood. No matter how old you may be, one of them will outlast you. She wants her ‘piemaker’, her ‘piemaker’ she will have.”

Thranduil snorted at the horrible epesse, but it did not prick his pride as it had before. He had felt lost when she had bowed to him, bowed to him as her king. He felt as if he had lost her as well, that she had retreated from him due to his crown, but then she had risen from her display of respect and had hugged him and it felt… He had felt relieved that she would still treat him the same, would still call him an undignified name and cling to him and he would wager that he would lose another shirt if he tried to exert his position.

It felt like home. “‘I have not listened to gods, kings, or men since before I could walk, I’m not about to start with a prince.’” He laughed quietly. “It was one of the first things she said to me that I could understand.” He had been angry at her, at first, after the battle, after his father’s death. She had known… but the weight of the stone in his pocket had reminded him… she had asked him, in riddles and lines of stones, asked him if he was willing to suffer for his people. And she had accepted his answer. He could not hold onto the anger knowing she had been willing to change the fate of his people on his wish.

Glorfindel smiled fondly as he reached for the tent flap, “Ai, that sounds like Shunmahayr. Never will her shadow leave me.” And then he was gone… leaving them alone.

He sighed and looked down at Miwen; she still needed care, and he swore to Eru he would provide it.

The armies went their separate ways, his people fewer than before, much too few. Miwen and her ‘grandfather’ had parted with a fond embrace, Miwen both thanking him and apologizing for
punching him. Elrond had sighed longsufferingly at her awkward shifting before he opened his arms and allowed her to bestow him with a ‘hug’. She had whispered quietly to him, but still enough to be heard. “You will be an amazing dad.” Elrond had looked at her in confusion and Miwen let him go with an impish, silver lit grin. “She’s very sweet.”

Elrond’s ears turned pink and he coughed. Thranduil felt a vague sense of satisfaction that Miwen could rattle his composure so easily.

And once everything was said and done they were blessedly traveling back… back to the Greenwood… his Greenwood. Miwen flitted after him like a welcome shadow and truth be told, he had missed her constant presence at his elbow, even when her grief took her and she rambled beyond his understanding.

During one such fit, he found her with her hand pressed to the ground, a concerned expression on her face. She had been murmuring in her ‘elvhen’ and when he approached, looked up sadly. “Earth doesn’t remember without the trees to bind it. So much memory in the wind.”

He couldn’t help but sigh and smile as he knelt next to her. “I missed you.”

“And I you, piemaker.” She ran some dirt through her fingers. “All we are is dust in the wind.”

The closer they drew to the Greenwoods the more Miwen began to gain strength. She was not as gaunt, gaining weight and color as the days passed, and the dark circles left her eyes, smiles came easier, and fits took her less often. She was healing.

One night, just before they were to reach the Greenwood, she had set a locked chest in front of him with a pensive expression, chewing on her lip. “This is… everything I think I know. I don’t… want to show you, but if you ask I will.”

He hadn’t hesitated to shake his head, remembering Glorfindel’s haunted look and Miwen’s own tangled, torn mind. “No. I do not want to know.”

She let out an explosive, relieved breath and smiled. “Thank you.”

“I do, however…” He hid a smile at her wary expression. “Want to learn to use my fea as you use yours, if possible.”

She blinked, and then grinned. “Yeah! Okay! We can try!”

It was not as fast as he expected it to be… apparently listening with his fea was vastly different than causing it to manipulate things around him. Miwen seemed confused for a while and retreated to her mind, eyes silver as she muttered to herself before she came back with a determined and sheepish expression. “You’re a lot younger than I’m used to, your magic is younger. Gotta start simpler. I’m gonna teach you to meditate.”

He barked a laugh. “Miwen, I am twenty times your age.”

She raised her eyebrows. “Are you, though?” Before shaking her head and waving her hand. “Wait, no, not going there. But the fact remains, your magic isn’t as… developed? Um… evolved? as I’m used to dealing with. We’re gonna have to start like Damon did. Find yourself, find your center.”

He… did not want to think on that too much.

He sighed and shook his head. “Very well. Show me how to ‘find my center’ as you put it.”
The blood drained from her face and she pressed her hand to her heart, stepping away from him with an expression of agony. “No.” She took a shuddering breath and looked away. “No, I can’t… I can’t show you. I can talk you through it, but I can’t show you.”

He immediately felt terrible for asking, and unknowingly sparking a memory that pained her. She blinked and gave him a weak smile. “Sorry, just… things can go very right or very wrong if I show you. So, have you ever heard of extreme self awareness? What am I saying, of course you haven’t.” She blew out a breath and sat cross legged on the ground. “This is gonna take a while.”

So, they meditated… and meditated… and meditated… until he was sick of meditating. He struggled with parsing her meaning, but tried to be patient with her as she talked and rambled. Apparently her center was in her chest and her bonded had been in his head, and her brother’s had been in his stomach.

It was… confusing, but he meditated and concentrated, and became uncomfortably aware of the way he used his fea with every breath. He used it to walk gracefully, he used it to hear and see, he used it to pass over snow and grass and earth without disturbing it. It was… disconcerting to become suddenly aware of how much he used his fea, how they all used their fea without realizing, like becoming aware of the constancy of one’s heartbeat and breath until you could not remember to breathe in rhythm.

Miwen had laughed herself to tears the first time he had risen from their ‘meditation’, uncomfortably aware of his fea in his limbs, and had tripped. Once she could breathe again, she said it was progress.
He felt a sudden wash of relief once they were within the Greenwood’s. The trees, tall and proud, calmed his being and now that he knew how to listen… welcomed him. Recognized him.

Miwen burst into elated giggles when they reached the Greenwoods and had raced ahead to… hug a tree before shimmying up it swiftly. At first he had worried but… he listened… and she was safe, and apparently traveling through the branches. Gwathren had looked at him strangely when he had them continue on, apparently without her, but he did not explain that the trees had told him where to find her. The knowledge of the song of the trees felt… private. She emerged from the trees several miles down the road with a simple bow in her hand and pockets full of acorns, dropping from the limbs and directly onto him with an elated, “Piemaker! You’re home!”

He couldn’t help his laughter as he caught her… and it felt good to laugh. “Where did you get that?” He pointed at the simple bow.

“The tree! They gave it to me when I shared my story. It’s not like the one I used to have, but I have two arms!” He eyed the simple, rough looking bow thoughtfully, while it was… serviceable, it did not suit his edain. He would have a better one made for her.

The trees seemed to part as the mountain caves… his home, came into view. Miwen was in, as she put it, ‘full on fansquee mode’, which apparently meant that she gasped and darted from thing to thing and stared and smiled, and occasionally let out short, high pitched squeaking noises before she came dashing back to him with excited cries of, “Oh!” or “Wow!”. At one point she just came back and made the high pitched squeaking noise, jumping up and down while she clutched his sleeve, completely oblivious to his people’s shocked expression, before dashing back off to stare at an elk. She was… enraptured.

He listened, half to his father’s advisers, who had been left behind to run the kingdom during the war and half to her excited noises. Catching himself smiling on more than one occasion, her excitement was… infectious.

After one of her excited gasps about “elks! Real elks!” And then dashing off again, one of his father’s advisors hesitantly spoke up. “My lord… the edain? She is…” the advisor hesitated when Thranduil looked at him.

“She is Miwen of the ancient house Golden Flower, and her grandfather has placed her under my care.” He spoke pointedly, he would not have her treated as she had been by Gil’galad.

She suddenly came back and tugged on his sleeve excitedly. “Piemaker! The trees! The crown! I gotta do a thing!”

She started to turn and dash away again and he caught her around the waist, lifting her up slightly before she instinctively went for his legs. “Ai! Wait for one of us to go with you into the forest. I don’t want you to get lost.”

He chuckled when she actually pouted. “But you have to do kingly things.” She went limp, hanging like an overstuffed rag doll over his arm and he sighed at the image she presented to his new advisers. Eru was not done laughing at him apparently.

She lifted her head hopefully. “I won’t get lost. I can follow the roots. I’ll bring you back a
present.” She narrowed her eyes, and then smiled. “You’re using it to hold me up, you know.”

He blinked, suddenly aware of the way his fea was indeed coursing through his arm and when he focused on it, thought about it, it retreated and then he… he dropped her, her weight suddenly seeming heavier.

She laughed and scrambled to her feet and took off and he pinched the bridge of his nose in exasperation. “Gwathren?”

“I have her, my king.” The ellon sighed before following.

He looked back at his advisers… oh Eru was definitely laughing at him.

He had to endure a formal coronation ceremony, immediately, according to his advisers. They had prepared as soon as the news of his father’s death had reached them. Miwen had… had shone. She had appeared at the end of the ceremony, much to everyone’s shock, dropping from the tree tops with a crown of branches and twigs in her hands, her eyes glowing silver as she had seemed to almost float towards him, blades of green grass springing up under each of her steps, mindless to the soft murmurs left in her wake. She looked… like what he imagined the Maiar would look like, powerful and beautiful. She dropped to one knee in front of him, her eyes shining with her magic as she presented the elegant crown towards him. “A gift from the trees, my king.”

He shook his head, only she would do something like this… his insane, impossible edain. “If you are an Ambassador for the trees, would you crown me, my lady?”

She stood with a small smile, then looked up at him. “I’m afraid you might have to kneel for me to do that.”

“As you wish, Miwen.” He dropped to one knee and her power flared in pain and beautiful silver light before she placed the crown on his head.

She smiled at him, shining and beautiful. “I would sing, my king, but I fear it will have to wait.” Then the silver light flickered out of her eyes as she collapsed as if strings holding her up had been cut. While she was slowly growing more powerful as she healed, she still had definite and sudden limits. There were shocked and horrified gasps from those watching as he caught her before she could hit the ground, and one of his advisors stepped forward with a concerned, “Is she alright?”

“She used too much of her power for my sake. She needs to rest.” Thranduil stood, holding her carefully against his chest before looking at those assembled. “I thank you for your trust, for accepting me as your king. I must care for my charge and I ask you forgive me for my early retreat.”

“My king, one of the healers can tend to her.” An advisor said quietly, eyeing Miwen’s small, limp form in his arms.

Thranduil smiled softly and shook his head at the elder adviser. “Before he his death, my father asked me, ‘if you cannot care for one edain, how can you hope to care for a kingdom?’. Thank you, but I will tend to her.”

He strode off towards the gates and through the familiar halls. It was not until he passed a pair of wide eyed guards and then closed the door to his chambers behind him that he realized…
Oh Eru. He had grown so accustomed to carrying her, of bringing her back to his tent to rest, he had not thought- He had picked her up, cradled her intimately before all assembled, and then had taken her to his room. He had all but publicly claimed her. He set her on his bed and stepped back, covering his face with his hands as he felt it burn with embarrassed shame.

As Miwen would say, “Well, crap.”

Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately, Miwen remained oblivious to the implications of what he had done. She woke in his bed, rolled out with mussed hair and sleepy blinking, and had wandered barefooted and sleep rumpled out of his room while he was in council meetings. He knew this, because a red eared ellon was following her uncertainly as she listed absently, still not fully awake, into the council room. She smiled when she noticed him.

“Piemaker! You look almost recognizable now. Pretty.” Then she had turned and wandered away, no doubt searching for something to eat before she returned to sleep.

He looked at his advisers, determined not to show his embarrassment. “Have a room prepared for Lady Miwen.” And stuck his face back into the documents before him.

“Near your quarters, my king?” One particularly brave one asked.

“Yes.” He answered, having expecting them to ask whether he thought it wise. Then winced inwardly as the question dawned on him and at his hasty answer. What was it she had said to Ciryon at his accusation? Again and again it goes?

Evening was nearing when Miwen came back, her arms wrapped around a basket, her face scrunched into a confused frown. “Why’s everyone looking at me weird? Weirder than usual? Was the glow up too much? It felt right at the time. I did sort of fall asleep in the kitchen though. You have a very nice cook. Mine would chase me out with a spoon.” She said, then reached into the basket and shoved a slice of berry pie at him. “Pie for the piemaker!”

“Miwen…” He glanced at his gaping Advisors, then firmly decided not to be embarrassed by her and accepted the pie. “I have yet to make a pie.”

“We should fix that. You have the eyebrows for it.” She grinned, then looked around with a slight wave. “Hi! I’m Miwen. I was a little out of it, so sorry if we’ve met before.” She paused and then looked back at him. “Hey, can I get an official something to wave at people who keep trying to give me dresses? There’s only so many times I can go out the window and the dresses here are really heavy and expensive looking and I still end up with grass stains and twigs in my hair.”

Thranduil closed his eyes and… he could not help it, he laughed. The ridiculousness of it all. “Miwen, I am in council.”

“C’mon! I used to get them from-” She paused and pain flashed over her face before she swallowed and nodded. “Right. Yeah. I’m gonna…” She turned and fled, calling over her shoulder. “Don’t forget to eat!”

He began to rise to go after her but stopped himself, breathing out deeply before turning back to his counselors, “How many more issues must be dealt with today?”
He found her in the private garden. Both his room and his father’s room had doors leading to it. She was lining pebbles up, as she liked to do, her face oddly serene. She hummed when he approached, somehow knowing it was him without looking up. “Hey, Piemaker. Time for some meditation? Or did I lose track of time?” She glanced up at the sky curiously.

He smiled and indulged himself by sitting down on the grass beside her. “After today, meditation sounds like a retreat.”

“That bad, huh?” She laughed and then looked over at him… pausing before dissolving into hysterical giggles. “My queen.”

“Dare I ask?” He sighed.

“You- you’re wearing a dress!” She laughed openly. “Did they give you mine by mistake?”

He looked down at his robe… he had not been wearing the top layer in council, it had been draped on the back of his chair. “They are robes, Miwen.”

“Uh-huh, sure princess.” Her smile faltered, then settled into something sadder, but still a smile. “My brother wore dresses. He ‘rocked’ them.” She moved to sit cross legged. “Shall we, princess piemaker?”

He groaned. “Miwen, please… not another epesse… my mind can not handle another.”


“Miwen.” He growled in mock irritation.

She froze, though her fea reached out towards him, then in a flash of magic, she shifted to her wolf form and bolted away with a pained whimper.

He sighed and rubbed his temples. What had he said? She had just been teasing him and now- a shout of alarm rang out and he scrambled to his feet in sudden realization that there was a massive wolf running through his halls and it would cause panic. He ran after her, towards the noise of shouts.

He burst through a pair of open doors, and just as suddenly, the wolf that was Miwen ran towards him, followed by a handful of armed ellon. She ducked behind him, her tail tucked tightly to her legs as she laid down behind him. He held his hands up towards the ellon. “Peace, she is harmless.”

Miwen made a scoffing growling noise, then in a flash of magic, returned to human form and swayed where she sat on the ground. “S’rry. Uh. Bad idea. Panicked.”

He sighed and dismissed the very confused guards… he turned and picked Miwen up, carrying her back into the garden and setting her on a bench. “Panicked at what? What did I do?”

Her eyes widened and she… she blushed and looked away. “Don’t growl at me. It’s a… a wolf thing.”

He rubbed his temples. “A wolf thing… Miwen you are impossible.”

Her fea reached towards him in pain, then she snatched it back, pressing her hand to her chest. “Yeah… So I’ve been told.” She whispered then said with forced brightness. “I kept my shape longer that time!”
Time in the Greenwood was… Soothing. When it was not soothing, it was not dull. Miwen slowly settled as time passed, her fits growing fewer and farther between, her ability to hold her powers stretching further and further. He had been at a loss to explain to his advisers when he had been sitting in his throne to greet the dwarven emissaries from Erebor and a massive, familiar, silver wolf had padded out of an archway and sat regally next to his throne. She had giggled for days after over the faces of both the advisors and the dwarves. He had been somewhat grateful as her presence had shortened his dealings with the dwarves. However, he did ask her not to show up as a wolf when he was greeting dignitaries anymore, and she had smiled slyly and agreed far too readily.

So of course a massive silver cat appeared when he was dealing with a Gondorian Ambassador and he had had to fight for every scrap of self control he had not to reveal he had been as badly startled as the others as it laid across his feet with a toothy yawn.

His own control of his fea was slowly progressing. He had found his ‘center’ as she called it, residing within his head in the ‘seat of intellect and pride’ she had wistfully declared, and had begun exercises, learning to reach with it and call it back. It was difficult, like trying to handle water with his bare hands. The first time he managed to reach across a room and prod Miwen with his fea, she had burst into tears, and then had hugged him and declared she was proud of him. She also muttered about stupid, stubborn, arrogant elves so he was not sure how to take her praise.

Glorfindel made regular trips to the Greenwood, Miwen would squeal as she rushed to tackle the ancient elf in a hug as soon as he reached the bridge. Thranduil found himself looking forward to the times the balrog slayer visited. As Miwen settled she began to tell stories to him, of her brother, of her adventures, of her lost children, of her studies, though those often left him lost. An expression Glorfindel shared, though he listened intently to her spiels of ‘liminal spaces’ or the ‘migrating of ocean floors’.

It was during one of The Balrog Slayer’s visits that he presented Miwen with a bow worthy of her. His smiths had taken their time perfecting and working enchantments into the elegant whitewood of the bow. When he unveiled it to her, she moved forward as if in a dream, as if she was enthralled by it, immediately drawing it as if it was part of her before tearing up and smiling softly. "Valor kept it."

“It is enchanted to your hand alone. It-” He was going to tell her how it was made but he was cut off when she had hugged him fiercely.

Glorfindel had smirked at them and commented that he was surprised it wasn't a knife, and Miwen had… blushed and punched him in the side and said that wasn’t appropriate. He did not understand the pair’s relationship at all.
Time passed, and they both healed a little more.

Thranduil heard her, screaming loud enough to echo through the halls. Panic clutched at his chest as he threw aside his papers and ran, channeling his fea into his muscles to lend speed. He followed the sound, closing in till his ears rang and then he found her…

Standing in front of… an old man dressed in plain gray robes, who leaned against a staff, with a very… amused if baffled expression. Miwen was jumping up and down and… He let out an exasperated breath and let his head fall back before gathering his dignity. She was in ‘super fansquee mode’ that was all. He moved to her side and waved his hand in front of her face, and she latched onto his arm, blessedly ceasing the screaming to breathlessly exclaim, “It’s him!”

“And he is?” He looked at the baffled old man.

“Gandalf the Grey! Mithrandir! Gandalf the Wandering Wizard! Olórin! The gray pilgrim! Eeeeee!” He winced as she was so close to his ear. “He’s one of the Maiar! The Istari!”

The- maiar? Thranduil looked at the old man before them and- The old man before them chuckled. “When lady Galadriel spoke of you, my dear, this was not the welcome I expected. I have not seen such unrestrained joy in many, many years.”

“Sorry! I just-” Miwen bounced excitedly. “This is like my every fifteen year old dream come true! I have over half my wish list checked off! You’re super awesome.” She suddenly gasped. “You came to see me?!”

This Gandalf did not seem put off by Miwen’s mannerisms, instead he looked… understanding. Kind. “Yes, my lady.” He winked at her in a playful way that had her squealing again.

“Oh, I could fangirl all day, but you probably have purposes and important wizard stuff you have to arrive perfectly on time for but-” She squealed again. “How can I help you?”

The… maiar looked at her steadily before speaking. “Why do you think I came to you to ask for aid?”

“Hmm? Oh, it’s a turn of phrase, but most people looking for me want answers or magic tricks, or perhaps to tell me to stop climbing the trellises.” She grinned. “So it works either way. Wait, Galadriel sent you? I’m not going to stop singing around her.”

The maiar chuckled again, apparently amused by that. “I did not come on her behalf.” He smiled at her gently. “My dear, would you do me the honor of singing… as you sung before?”

She blinked, then frowned. “I’m assuming you mean sing for real and not the song that never ends.”

Again he smiled at her. “Heavens no. Do not torture me so.”

Thranduil felt as if he was missing something vital as Miwen bounced on her toes and looked around, muttering between her teeth. “Gonna sing for mother freaking Gandalf. What even is my life?” Then louder. “I need a tree. Or a rock.”

She looked around, then darted away, then darted back and motioned eagerly, then darted away again. Most likely to the gardens. He shifted awkwardly under the maiar’s gaze before he
straightened and waved his hand in an ‘After you’ gesture he had picked up from Miwen. Gandalf chuckled and walked down the hall she had disappeared through, finding the garden easily.

Miwen was in a tree when they reached the gardens, muttering to herself as she paced back and forth across a limb. She threw up her arm when she saw them. “Piemaker, I don't know what to sing!”

He couldn’t help a smile that she would consult him, before suggesting. “How about something about trees? You are fond of them.”

She scrunched her face up, then beamed. “Yeah! Okay.” She inhaled and fidgeting nervously before closing her eyes and beginning to sing, the threads of the world shifting at the touch of her voice. “I know the sound of each rock and stone. I embrace what others fear. You are not to roam in this forgotten place. Just the likes of me welcome here.”

Gandalf inhaled in a soft gasp as the tree’s leaves brightened as her voice lifted. “Everything breathes, And I know each breath. It's more than enough for this girl.”

She raised her arms, calling her wooden arm into shape to do so. “Like every tree stands on its own. Reaching for the sky, I stand alone. I share my world with no one else. All by myself; I Stand Alone.”

Her eyes opened, shining silver and bright and beautiful as she changed the world with her song. “Deep in the darkness my heart still sees, Everything I'll never be. Behind these eyes I go everywhere, There's no need for sympathy. Everything breathes, And I know each breath. In my world there's no compromise.”

The tree she was standing on was in full bloom, healthy and shining as silver tears began running down her cheeks despite her smile. “Like every tree stands on its own. Oh, reaching for the sky I stand alone. I share my world with no one else. All by myself…”

Thranduil felt his feet shudder and had to draw it back as it reached for her as her voice rang with mournful notes, her grief mingling with the shining of her voice. “Still I will remember. Still I run with you… And when it's time for you to go, Take me in your heart…”

She inhaled shakily and her voice trembled. “Like every tree, stands on its own… Oh, reaching for the sky, I stand alone… I share my world with no one else… All by myself, I stand…” She shuddered and hugged herself, the last word whispered instead of sung. “Alone.”

Thranduil stepped forward just in time to catch her as she crumpled from the branch without even a shriek of surprise. She trembled in his arms before patting his shoulder. “Thank you.”

Thranduil turned to looked at the Ñaiar, Gandalf. “Did that satisfy your curiosity?” His words were sharper than he intended… but she had wearied herself.

“He wasn’t making me dance, Piemaker.” She smiled lopsidedly up at him. “It’s okay.” She looked over at Gandalf. “Whatcha think?”

It was only then Thranduil noticed tears in the Ñaiar’s eyes, the Ñaiar who looked incredibly like an old man who had found something thought lost. “Your light is radiant as the day it was sung into being, my lady. Thank you for indulging me.”

Miwen frowned, then her eyes widened and her mouth fell open. “His were gold.”

Gandalf’s breath caught. “Who?”
But Miwen had begun muttering distantly, spiralling into one of her manic fits that would end in pages pasted to walls and scribbled equations he dared not look at.

“Her late brother. She… she says his fea and eyes were as gold as hers are silver before she buried him.” He tried to explain.

Miwen suddenly squirmed and he carefully set her down, following attentively as she hobbled quickly along the hallways, leaning against walls to steady herself as she moved frantically towards her goal, pausing to motion them both after her, leading them to her room.

She practically threw herself at her bed and fumbled under it, bringing out her precious lockbox of memories. She unlatched it and pulled out the cloth bag with trembling hands. “I don’t remember if you ever saw them, but…” She untied the bag and poured two halves of a clear, broken stone, hung on silver and gold chains, into her hand. “These belonged to our mothers.” She held them up for Gandalf to look at. “They said they found it in the ocean when they were children, and it glowed, and exploded and they absorbed the light when they split it to make friendship necklaces. But no one believed them.”

The maiar very careful fit the two halves together before his hands began to tremble visibly.
Thranduil stood on the balcony, under the lights of the Stars, as he watched his people prepared to celebrate. The feast of remembrance. To honor Oropher, and all others who perished in the war ten years past. He wondered what his father would say if he saw him now? The mantle of king was heavier than he had ever imagined... his father had made it look easy.

Ten years... for ten years Miwen had been with him... Miwen, a lady of the ancient house of the golden flower, bearer of Telperion's light.

Telperion. Miwen had, or was, the actual light of Telperion. Her brother had... Thranduil felt incredibly grieved at the loss of Laurelin's light, though he had never witnessed it. Their mothers had found the last simmaril... How such a thing was possible, he did not know but...

The maiar, or wizard, or Mithrandir, as Gandalf wished to be called, offered to see Miwen to Valinor... the offer had caused his stomach to clench in dread, fear that she would accept... but Miwen smiled sadly at the maiar and said that she didn't belong there... and she stayed when the maiar left... stayed with him.

Not long after Mithrandir left, a letter arrived from another wizard, Saruman the White, asking Miwen to travel to Imladris... she paled when she read it and vehemently refused, Would not even answer the wizard. And when said wizard made an unexpected appearance in his court, she had disappeared until the white robed wizard had given up and left the Greenwood. Yet, When a shorter wizard, robed in brown with twigs and moss clinging to his clothes, who claimed to be 'Radagast' appeared at the gate, Miwen had squealed and greeted him with almost as much enthusiasm as she had Gandalf.

And when Radagast asked to live within the Greenwood, she had turned to him with pleading eyes. So of course, he had agreed to the wizard's request.

Gwathren had sailed. He had requested leave, stating that the horrors of the war had been too much for his fea. Miwen had touched his arm and whispered something about 'shadows and loyalty' that left them both confused, and then said she'd find him in a few millennia or so.

As time went on she was as wild as ever, impossible to predict... yet he would not change that for-

"You look like him when you stand like that." Her voice drew him out of his thoughts and he turned to find Miwen leaning against the door, watching him with a sad smile. She wore a simple but flowing pale blue dress, a dress she only agreed to wear after much pleading from him, her hair, left down as she preferred to keep her ears covered, held in place by a simple circlet with six rubies, a gift from him, the concept taken from one of her fevered sketches she had made during one of his counsel meetings. She loved it, though it made her sad to look at it at times.

"A poor substitute I fear." He sighed as he turned back to look at the stars.

He heard the whisper of fabric as she moved and the slight padding of her bare feet against the stone as she moved to stand next to him. "Somehow I don't believe that."

"Once again you have too much faith in me."

"And you have too little in yourself."

She chided as she turned and hopped to sit on the railing.
unheeding of the height should she fall.

“You have plenty for the both of us.” He moved to stand closer to be within reach lest she lost her balance. She never did unless exhausted, but he cared not to risk it.

She hummed and looked up at the stars, feet swinging idly. “Soo, what captures our queen's attention tonight?”

He sent her a mock glare that made her giggle. “Your King was admiring the stars, as elves are known to do.”

She raised an eyebrow at him playfully. “Stop wearing dresses and I’ll stop calling you a queen, Piemaker.”

He rolled his eyes. “They are robes.” Out of everyone in his kingdom she was the only one who treated him the same as she had ever treated him. His edain. His Miwen.

“They’re dresses.” She said defiantly, raising her head in challenge.

He shook his head at her but laughed, which he guessed had been her whole intention, for she smiled brightly, looking pleased with herself. He returned his gaze to the stars above. “They are beautiful. Perfect and untainted creations of Eru. Right there for all to see yet always out of reach.”

Miwen looked up and smiled. “Are you so sure of that?”

Thranduil looked down at her and raised an eyebrow at her. “I feel if I say yes, you will just do something impossible to prove me wrong.”

“You know me too well.” She grinned impishly before looking up at the stars, catching her lip between her teeth as she concentrated. Suddenly her eyes shone a bright silver that put the stars above them to shame as she stretched out her hands, both flesh and wood, cupping them together.

Thranduil suppressed a gasp as the threads of the world shifted once again under her hand and the light of the stars above them shifted, parting yet not dimming and several dozen little lights floated down from the sky to fall into Miwen’s cupped hands. After the last light fell to her hand she turned and held out the little gems of pure starlight to him with a small smile. “Nothing is out of reach, if your will is strong enough. Not even the stars.”

He put his own hands under hers and looked down with awe and wonder as she let the white starlight gems fall into his hands in a cascade of beauty. “They are-” he couldn't finish the sentence, for how does one describe the beauty of gems that shine from captured starlight within? Instead he looked at her and the way she held her mouth in a soft smile as she studied his face. He clutched the precious starlight and gave her a promise. “I will cherish them until the end of time.”

She smiled widely but as quickly as it appeared the smile fell and something passed over her face and she grew pale. “I need to go.” She said suddenly, jumping down from her perch.

“Miwen, are you well?” He was confused and concerned. Had she overtaxed herself with this gift?

She stopped and took several deep breaths before turning back to give him a tentative smile. “I'm fine, I just… remembered something… unpleasant.” She looked down at the floor for a second, grief showing itself once again. Suddenly she looked up with an impish smile. “New bling so you can be a pretty, pretty princess.” She teased as she started walking to the door.

“Miwen-” he started with exasperation.
“Dresses!” She called before ducking out the door.

“Miwen.” He sighed fondly, setting the gems into a box on his stand, he smiled at thoughts of what he could have made with them… possibly for her. He closed the lid and moved to follow her.

The feast had only just begun and he delivered the speech that was expected of him before searching her out, intending to steal a dance, only to come face to face with a green eyed elleth he vaguely remembered as one of his adviser’s daughters.

“Haaaave you met Thranduil?” Miwen asked brightly before practically shoving the elleth at him. “You have a lot in common! Blond. Tall. Elves.” and with that she slipped into the crowd.

The elleth blushed before dropping into a low curtsy. “My lord king.”

Why did Miwen keep doing this to him? This was the fifth elleth she had abandoned him to in the last year alone.

He suffered the elleth’s attentions for a good hour before he was able to slip away. Miwen actually narrowed her eyes when he found her again before nodding. “Brunette next time. Or a redhead.”

Thranduil sighed and took her hand before leading her to the center of the room. “Just for abandoning me, you are going to dance with me.”

“I will figure out your type, my queen.” Miwen hummed thoughtfully, allowing him to lead her as her eyes started searching the crowd. “She’s got to be here.”

Was his ‘type’ not obvious? “You are impossible, Miwen.” He sighed as he led her through the first steps of the dance, particularly happy to see the elleth that she had shoved at him was looking very forlorn.

“Yeah. I’ve heard that before.” She sighed before looking up at him. “So, what was wrong with her? It was her nose, wasn’t it? Too long. What would make you want to drop everything to get to know a gi-elleth?

Thranduil laughed and decided to play with her a little. “She was too… polite. Quiet. Made sense with every word she spoke. Far too possible.”

Miwen scrunched her nose. “Crap… elleths are so… restrained… you’re putting in a tall order, piemaker.”

“Or a rather small one.” He hummed with a smile.

She sighed then almost immediately froze, halting the dance abruptly. Her eyes darted up at him, narrowing. “You- you are teasing?”

What must he do? He had shown his preference to her over and over again. His whole court knew he favored her, whispered of her possibly becoming his queen, yet she remained oblivious. How obvious must he be?

“Miwen.” He said gently before lifting his hand towards her face.

Her eyes widened, and then she was moving, grabbing the nearest elleth and bodily shoving them at him. “Have you met Thranduil?” She gasped before bolting.

He steadied the elleth, who grasped his robe so not to fall, before stepping away from her. “Excuse
me.” He had to catch her. “Miwen!”

Her head bobbed and darted through the crowd easily and he sighed as he followed much slower, unwilling to duck beneath elbows as she did. But he found her in the gardens, pacing, hugging herself and muttering in her ’elvhen’. Her eyes widened when she saw him, her mouth opened before it snapped shut and pressed into a determined line. “You need a queen. It- you have to pick one.”

“Miwen.” He stepped towards her, and she did not step back, instead craning her head back to look up at him.

“You have to pick one! You need a queen.” She hugged herself again with her flesh arm. “It’s… necessary.”

“Very well.” He complied, putting a hand on the side of her face and leaning down to press a kiss to her mouth.

A brilliant flash of Telperion’s light, Miwen’s light, longing and pained, blinded him, and then…

She was gone. A silver wolf racing away and bounding over the garden wall.

Running from him. He stepped forward to chase her only for a silver circlet with six rubies to bump into his boot where it had fallen.
Thranduil cursed himself, he should have never pushed her so hard. He had known she wasn’t ready, not for that. And yet… he couldn’t help himself. She had become dear to him. But she had ran from him. From the Greenwood. And he like a fool, pursued her. What would he do if he caught up? He couldn’t force her to return, he wouldn’t. He could only apologize for overstepping and hope she would forgive him and return.

The trail led straight towards Amon Lanc. His father's old castle. Why she was drawn there of all places he didn’t know. His scouts have been reporting feeling something strange in the air around the ruins. He hadn’t been there since his mother… he shook his head of the bitter memories and pushed Ionath on. The elk’s muscles tensed under him as they drew closer.

The Forest around him and his guard grew unnaturally darker the closer they drew, as if the earth itself was warning them away. But her trail led on, she wasn’t even trying to cover her tracks, and he had to follow. He spotted fresh imprints of large paws in the damp earth; she was still holding her wolf form, even after several miles.

Their mounts balked as they broke through the tree line surrounding the castle. Even Ionath snorted through his nose sharply and danced on nervous hooves. His eyes spotted movement around the base of the castle’s wall, it had to be her. He tried to urge Ionath on. but in uncharacteristic show of defiance the elk planted its feet and refused.

“Manwe’s breath!” He cursed in frustration, jumping from the elk’s back and ignoring his guard’s pleas for him to wait. He vaulted fallen rubble, covering the ground quickly despite abandoning his mount. She had to be here. The trail was clear.

“Miwen!” He called out as he rounded through the decrepit crumbling gate of the once proud castle. The courtyard was littered with rubble from fallen towers and broken and rotting carts. “Miwen!” He tried again, his voice echoing around him.

He strained his ears, listening for any movement that would give her away, but all he heard was the distant sound of his guard’s feet as they followed him. One cursed as they tripped over rubble.

“Miwen, I know you are here.” He scanned the walls around him searching for movement. “Please, let me explain myself!”

Something shifted behind him and he spun just in time to see a flock of thrushes spook from their roost. Suddenly the hairs on the back of his neck pricked at the sensation of being watched… not as if she was watching him but something… something malicious. His mind suddenly slipped into alert defensiveness, his eyes now spotting details he had missed in his frantic dash find her. A few surrounding walls looked as if they had been pushed in, not from any natural deterioration but from some massive force. Some carts were charred, blackened splotches on nearby walls and buildings. But the most damning sights were the deep gouges and grooves in the stone surrounding him. Grooves and gouges that could only have been made by one thing.

His blood ran cold and he drew his swords. Almost as soon as he did a deep rumbling sound echoed over the courtyard. Laughing. “Sssso thisss isss the ElvenKing?”

Dread clutched at his heart. Where was Miwen? He turned in a slow circle, keeping one leg planted firmly and ready to move if-when he needed to.
“My King” his guard had just entered the courtyard, their faces wary and their eyes searching for the voice they all surely heard. He saw movement a second too late, and cried out in warning as dragonfire billowed towards the narrow gate, where they stood. His guard was well trained and they leaped into action the moment they heard his voice, that precious instant allowing them to escape mostly unharmed. One of his guard was dragged behind a fallen wall stone, his leg a blistered agony.

“Are you ssscared, little king?” The fire drakes Voice echoed around them. “You ran ssso fasssst to ssee me.” To see him? The beast must not have found Miwen then. Was she hiding? “Or were you sssseeking ssssomething elssssse?”

He turned in a circle, trying to find where the voice was coming from and also edge towards some cover. Unnatural shadows descended on the courtyard, cutting down visibility even to their eyes.

“Ahhh, Miiiiweeen.” The voice dragged out her name as if he were savoring it and Thranduil’s grip tightened on his swords. Something shifted to his right and he spun, narrowly dodging the thickly spiked and scaled end of its tail. He swung his swords reflexively but they merely glanced off its scaled hide. “You called for her so desssperately, little king.” The voice chuckled, deep rumbling. “Tell me, wasssss sssshe yoursss?”

He barely leaped over another swing of the beast’s tail that smashed into the side of a stone stairway, sending sharp bits of rubble flying.

“No… you were chasssing her. She wasss not yourss.” The beast sounded so delighted that Thranduil had to clench his jaw to keep from cursing. “Miiween. Ssssuch a fitting name. Sssso ssssmall.”

There was a shout to his left. One of his guards had managed to move from the gate unseen and climb to the rampart above and was now firing arrows from above. The beast raised its head from behind a tower and laughed. “Gnatssss.” It hissed before rearing its head back and opening its jaws. His guard managed to shoot an arrow directly into the beast’s mouth before its jaws closed around him. The beast spat his guard’s corpse out and clawed at its mouth, tearing the scales around its teeth before managing to tear the arrow from the roof of its mouth. It roared, rage in the deafening sound and turned its gleaming eyes onto him. “Enough play then.”

A swing of the beast’s tail demolished his stone cover, leaving him exposed. He ran for the castle, hoping for more lasting cover, but heard the beast’s deep inhale. Eru help him, it was going to cast fire. He was too far from cover. A voice rang out through the air, ragged with fear and anger.

“Thranduil! NOOO!”

He turned towards the voice. He could not reach cover in time, but maybe he could have one last glimpse of her. Terrible pain licked up along his left side, burning and consuming. He saw her, her eyes and tears glowing with her power as she reached for him. Something gripped his body and he felt as if he was being torn apart as something tore him from the drake’s flames.

He heard the beast roar in anger, even as he felt his body slam into hers. His whole left side in agony, he barely hear her frantic chanting. “No nonono, Thranduil no!”

“ You truly thought you could sssave him from me, sshe-elf?” The serpent’s voice boomed, drawing closer.

“Thranduil! Thranduil, stay awake! Please, just stay awake!” He felt her hand ripping away what burned clothes she could reach. A coolness flooded him even as his back bowed up in pain.
“R...run!” He forced himself to gasp out, trying to weakly push her hands away. This was dragon fire. No amount of healing to his body would save him. Even now he felt it slowly consuming his fea. “Mi.... ru-ahh!”

“No! I can-”

“He will die, Ssshe-elf. Look upon your king as he dieesss. Hissss very being consssssumed by flame. Burning out hisssss immortal fea.”

Her hands left his body and he mourned the loss even as he hoped she would try to escape. Her voice was hot with fury when she hissed. “He. Is. Mine!”

He felt her fea explode away from her, ice scabbing across his skin in sharp, painful waves. The beast roared again, but this time in pain. And then... she... Shouted. The threads of the world bending to her voice and will.

The dragon screamed, a terrible earth shaking scream, but he could not see what happened to it as shocks trembled through the earth as a great weight crashed against it. Her hands returned to touch his face. “Ir abelas. Ir abelas.” she was chanting in her ‘elvhen’ as her hands passed over him frantically. He was slipping away, he could feel his connection to his body fading.

He turned his head to look at where he knew her to be. But it was useless, he couldn’t see, his eyes were open yet he could not see. Was Eru so cruel as to deny him one last look of her as he lay dying?

She snarled, the wolf that she is in her voice. “Ar Emma!” With that, she slammed her hand to his chest and her fea flooded into him, feeling of fire and moonlight as it forced its way into him, into his own fea, and he let her in, let her do as she wished. His fea craved the embrace as hers flared, and then he felt her wrap around him in a tight, desperate hold, clinging to him, snuffing out the dragon fire, the jagged edges of her shredded fea filling the wounds left by the drake fire.

The agony suddenly abated and she slumped over him, breaths ragged from exhaustion. He felt a sudden sense of dread… no, of failure from her. “I- I can’t- I can’t fix…” She inhaled a sob, her fingers twisted into the remnants of his shirt. “I can’t fix all of it, I’m so- so sorry.” He felt her magic flare within him again, weakly, stuttering. “I’ll- I’ll try again.”

“No.” His voice came out a croak. Raw. He felt her hands moving shakily, he was able to move his right hand to catch one of them but his left refused to heed his commands. He felt her fea spark weakly within him- “Mi- Miwen! St-stop!”

She suddenly broke into sobs and he could feel her agony, her guilt filling his chest. “It wasn’t..... i-in the book.... you never should have.... scars.” Her sobs were broken and pitiful… then just as suddenly she stilled. Her fea flaring within him in shocked recognition. She gasped. “Scars... scars! Ma’nas?”

“My lady? Is he...?” One of his guards spoke quietly.

Thranduil turned his head towards the sound, the action sending white hot agony down his left side. He was still unable to see, yet he heard the sharp intake of breath from his surviving guards. “No,” he forced himself to grind out. “I am n-not.”

Her fea flared in hope. “Elrond! He’s- He’s a healer. Get him to-” Her words cut off the same instant that her fea fell dormant and her body toppled to the side.

“My lady!” His guard’s panicked voice called out.
“Miwen!’ Thranduil felt his chest constrict in concern as he grasped for her with his functional arm, catching hold on her arm. The only thing that kept him from screaming her name frantically was the fact that he still felt her… deep… tangled… no, interwoven with his own fea. Bonded.
The Shape of You

Chapter by AntlersandFangs

The trip back to the mountain caves was agony. Several times he had passed out from the sheer pain of being moved. Three of the five guards that followed him survived. One succumbed to the dragonfire, though his physical burns had appeared survivable, it had ravaged his fea. How his Miwen had been able to stop the flames of his own fea he was still at a loss. ‘His Miwen.’ She had been laid beside him on the creaking, half rotten cart his guards had managed to find. He had howled in agony when they lifted him onto the small cart. But it couldn't be helped. The cart would be easier and less likely to aggravate his burns as they transported him back, yet each jolt and bump pulled a groan from his chest.

His only comfort was Miwen’s soft breaths and the steady glow of her fea within his chest. Sometimes, when the path was smooth and he managed to drift into a fitful trance, he would catch glimpses of things, strange things. A man with horns and skin like the night, laughing. Babes with pointed ears, curled in his arms and blinking up at him with eyes that looked so much like hers, another elf babe with solemn eyes. A softly smiling elf with dark auburn hair shaved at the sides and ancient eyes. A flash of another elf with dark hair and dark eyes that seemed so familiar. A child with horns, another with magic in her hands.

Then himself, moving near flawlessly as they fought, back to back. Himself hunched over his desk, rubbing his temples before glancing up and smiling. His coronation. Mundane meetings in the halls. Each time looking up and smiling. Welcoming. Warm. Longing. Him brushing his hand against her cheek the night she ran from him.

He jolted awake, sucking his breath in sharply as the cart jolted. The ellon that walked alongside the cart offered soft apologies. He didn’t answer him, only tightened his grip of Miwen’s hand as she lay near his uninjured side. His mind racing, trying to make sense of what she had done.

Bonded.

Everything he knew of ritual said it was only accomplished through the act. Instinctual. Yet she had bonded them. Weaved their fea together in a way that shouldn’t have been possible. Part of him knew he should be angry, irate even ... but he wasn’t, he couldn’t be. He had wanted it... longed for it... dreamed of it and now here they were. Bonded.

It was a strange feeling, her fea curled, ever present in his. It was a constant warmth, moonlight caressing him from within. Brightly burning, yet nourishing and soothing instead of consuming.

Bandages had, at some point, been applied to his face and neck, he didn’t much care. He couldn’t see anything even if he had wanted to. He distantly listened to the ellon’s whispers, trying to focus on something besides the pain and the fear that Miwen had not moved once.

“-it shouldn’t have been possible.”

“But it happened. You saw it, we all did.”

“It shattered like glass.”

“Ice.”

There was an awed silence before they spoke again. “What did she shout? I did not catch it.”
“Mine.”

Mine. He traced his thumb over the back of her hand before focusing inwards like she had taught him. It still took effort to find the shape of his fea, it wasn’t so simple as she made it seem, but he found it and carefully stretched it, testing out the threads of it. It ached in a deep, visceral manner, but he gritted his teeth through it, memories of his Miwen forcing herself to lift stones flitting through his mind.

He found the edges where their feas were interwoven and explored it cautiously. The ragged threads were raw and painful, but where they met was soothed by the other’s presence. He found himself able to follow the gleaming channels of her fea, drawn by the enchanting silverfire of her magic. Images of the beings he had seen before flitted through his head, but he pushed them aside in order to focus on her fea, to see how she fared after her great feat. She seemed… alright. Exhausted and grieved, but alright. He went to withdraw when a bright green caught his attention. It… was a shard of fea not her own, but oddly familiar. Now that he had noticed it, he could sense many little shards of the foreign green. He tentatively brushed against one, getting the aftertaste of mint and agony as a vision of the elf with auburn hair flared and the shard seemed to cling to his fea.

Her bonded. Her fea reacted as if suddenly sensing him and grasped his. There was a blur shapes and flashes that made no sense, then suddenly he found himself standing in a massive tree and gazing out over a moonlit forest, watching a pair of moons rise over the horizon.

Then she was there. Miwen slammed into his chest with enough force it should have driven the air from his lungs. “Ma’nas, ma’lath, Ma-“ she was suddenly sobbing into his shirt, but her fea sang of relief, of… joy.

"Miwen…” he put his arms around her and held her to him, uncertain why her fea and tears seemed to contradict each other. “I am well… I’m here.”

"I recognize the shape of you now." She murmured. "So young." She pulled away to look up at him, her eyes shining brightly as silver tears spilled down her cheeks. “You have scars.”

“They will heal.” He tried to soothe, hoping she did not blame herself. He reached down and wiped at the tears on her cheeks. “Miwen… why did you run?”

She laughed softly. "I didn't… your fea wasn't... " She looked down, her fea uncertain even though she smiled. "I wasn't ready."

He closed his eyes. He had known. Of course he had known. “I apologize, it was impulsive and-“

Her sudden laughter shocked him. "And I'm not?" She giggled and buried her face into his shirt. "I've bonded by accident twice now. Arrogant elves. It's a thing.”

He was at a loss what to do… her mood was shifting so fast. Fear, joy, relief, confusion. He tried to latch onto the thing that she seemed the most… happy about? “Bonded?”

She bit her lip, suddenly looking on the verge of tears and looked away. “Yeah… I’m… I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to- there was just so much fire. By the time I got it out I was in too far, and you… wouldn't let me go. I’m so sorry.”

He felt dread clench his heart at her words. “You… did not want to bond?”

“NO! I mean yes!” She answered quickly. "This kind of thing doesn't happen if both don't want it. You… obviously did. I just… was just trying to burn out the fire." She shook her head and looked
at him as her face fell. “I’m sorry.” She rested her forehead on his chest. “I couldn’t… I couldn’t heal you all the way. I tried but… I was too weak.”

She had wanted… with him. He felt himself move before he realized he had, his hand raised her chin and he kissed her, pressing gently but… this time she did not pull away. Her hands twined around his neck and with a moan her mouth opened to him and he instinctively tasted her, only pulling away when he realized his hand had fistred in her hair and he might be hurting her.

She sighed shakily and clung to him, pressing her face to his shirt and breathing deeply. “Just the same.” She exhaled her fear singing in relief and… something else he could not place. “I… I don’t know how long I have here, so- Thranduil.” She shuddered. “Before something happens to take me away.” She pulled her left hand up and a shard of bright green magic appeared in her palm. “If I get taken away, you will…."

He remembered the way she had appeared from thin air years ago and silenced her with another willing kiss, pulling away only to press his forehead to hers. “Miwen, I do not care how long you have here, be it weeks, months, years, or decades. I care not how it happened or why. But if you’d allow, I would like to recognize you as my bonded.”

Her eyes wide ned in shock and she opened her mouth to speak but before she could, blinding pain lanced through his being. Then everything was gone, the tree, the forest, moonlight, and her. All gone.

“-ently!” Voices, echoed around him as his body was shifted.

“-on’t let go.”

He felt hands trying to gently pry his hand away from Miwen's. “No!” He tried to growl but it came out a painful croak.

The hands immediately stopped and cool fingers pressed lightly to his chest. “My king, we need to move you to the healing halls. Messages have been sent to Lord Elrond and Lord Glorfindel. We need you to let go of Lady Miwen. Just so we can move you both to the healing halls.” The voice spoke in what he assumed was supposed to be a soothing tone. “Please, my king.”

Another voice spoke up. “We will return her to you, My king. I swear it.” He recognized the soft tones of the young guard who had walked beside them on the agonizing journey back, the one who had returned her hand to his when a particularly nasty jolt had separated them.

Reluctantly he allowed his grip on her hand to loosen, instantly regretting it as she was pulled away and his body was lifted once more. He bit back a scream as hands pressed into his burned shoulder and side.

Glorfindel felt the vast backlash from Imladris, the trembling of the world from the outburst of magic, and he knew… somehow he knew it had been Emma… it felt like Emma, distressed and powerful.
Something was terribly wrong.

He dropped what he was holding and turned and ran, ran to his lord’s study and did not even pause to knock. He burst in and Elrond startled as he looked up from his desk. "We need to go to Emma. Now."

Elrond frowned but stood and did not ask him why, simply calling out to a passing elleth to tell the Stable master to have their horses ready.

Everything felt too slow despite their urgency. Emma was in trouble. He did not like to think on what would make her cry out with her magic so.

They were met by a messenger on the way, apparently sent to fetch them. Thranduil. The Elvenking had fallen to dragon fire… yet lived and needed healing.

It was exactly what and yet less than he had feared. He did not know if Emma could survive the loss of… whatever the ElvenKing was to her. Their relationship was baffling.

Elrond was not as accepting of the news that Thranduil had survived, "That is not possible, the dragon flames will spread through his fea."

"Lady Miwen said to ask for you to come heal him, my lord." The ellon said as if that was all the answer needed, as if because Miwen had said it, it would be so.

Despite Elrond's scepticism, they continued on, the Greenwood not seeming as bright as before as they passed through, as if the trees could sense the distress in the air. Or perhaps they were angered at the injury to their king. Glorfindel did not understand the trees as Emma and Thranduil did.

They were met at the gates by a group of healers bodily supporting Emma, who looked relieved at the sight of them, and exhausted. "I can't- you have to help him, I don't have enough left."

Elrond opened his mouth to speak and Emma *glared* at him. "He's *mine* and no dragon is taking him. I won't lose him again. I am fire as well." her voice was hard as steel, her intent in every word.

Glorfindel watched as Elrond closed his mouth with an audible click of teeth and hurried past her, following one of the healers before he took her from the elleth supporting her. "I have her, go. See Lord Elrond has everything he needs."

"You're a healer too." Emma said desperately as the elleth scurried away.

"I will help after Elrond has done what he can." he whispered reassuringly as he lifted her.

Emma curled against his chest, exhausted. "So young..." She laughed brokenly. "I feel so old, Babala, I found the shape of ma'solas and he's so... young." She looked up at him with tears and a smile. "I didn't recognize him till he was burned into the shape I knew. I found my proud spirit, and he will not remember me when he is as old as I will be young."

Her pride, her light. He looked down at her and allowed his fea to reach out, and started. She was... bonded. Thranduil’s burned, blistered fea resided in her chest.

"Why-"

She smiled sharply. "I am fire, Babala, you cannot burn what is already claimed by flame." She
suddenly looked pensive. "I found myself. Loyalty, and if twisted, obsession. Ten thousand years doesn't seem too long to reach one’s love. I would have denied myself for so long for my loyalty, but he is the right shape now."

He tried to drown out the urgent tones and shouts of the healers orders by searching out her fea once again but every time he got close his focus would be broken by the pain of charred clothes being pulled from his burned skin were they had fused together. Cooling yet still irritating salves spread

He drifted in a state between awake and asleep, delirious from pain. Time seemed and abstract concept "-not nearly as bad-"

He knew at some point bandages to his head and neck had been removed, yet still he could not see. "-alf healed-

“How is he-?” Different voices, familiar yet he could not place them in his haze.

“Dragon? How-”

He drifted. Only brought back by the stinging of water washing his wounds “-she did-?”

“-is he?” The voice was deep and musical. Glorfindel. His mind supplied.

“Sleeping. Has been for several days now.” The solemn baritone of Elrond answered. “He should have not survived.”

He opened his mouth to speak but instead was wracked with a ragged cough that jarred his burns painfully.

Hands immediately supported him, careful not to aggravate his injuries. “Easy, Mellon nin.” Something nudged his lips and he opened to accept cool water that flowed over his tongue and down his raw throat. When he drank his fill, he fell back against the bed with a hiss of pain. “Gently.” Elrond admonished in his usual tone of quiet disapproval.

“Mi- Miwen?” Her fea still burned in his but he could hear nothing beyond the breathing of Elrond and Glorfindel.

“I had her moved to another room to rest.” Elrond spoke, continuing to wash his side. “She was exhausted, and your healers say she had not left your side since she woke.”

“She is well, Thranduil. Exhausted from the feat of quenching the dragon fire as well as defeating the beast. But well.” Glorfindel answered him gently.

“I… want, need -er.” It hurt to speak, pulling at scabs and blisters covering half his lips and left side of his face. A memory of his Miwen’s sad expression as she explained that burns needed to stretch as they healed flickered into his mind. “S-she’s my-”

“Your bonded, yes, I know.” Elrond tone sounded almost bored as he pressed the wet cloth to his shoulder drawing a hiss from him. “Rude of you not to invite us I must say.”
“It was a bit last minute.” Miwen. He turned towards her exhausted voice but Elrond’s hand pushed him down, eliciting another hiss of pain from him.

“You should be resting, child.” Glorfindel spoke softly, but without surprise that she was up.

“I’m fine. I’m just used to having… more.” He felt her hand slide onto his unburned shoulder and her bright magic tentatively brushed against him.

“No more healing, Lady Miwen.” Elrond chided. Her hand disappeared with a jerk as if they were pulled away.

“I wasn’t. Just… checking.” She paused and he could almost picture her chewing on her lip. “I… if someone was willing to lend me some magic, I could… I could fix at least one of his eyes. None of you have enough for both… If Damon were… but he isn’t.”

“Can it not wait ‘til you are restored?” A voice, his head healers.

“I can’t heal over scar tissue. That’s… undoing the body’s healing. I don’t know how to un-heal.”

“None of us have enough?” Glorfindel queried gently.

“You use too much of it to live.” Miwen’s voice was distant. She was having one of her episodes then. He reached out blindly with his right hand and, reading his intent, she grasped it tightly, breathing through her emotions. “Your immortality depends on your stores. I can take what you would use for spells, but if I took more, you would essentially fade.”

He felt Elrond’s hand retreat suddenly. “You have that ability?”

He felt a sudden smugness from Miwen's fea, “Theoretically, yes, but the threshold I would need to cross for that to happen is easily defined.”

There was silence as the two seemed to think over what she had just said. It was Glorfindel who spoke first. “Take what you need, child.”

He felt the tension in her release as she squeezed his hand. “Thank you, Babala.”

He felt them shift around him as Glorfindel drew closer and Miwen settled on the bed next to him. Her hand releasing his only to lay gently on the unburned portion of his right cheek. “I don’t know how this will feel. My father said it burned like fire.” Her voice was quiet, holding a hint of worry.

He didn't have a chance to ask what she meant, as it suddenly felt as if a hot poker had been jammed into his eye socket. Arms immediately went to his shoulders, making him realize he was thrashing… and screaming. By Eru what was she doing? It hurt!

Just as suddenly as it had started, it stopped. He collapsed back onto the bed, gasping and blinking away the bright lights that seemed to stab straight into his head. He heard Elrond say something, and then the lights dimmed. Miwen’s hand shakily touched his face, turning him towards her.

“Ma’nas, are you okay?”

He blinked his eyes, focusing on her blurry features, her hair was a wild, tangled mane around her face. He reached up to cup her cheek but his depth perception was off and he went past her slightly, wrist bumping her ear. She giggled and turned her head to press a kiss to the inside of his wrist that caused him to shudder. “There you are.”
“Well.” Glorfindel sounded faint. “That… is an experience I would prefer to never repeat…”

Elrond used his hand to turn his head away from his Miwen and towards a candle. “Incredible.”

Miwen carefully laid down on the bed next to him, her tiny frame fitting easily. “Yeah. I’m kinda… tired though.”

Thranduil thanked the valar for having one side unaffected by flame as she tucked her head against his shoulder. He allowed himself a small smile, ignoring the stiffness on one side, that she didn't seem to be fighting anymore. “Then... sleep.”

He hadn't even needed to say it, for her eyes had already closed and her breaths grew soft and steady.

He glanced up at Elrond, who was watching them with a strange expression. “Thranduil, Mellon nin, you must know…” he paused, clearly unsure how to continue. “You were... gravely injured.”

Thranduil forced himself to nod, pulling at the tender muscles and skin of his neck and shoulder. “I have… been in-injured before.”

“Not like this. Your fea…” The half elf grimaced, and Thranduil marvelled at his break from composure. “You should not be alive.”

Thranduil studied him, before nodding. “She somehow… stopped the flame… by bonding.”

Elrond looked at him as if he were mad. Glorfindel laughed weakly. “Last minute, indeed.”
Recovery

Recovery was long and hard fought. Because of the nature of dragon fire, he was restricted to the healing speed of an Edain. Miwen could not heal him more without risking her health, and her fear was slow to recover. And even beyond that, there was only so much she could do before he had to do days of stretches and exercises to prevent his flesh from binding up.

Elrond insisted that no mirrors be brought into the healing halls until after he was nearly healed. He knew that he was changed. How could he not by the scars that covered his shoulder and side?

Miwen remained with him throughout, curling into his good side when they slept. At first he had thought that maybe she was avoiding the scars, was repulsed by them, but she gave him one of her flat looks at the bitter accusation and pressed the flat of her hand against his side, and when he hissed in pain and pulled away she raised one eyebrow.

He had been too ashamed to even speak, but she seemed to understand and tucked herself under his hale arm with a smile and a pointed wiggle of her wooden fingers against his ribs. “I still think you’re pretty, ma’lath.”

He was moved to his own chambers once Elrond had deemed him fit enough and at first he feared that that would be the end of his Miwen’s constant presence, especially when she disappeared down the hall once they had reached his doors.

Elrond noticed his sudden shift in moods immediately and shook his head. “If this is what awaits me with Celebrein, I may have to reconsider.”

He looked at the noldor elf in shock. “Celebrein? Celeborn and Galadriel’s daughter?” Elrond cheeks colored faintly and Thranduil couldn’t help but grin, now getting used to the pull against his scars. “You have more bravery than I, Mellon nin.”

Elrond huffed, but a slight smile pulled at his lips. “A certain tiny meddler had a hand in it.”

Thranduil had just settled on his bed with one last forlorn look at the door when it flung open and his Miwen bustled through with an armful of pillows and a chest magically dragging along behind her. She glanced around before dumping the pillows onto the bed next to him and hauling the chest over to his wardrobe by hand. She put her hand on her hip and grinned at him. “We might need to get help to move my wardrobe in here. I didn’t feel like getting it myself.”

She might have well as given him the entire moon by the smile he gave her. He reached out his good hand to her and she immediately went to him, tucking her self under his arm, still grinning.

Elrond grumbled good naturedly at them before slipping out to ‘leave a list for the head healer’.

Once the door was fully closed, Thranduil took advantage of their first time alone in weeks, tipping her chin up and placing a soft kiss on her lips, wishing he could have deepened it, but his shoulder and side were both still tender at sudden movements. So much so he had to forgo anymore clothing then simple breeches. Miwen did not seem to mind though if the way her fingers roamed delightedly was any indication.

She broke away from the kiss and sighed and ducted her head into his neck, breathing deeply as if savoring his scent. “Not fair, Piemaker.”

He chuckled and held her to him, dropping a light kiss to her hair. “I find myself unwilling to give
you a moment to change your mind again.”

She stiffened and he wondered if he had said the wrong thing. “I’m sorry.” Her voice was barely a whisper and her fingers rested against his heart. “I probably just messed up the whole timeline by being selfish. You’re supposed to have a son… but… now that I know, I can’t…” she let out a frustrated sigh.

He froze in shock as he turned that over in his mind. A son? A son. His son? He tentatively asked, “You do not want a-” He stopped. She had borne children before, and had lost them. Of course she did not want more.

“No… I mean, yes, I would want kids… I just-” She sighed in defeat. “It was never supposed to be me.”

He was quiet for a moment and just held her to him as he pondered her fears. “How do you know?” He asked quietly, his mind recalling the several elleths she had practically shoved at him. “Who was it supposed to be?”

She paused with her mouth open before humming in surprise. “They… never named your wife.” Her face fell again. “But she had to be an elf, your son was to be an elf.”

He looked down at her in surprise and couldn’t help but chuckle. “Were not your children before elves? How is this any different?”

She blinked, then blinked again. “Breeding or veil?” She muttered.

He frowned at her in confusion. “Your children bore Eldar ears. You have Eldar blood in your veins. Why do you doubt it now?”

She bit her lip. “That's the thing… there was no way for us to know if they were immortal until they were older… they weren’t even weaned when I…” she couldn’t seem to bring herself to say it.

He held her closer. A son… “Regardless, whatever has changed or has not, we shall face it together. And if you desire a child, I will do my utmost to make that happen.” When she looked up at him he claimed her lips once again.

By the Valar did he desire her more each moment. Would have given anything if he could but take her now and claim her truly as his. But no. He broke the kiss and pulled away and a whine from her made him chuckle. “Mir nin, when we consummate our bond I want to be hale and enjoy every aspect of you.”

She sighed and he felt disappointed as well as understanding “Okay… yeah, I’m just impatient. I’ve had a crush since I was twelve.”

“A… crush?” That did not sound pleasant.

She wobbled her hand in that gesture he had come to associate with her unusual knowledge of things past and yet to come. “Crush means… uh… I, uh…” she bit her lip thinking of how to explain it. “Not quite fantasized but close.” She buried her face in her wooden hand. “I liked you. A lot.”

That would explain why she had been willing to trail after him the moment she had learned his name. But… twelve? “I… am unsure how to feel about that.”
“Don’t ask me to explain it.” She groaned and stood; he immediately missed her warmth. “It seems to be a running theme.”

“Very well, I won't ask.” He slowly pushed himself to his feet. He was still getting used to walking unassisted; he saw her twitch to move to support him but she held herself back, probably sensing his desire to do it himself. “Now that I am finally in my own chambers, I would like a proper bath. Sponging is all well and good but it still leaves much to be desired.”

Her eyebrows flew up, and then her entire face flushed red, and then he felt a flare of… embarrassed arousal before her emotions shut off from him, all in the span of a few heartbeats. “Are you trying to-?”

He grinned, suddenly realizing exactly were her thoughts had gone. “A tempting idea, to be revisited.”

She covered her red face with her hand, but a smirk played in the corner of her mouth. "Sooo… do you need… help?"

He smiled at her before shaking his head. “You would only try to sway me if you could.”

She grinned and put a hand on her hip, pushing out her chest invitingly, “I can do a lot more than ‘sway’ you, piemaker.”

Thranduil groaned and shook his head again. “You are a minx.”

She laughed and bared her teeth playfully. “I prefer ‘wolf’.”

“Concentrate, you’re projecting what you want me to see. Better, but it's still a little translucent.” Miwen sat on the bench next to him, one hand gripping his as he tried to project the glamour she was teaching him. He tried to add more effort to the magic, but his fea twinged and the spell slipped from his fingers. He bit back an irritated snarl and ran his hand over the unmarred side of his face.

“It is hard to concentrate when it causes pain.” He snapped.

“I know.” She said softly, her hand going to his.

Immediately he regretted the words. Of course she knew. How often had she pushed through the pain her spells inflicted as she had fought in the last year of the war alongside him?

She bit her lip, as she tended to do when she was working through a problem in her mind. “Maybe… maybe a staff would help? A focus crystal.”

“A staff?”

“Yeah, like…” Her gaze turned vacant, as it did when she was sorting through painful memories. “I never used one, but after the before… most mages had trouble focusing their magic without. Even the Istari have staffs. Gandalf and Radagast and-“ she made a face. “Saurumon.”
He furrowed his brow at the name, she did not like the white wizard, yet seemed to adore the others.

She nodded and then slapped her forehead and he felt panic in her fea. “Oh pala! They shouldn’t have come from Valinor yet!”

“Is that bad?”

She nodded her head and looked pale. “I changed things…” she shook her head and held up her hands. “Crap, worry about it later… Can’t… can’t do anything about it now, I’ll do a damage report later. Staffs, your staff.” Her fingers traced a pattern through the air. “Handle is conductive, focus can be…” Her silver sheened eyes focused on him and her head tilted. “May I?”

He nodded without hesitation and she reached out with her fea and began what felt like a… very close inspection, intimate. He was healing, could stand a shirt for an hour or two before he was forced to remove it. His restraint with Miwen was coming to the end of its frayed tether with the way she constantly touched, kissed and… even just the way she watched him made him feel heated. Like she was hunting him in her mind, and he wanted to turn the hunt towards her- Her fea touched his center and he broke away from those thoughts before she caught the scent of them and renewed her teasing.

He had goosebumps over his skin by the time she pulled away and began muttering to herself. “Wood, maybe a freely given branch… maybe a deadfall? No, given. Metal, light, bright, strong, maybe silverite, no, that’s too far.” She narrowed her eyes and rubbed her temples. “Damon was always better at this part.”

“At what part?”

“Figuring out how to build something. I can- I can figure out what materials your fea is similar to, but I’m not much of a builder.”

“Well… The handle must be a freely given branch from a tree?” At her nod he continued. “I can practice communing with the trees and ask for one while you consider the… focus.”

She nodded, biting her lip, her eyes darting around their surroundings as her mind worked, absently twisting the simple gold band on her right hand that mirrored his own. They had had a simple ceremony, with only a few witnesses, for proprietary sake, and due to his burns. Her erratic mood shifts had lessened even more over the last few months of their bonding. Yet she still became distant and focused to the point of distraction when she tried to bring her ideas out of the labyrinth of her mind. “I think I need to see the blacksmith. Some kind of metal… simple but elegant.”

She hopped off of the bench and flitted absently down the hallway, her toes barely seeming to touch the ground with how far into her own mind she was. He smiled fondly after her before going to find a tree. He still had difficulty keeping his purpose when he reached out to them, was too easily transfixed by the spread of their connections. It would take effort and focus to gather the item she had suggested.

He followed the song of the roots, doing his best to hum the soft song of the forest… Images began flowing to him as he went further into the hearts of the trees. Deer moving quietly and surefooted through the brush. Rabbits, birds, squirrels. Which trees they built their nests in and burrows under. His own huntsmen and patrols moving through the forest in search of game on their well worn paths. It all never failed to take his breath away.

A tree caught his attention, an inquisitive surge in it’s innate hum. He focused on it, it was young,
and healthy, still curious and seeking with it’s roots. It was difficult, but he sent his request to the tree, and then waited, patiently, for one must be ever so patient with trees. It sent back an agreeable impression along with a wondering if the quickling things by its base were part of his rootwork. A quick check confirmed that they were his huntsmen and he answered so. The tree’s vague attention moved away from him, so he moved on, humming through the secrets of the forest until a call to fold away their flowers made him realize it was growing dark.

He pulled his fea back into himself and removed his palm from the base of the ancient tree. A sudden wave of exhaustion hit him as soon as he stepped back.

“Any luck?” Miwen's voice asked softly from his side. He looked over to find her sitting cross legged on the ground. Small bits of metal laid out in front of her, and a basket with what smelled of fresh baked bread.

“Perhaps. A young one took notice of me.”

“Awesome. Try to touch the metal with your aura, see which one sings.”

He blinked at her, then sighed and reached out with his sore fea towards the metal. “What am I looking for?”

“Singing.”

Helpful.
The staff was completed with a given branch from a young tree and it did help his focus. He wasn’t sure if he actually needed it or the concept of it, but it helped, and the more he stretched his fea he was able to maintain his glamor for longer and longer periods of time. Miwen insisted he was still pretty without it, but he would admit to a bit of vanity on his part. He didn’t want others to see… it was a weakness he would rather not allow others to see.

Elrond had left to return to Imladris, apparently his hasty departure had alarmed his people, and though Glorfindel lingered, eagerly pursuing ‘magic lessons’ with Emma, he also eventually returned to Imladris with promises to visit as soon as he was able. And Thranduil...

Thranduil wasn’t avoiding her… he wasn’t. He had a perfectly good reason to remain in their room and work while she was in the council meeting… where he should be… but her teasing had become almost too much to resist of late. He was doing better. And that was the problem. She had been bonded before, been, with someone before and he… had no experience, no idea how to… what she would even…? He growled in frustration with himself as he snatched another missive from his desk.

He knew what he wanted, but when the many fantasies he entertained were held against what she might want, he once again found his pride rearing its head in fear he would be… lacking.

“Thranduil.” He looked up from his papers, and felt the breath escape his lungs in a sharp gasp when he found her standing in front of him, her hair falling in loose waves around her, a smirk on her face, and not a stitch of clothing on her.

What happened after… he would never forget. She lit a fire in him that was… primal, possessive and… wolphish. Though he refused to use such a word in front of her. She would be unbearably smug. But she truly enjoyed the… the biting and roughness that he could not help. Actually encouraged it.

“What… what was your first time like?” He regretted the words as soon as they left his mouth. He should not remind her of her lost bonded, especially not now that they were laying in bed together.

“Mmm. Bitey. My wolf pinned me down and bit a mark into my neck hard enough to last for weeks as he took me.” But there was no sadness, instead her fea stirred in interest at the memory. “Emma’lath, ir tel elanel’melena’i’das.”

“What does that mean?”

“Mine love, I have no patience.”

“Emma’lath.” Mine love. He felt her fea reach towards him, curling in him contentedly as he brushed his fingers through her hair. “Emma’lath.”
Glorfindel chuckled in amusement as Emma flung herself from a tree at him. He caught her in a hug and set her down, holding her at arm’s length to look at her. “You look well. Happy.”

“Incandescent.” She grinned. “I’m pregnant.”

He froze… she… she was…?

She suddenly narrowed her eyes at him with a very serious expression. “House arrest is off the table, not doing that again.”

“Why would I-?” He paused then frowned. “Who would-?”

“My brother. There were assassins and it’s… a long story.” She waved a hand with a sigh, then pointed at him. “Not doing house arrest.”

His blood ran cold at the thought of her being targeted by assassins. “Who-?” He started, then stopped. She was not in the same time or world, he still wasn’t clear which, from the people who had targeted her. He changed approaches. “I am happy for you.”

“Course you are. A little grandbaby for you to spoil.” She gave him a soft wistful smile.

“I do not spoil-”

“Totally spoil. You’re a softy.” She grinned and he could not help but pull her back for another hug. She seemed so much more… stable now that she had bonded. Healthier in mind and fea.

“How is Thranduil taking the news?”

She winced and looked down guiltily. “I… haven’t told him yet? I kind of wanted back up. Last time I…” She trailed off and looked heartbroken before rallying. “Last time the father didn’t handle the shock too well.”

Oh Eru. “Apparently your grandmother’s blood made it possible for him not to know.”

“Oh, pretty sure that’s just a me thing.” Emma shrugged one shoulder. “I’m full of surprises. Including one, most likely, little boy.”

Glorfindel chuckled and set her down. “Shunmahayr always knew before any of the babes were born.” He sighed at the bittersweet memories.

Emma’s mouth opened then she frowned. “Damon always… always said he knew when a person gave their real name. I thought he was…” She shook her head. “Not today. I’ll think about it later. Come on, let’s go startle my piemaker.” She suddenly grinned like an imp.

He laughed as she took his hand and led him through the mountain halls and then burst through a door dramatically and announced. “Piemaker! Need you real quick.”

Glorfindel had to stifle his mirth at seeing Thranduil looking up from a stack of papers with his advisors standing around him with their mouths agape. Thranduil looked mildly panicked behind his mostly calm expression. “Yes?”

“It’s something important, but I think you might want to sit down.” She said without any pause for breath, then looked at the advisors and gave a pleasant smile. “Would you please excuse us while I speak to my husband on a very important and private matter, my lords?”
Glorfindel watched in amusement as the advisors practically scrambled to leave. He looked at her with a raised eyebrow, curious what had occurred for them to flee at her asking for privacy, and she blushed and looked away with a muttered ‘the door was shut’. As soon as the door closed behind them, Thranduil sighed and sat down and held a hand out to Emma. “Was that necessary or is this truly important?”

Emma pouted even as she moved to take his hand, “Me needing you is always important.”

Glorfindel closed his eyes and shook his head in amusement when Thranduil’s ears and cheeks turned red. “Miwen? Perhaps you can flirt when I am not present?”

Emma giggled. “Sorry.” She then bit her lip and looked at Thranduil with an uneasy but hopeful expression. “Uh, remember when I said that you were… uh… supposed to have a…?” She couldn’t seem to finish the sentence but Thranduil seemed to understand as he nodded, then his eyes widened in shock. Emma gave a weak smile. “Ta-da…”

Thranduil didn’t blink as his eyes dropped to her stomach then back up to her eyes then back down. “But… we only just… are… are you certain?”

“Yes. Their… Their light is there.” She smiled and grabbed his hands before pressing them to her middle. “Here, use your fea… you can see it.”

Thranduil’s eyes took on a faraway look and Glorfindel could see him trying to do as she said and… he must have succeeded, as his face softened into awe before he looked up at Emma… and pulled her into his lap and kissed her in a way that made Glorfindel for all his years and suffering at the jokes of Shunmahayr, blush, he looked away and coughed, hoping to remind them of her presence.

“You might want to step out for a bit, babala.”

“Miwen, you-“

“Out.” Thranduil's growl reminded the ancient warrior of his Beth when she was intent on having some ‘adult time get out of my room’.

He smiled and left them alone. And assured the advisers that were waiting in the hall that their King was otherwise occupied and that the meetings for today were over. He was overjoyed for Emma and Thranduil. And selfishly… for himself. Emma was no longer the last of his line.

It was a boy, a son. Just as she had said. Thranduil could hardly believe it, as he held the tiny squirming bundle wrapped in a blanket. Miwen was exhausted, she had labored most of the night to bring their son into this world.

Their son. Who was apparently, ‘So much bigger than the twins’.

Thranduil was enraptured as his son curled his hand tightly around his finger. “He needs a name. What- What should we call him?”

He looked over at Miwen who had been watching them with a wistful expression before it turned nervous and she looked down at her hand that twisted the sheets of the bed. “Wou-would you name him?”
He frowned in confusion and looked down at the precious bundle in his arms. “You do not want a say?”

Miwen bit her lip and looked up at him uncertainly, “I- I need to know… please name him… I can’t.” She must have felt his hesitancy because she smiled softly at him. “Please, it’s alright. I just need to know. You elves are poetic anyway, I know I’ll like whatever you choose.”

Her eyes had the faintest glimmer of her light, the light of the tree. And in his arms was an extension of her… too small to be a branch… Her leaf. "Legolas. It means-

"Greenleaf, I know." Her fea sang with relief. "It's a good name." She was suddenly crying, silver tracks trailing down her cheeks, but still her fea sang relief, joy. “It’s perfect.”

He smiled and moved to sit on the bed next to her as he handed her their son… their Legolas.

Glorfindel gazed down at the babe in his hands, his grandson, his tuft of blond white hair looking so much like Ailbhe when he was born. He found himself humming… humming that accursed song.

Emma’s voice joined his for a moment before she laughed and came over to lean on his shoulder. "Ah, that song just sticks around, doesn't it? Thousands of years and yet another baby hears it."

Glorfindel chuckled though his heart hurt. “It seems a shame to disregard tradition, after so long.”

Emma hummed, “I hated it growing up but suffered through it… Aunt Gemma was kinda insistent.” She reached out and ran a finger across Legolas’ cheek. “You know I have a nephew… named Legolas… after my Legolas and he had no idea.” She chuckled. “Oh god he’d be sooo geeking out right know if he knew.” Her voice sounded wistful and sad, but not the overwhelming grief of years past. “I wish he could have met you.”

Glorfindel took her hand in his free one and pressed it. “I do too, child, but we have each other and that is what is important. You have Thranduil and your son.”

Emma smiled. “Yeah.”

“Ada!” Thranduil turned and smirked at the sight of Legolas toddling towards him with a wide grin and a handful of nuts. Miwen following him from behind with a grin of her own. “‘ook.”

Thranduil bent and lifted him into his arms. “What do you have there, little leaf?”

Legolas grinned and offered the nuts. “Eat for you! I get high!” Then held one of the nuts up to his mouth.

Thranduil chuckled and opened his mouth, allowing Legolas to feed him one of the nuts before tossed his son into the air and catching the giggling toddler. He laughed and turned to Miwen, who was watching them with a grin of her own. “Have some time?” She asked as she moved to wrap an arm around his waist as they started walking down the hall. “Thought we might have a picnic in the woods today?”
Glorfindel watched from the shade as Emma corrected Legolas’ elbow, positioning him into the correct form as he aimed the small bow she had had made for him for his begetting day. The boy loved it.

Thranduil was watching as well, pride shining in his eyes as he watched his son. Glorfindel couldn’t help but comment. “My daughter, Mirwa, Miwen’s grandmother, she loved the bow as well. She was always in a tree, or shooting her bow. Much like Miwen.” Emma had asked that he use the name given to her by Oropher when they were not alone.

“I thought you were her grandfather.” Thranduil raised an eyebrow at him.

“There are too many greats separating us. It’s simpler to leave them out.”

“Perfect!” Emma praised Legolas as his arrow hit the target.

“Ada! Did you see?” Legolas beamed back at Thranduil, then saw Glorfindel and dropped the bow with all the haste of a child his age. “Babala!” The child launched himself into Glorfindel’s arms. “Did you see?”

“I did! It was a fair shot, little leaf.” He knelt to set Legolas down and offered him the box he had tucked under his arm. “I brought you your begetting day gift.”

Legolas beamed as he eagerly opened the box, and gasped at the white longknife he had commissioned for his grandson. He had left his sigil off of the hilt out of respect for Thranduil. Legolas went to take it from the box, and he put his hand over his with a serious look. “What are the rules?”

“Never give your true name to a stranger, never trade knives with someone who doesn’t know what it means, and always tie your hair back before a fight.” Legolas listed solemnly before bouncing.

Elrond had come to deliver the invitation to his bonding ceremony personally to the last Elvenking who had… somehow become his friend due to a tiny meddler who always seemed to be sending him pointed letters. One of the guards had pointed him to the gardens when he had asked where Thranduil could be found, and he was not surprised. Thranduil and Miwen were ever fond of the trees. He would have to be alert lest he be attacked in a ‘hug’ from above. Again.

He entered the gardens with a wary eye on the tree limbs, and so intent was he to try and catch sight of Miwen before she saw him, that he was startled when a massive, silver elk thundered down the garden path, a shrieking Legolas on its back. The beast charged past and into a doorway, and he heard a crash and then more shrieks from the child. He hurried towards them, concerned for the child’s safety, but when he rushed through the door, he only found Thranduil laying on his back on the floor, laughing in unrestrained joy, Legolas sitting on his stomach and giggling happily.

While he was staring, trying to make sense of the elk and the absence of said elk, a silver raven fluttered into the room, and in a flash of magic, Miwen was hugging him. He sighed and she
moved away to scoop Legolas up and grin at her bonded. “Not bad for a first time, Piemaker! Elrond is here with an invitation.”

Chapter End Notes

Explicit Thranduil/Miwen can be found in chapter 4 of Virtually Unspoken
Her daughter was getting married, bonded to Elrond Peredhel. In truth, she had expected it to be many, many more years before Elrond found the courage to speak to her daughter. Yet in his words ‘a little meddler’ would not let him be until he did.

Celebrian was… deeply in love with the very serious ellon. And though she could not have asked for a-

This is the song that never ends! It just goes one and on my friends! Somebody- and Lady Miwen was here. Galadriel resisted the urge to rub her temples at the annoying tune. She was presiding over the ceremony and if she had to listen to that awful song the entire time....

“Lady Miwen.” The bearer of Telperion’s light was as young as ever, her form unaging despite it’s edain appearance, even after several decades. And she still carried that awful tune in her head on their every meeting.

“Lady Galadriel.” Started singing it, not knowing what it was, and now they’re still singing it-

“Must you?”

“That you’re asking that means yes.” Miwen answered cheerfully. - because this is the song that never ends! It just goes on and on-

“Must you what, naneth?” The little prince, Legolas asked from behind Lady Miwen’s skirts.

“Nothing little leaf, go find Ada.” The child nodded with a grin scurried off at his mother’s words

On one hand, she knew that the Lady Miwen had many, many powerful secrets and knowledge of the future in her mind and had every right to use what methods she could to keep those secrets. On the other hand… - my friends! Somebody started singing it, not knowing what it was-

“I believe I will…” she started to rise from her seat, desperate to avoid the constant song that clung to one’s mind.

“Yeah, no problem. I’ll just…” Miwen indicated over her shoulder with her thumb with a smile.

“Big fan still.” and now they’re still singing it because this is the song that never ends!

He had asked, for Celbrian’s sake, but had not expected her to agree. But she had, readily, eagerly even. And now… Elrond could not help but look at her in awe as she began to sing, her voice
shifting the threads of the world with her light and power as her voice rose and rang out from her perch in the great tree. Her voice took on a mournful, beautiful lilt as Telperion’s light shone from her. “Here I am, I wait for you. Every day feels like a thousand years. You are the one that my heart longs for. How long till you are near? All I do is dream of you. It's your love that gets me through…You are the moon above my sea, You are the one who sets me free.

“It's as if our souls are one. Though you’re far, I feel you here with me. One look into the stars - your face Is all that I see.” The trees above them began to bloom and brighten as her voice was carried through the soft breeze. ”All I do is dream of you… It's your love that gets me through. You are the moon above my sea. You are the one who sets me free.”

The blossoms were released from the trees and carried through the air around them in a magnificent array of soft and beautiful colors. “I have learned from loving you. One kiss, one touch, can last a lifetime. I had so many walls surrounding me, before you were mine. All I do is dream of you. It's your love that gets me through. You are the moon above my sea. You are the one who sets me free. You are the one that who makes me feel. Like I could touch the sky. You are the one who sets me free, And gave me wings to fly.” Her voice rose in a bright, reaching note, the trees stirring around the power of her voice, the grasses and flowers rippling into life as her light flared with the ringing note.

She opened her eyes with a soft smile. “I wish you both unnumbered years of joy and happiness together.” Elrond felt the gravity and truth of her blessing, and then her knees gave out and she fell, only to be caught safely in her ‘Piemaker’s’ arms.

Thranduil cursed himself for his lapse of alertness. For wanting to leave Imladris early, for his impatience to be in the Greenwood. He ran in his elk form, pushing himself to faster and faster lengths as he followed the trail Miwen was leaving. She was being hunted by the foul orcs, herded towards Gundabad by their attacks. She had been weakened from her song, weakened and exhausted and it had been all she could manage to take Legolas and run while he and their guards fought the attacking orcs. Half their guard had fallen protecting him, and when the orcs finally retreated, leaving their numerous dead, it had been with exhausted dread that he had seen they had followed in the direction Miwen had run.

She had been their target in the attack… the realization had hit him like a mace to the gut. They were after her… her light… Telperion’s light. She had run, trying to take their son to safety, but now… now she was alone and hunted and he must reach her. He had shifted without a thought, his guard trailing as best they could on horseback, but their mounts were no match for the speed his form, the form she had taught to him, gave him. His muscles were sore and his lungs burned but he would not stop, not when there was the corpse of an orc with a familiar white fletched arrow through its neck, another half a league on with one of Legolas’ smaller arrows through its eyes.

He found himself counting the arrows as he followed her trail of felled orcs, his guard’s mounts hard pressed to keep up with him. Four left in her quiver. Two. None.

His heart clenched in fear. He had to get to them. His wife. His son. He had to help them. He crested a hill and there was another orc, this one with a knife through its heart. Her knife. A few paces on, was Miwen’s horse with orc arrows jutting from its haunches and neck. He heard snarling, the dark, corrupted voices of shouting orcs beyond the next hill, a shriek of pain, Miwen’s shout of pain and then Legolas screaming in fear.
Faster. He had to reach them. He saw them as he struggled up the next hill, exhausted and desperate. She had her back to a stone, an arrow in her leg, Legolas clinging to her back as she brandished his knife and her own at the circling orcs. The orcs were wary, but one of them drew a bow and he could not reach them in time!

Her eyes lifted to him, as if she could see him. Could sense him, and then her face took on a terrible, knowing, horrified expression as Telperion’s light, her light, flared weakly, and then, as an arrow dug into her thigh, she screamed, the light exploding from her in desperation, the force of the spell sending him tumbling to the earth, shaking him from his elk form.

Thranduil felt as if his fea was being ripped in two, worse than the dragon fire had ever been. He knew he was screaming as he forced himself to his feet through the crippling pain, forced himself to draw his sword and move his wearied limbs to go to her, forced himself to move through the agony in his fea, to find his son, to… The orcs were nothing more than charred husks, ash wisping from them in the breeze. By the rock… Legolas sat on the ground, clutching both his and his mother’s knife, blinking as if dazed.

Miwen was gone. Oh Eru… she was gone.

He struggled to his son and fell to his knees as he gathered Legolas into his arms, his fea aching and bleeding and… she was gone. He gasped in agony and wept into his son’s hair, shuddering from the loss of her, from the pain and absence.


Glorfindel knew something had happened… Emma’s fea had screamed to him in desperation, and he got the impression of her being chased… of Legolas in her arms. He had grabbed the nearest horse from the stable, not stopping to explain to the concerned hands, letting the oath of his fea guide him. He found the remains of a horde of orcs, charred as if burnt by a great flame, and Thranduil’s guards standing in a circle around a great stone. His heart fell at the sight. Was he too late? Was…?

He jumped from his mount and rushed to them, and one of the guards held up his hands in a plea to stop, but he could not- he could not bear another second without knowing. He stumbled forward and the first emotion he felt was relief. There was Thranduil, alive, with Legolas in his arms. Alive. But… Thranduil was weeping, aching, visceral sobs, his fea screaming in loss and agony. Legolas was still in his arms, but his father was weeping in agony and Emma…

He knelt beside the Elvenking and reached out to touch his shoulder but made himself stop. “Thranduil…”

Thranduil flinched and curled around his son before gasping, his voice ragged and raw as if his screams had torn it. “She’s gone. She’s gone, mir nin, she’s gone.” His chants were broken and painful as his fea lashed out in pain, searching for what was not there.

“Thranduil…” Glorfindel started but the pain of knowing his Granddaughter was gone… Eru, he was alone again. “And Legolas?” He forced out.

One of the guards answered softly. “He does not remember her, My Lord.”
C_L challenges you to watch Battle of the Five Armies with our Thranduil and Legolas backstory in mind :D
News of the battle of the five armies caused Glorfindel’s heart to ache. Thranduil had closed himself and his kingdom off from the world after Emma had been lost. He refused to leave the Greenwood, or as it was now known, Mirkwood.

Glorfindel was only able to visit on Legolas’ begetting day, a visit both joyous and painful, joyous in getting to see his grandson, and painful at the glimpses of Thranduil’s cold, agonized fea and Legolas’ inability to remember his mother, though he still loved the bow and trees. Elrond said a part of Legolas’ fea had been, for lack of a better term, sealed off. Glorfindel wondered if Emma had done that, had sealed off the bond between mother and son to protect him from the pain of her loss.

The boy remained bright and joyous at the smallest things. And he wondered if Legolas was the only reason Thranduil had not faded. Despite his pain and aloofness, Thranduil loved his son.

That Thranduil would march on the mountain to recover Emma’s starlight stones that many now knew as ‘the white gems of Lasgalen’ after Smaug had been defeated did not surprise him. Thranduil had told him in confidence before Elrond’s bonding ceremony that he had sent the stones off to be fitted to a necklace for her… and when Emma was gone, Thranduil demanded them back. The dwarves refused.

Glorfindel was quite frankly surprised that the Elvenking hadn’t declared war then and there but he simply walked away. Seemingly aloof and arrogant, yet Glorfindel had seen his fea screaming at yet another loss.

When Smaug attacked, Thranduil was not willing to risk his people to dragon fire, it destroyed their fea… he only had survived through Emma’s efforts. Of course the dwarves saw it as cowardice, that it had been because he was denied the starlight jewels of Lasgalen, that he had no honor. And Thranduil let them believe it… he simply had not had the will to care.

The battle of the five armies had been six years ago, for six years his grandson had been traveling with the Rangers… with Estel. And Thranduil sank deeper into his despair without his son.

Glorfindel felt the hair on the back of his neck prickle and looked up from his desk warily. He felt something yank on his fea and his blood leaped, and then there was a blinding flash of a silver light- Oh Eru! Silver! He blinked the light from his eyes moments before a small, bloody form fell into his lap with an agonized cry. He caught a glimpse of a ragged, scarred, ancient fea before it was locked away and hidden.

Emma.

Emma, with her hair shorn and black as pitch, her ribs exposed through deep, ragged wounds and several were broken, her leg a mangled mess-

She coughed and grinned, blood leaking from her mouth. “Hey, Babala, I think I need some help.”

“What happened!?” He gasped as he gathered her up and ran towards the healing halls nearly plowing over Erestor in his haste. How was she here? In this state?

She groaned and coughed up more blood, her head falling back limply. “Kinda dying here,
Babala.” And then she fell unconscious.

Hours passed in strained effort to heal her. Glorfindel healed the worst of her injuries until Elrond could arrive and heal with more finesse. They were both exhausted by the time she was whole again. Her eyes fluttered open and there was again that glimpse of ancient, tattered pain before it was sealed away and she sat up and began inspecting the flesh over her ribs. She nodded in satisfaction before looking at them with a grim smile. “Thank you. I need paper. I don’t have much time.”

“What… what happened?” Elrond asked, his voice weary from the strain of healing her, even as Glorfindel brought out the pens and paper he had procured while Elrond had worked his magic, having had a sense that they would be needed.

She took the pens and paper and sat on the floor, a furrow between her brows. “Dragon, been causing problems since the beginning of time. Someone should really do something about those things. Nasty things. Very large. Sharp teeth.” She began writing frantically. “I kinda jumped in one’s mouth.”

“Why in Eru’s name would you do that?” Elrond looked at her as if she was insane.

She lifted one shoulder in a shrug. “To save a dead man. Seemed like a good idea at the time.” She paused and looked up at them. “I have a lot I need to get ready, things to put in place.”

“I should send for Thranduil.” Elrond said wearily as he rose from his seat beside her bed.

“No!” Her voice was sharp and vicious before she grit her teeth and went back to writing. “There isn’t enough time. Blood magic is tricky, I don’t have enough here yet. Only two, I think I need at least three. Rule of three. A letter, I need a letter, tangible—” She began muttering under her breath as she wrote frantically and Glorfindel’s heart ached to see her returned to that state.

He rose and Emma glared up at him sharply. “Do not tell Thranduil I am here.”

He raised his hands in surrender and she went back to her muttering and scribbling. He stepped from the healing hall and went to the nearest ellon. “Send word to the Elvenking that Telperion’s light has returned.” There. He had not told him that Emma was here, only that the light was back.

Elrond found himself unsettled by Miwen once more. He had seen her fea while he had healed her and she was… she was ancient. Older than any he had seen before, but scarred, her spirit torn time and time again, shadowed with grief and pain and obsession. She was… mad. Her eyes were hard and cold even as she muttered feverishly over her papers, scrawling out secrets and plans and notes, papers scattered about her like a nest of fate.

She had moved to the floor and spread out papers and was drawing a complicated diagram across them, leaving notes across it that he dared not read. She suddenly froze and lifted her head and her fea flared in agonized longing before it was sealed away and her lips peeled back from her teeth. The door opened and Thranduil, pale and shaking, burst in. He stepped towards her and Miwen
jumped to her feet with a snarl. “I said don’t tell him!”

Thranduil looked as if he had been gutted by her words. “Miwen? Mir nin?”

“I don’t have time for this!” She growled and yanked at her hair before dropping back to her knees and muttering as she continued her diagram.

“Miwen…” Thranduil stepped towards her again, stopping when the toe of his boot touched one of her papers. “Why… why do-” He suddenly stepped back with his hand to his head and Miwen made a frustrated desperate noise, her own hand going to her chest.

“I don’t have enough time! I’m only here for a month or so and then the blood magic wears off and I go back. I can’t- I can’t tear myself apart for you again. Sixty years. In sixty years I’ll be back, and I won’t remember any of this.” She let out a shaky, near sob before bending back over her papers. “Ask me then, and I will. But there’s not enough of me left for you right now.”

“Blood magic?” Elrond asked, trying to pick through the spiel of words she had let out.

“Blood to blood, I used my blood to drag me to my blood. Took me to babala. If I can refine it, tweak it, add the rule of three,” She muttered and moved to another section of the diagram, seemingly ignoring Thranduil, who was watching her with a stricken expression. “I left hints for the twins with the shadow, and I can set things into place, between Babala and the twins, maybe- maybe if I can- there would need to be a binding element. Blood of three, set the prophecy into the quickling’s mouth on my next visit. Prepare a vault for the dreamers. He won’t go without his child of stone, note to research-”

“Miwen… mir nin. Do you not care-?” Thranduil’s voice was agonized, shaking as he gazed at her.

Miwen paused for barely a breath before she moved to her next paper. “The place that holds the sky back- the veil will be thin but stable, breachable-” She dropped her pen and cried out as she clutched her heart, and Thranduil took another step and reached out, but she scrambled back. “Stop it! Stop! I can’t! I can’t!” She gasped before shakily picking up her pen. “There’s not enough left for you to take. A few weeks isn’t worth it. Stop.” She shuddered and bent over her notes. “Please. Wait till I am younger.”

She continued to hunch over her papers, scrabbling above her diagram like a spider as she wrote and muttered. She suddenly paused as blood dripped from her nose and caught it with her hand before snarling and slamming the flat of her hand against her papers, leaving a red smear across her notes. “Not enough time!”

“Miwen.” Thranduil knelt by the edge of her papers and she looked at him with cold, grey eyes, blood still dripping from her nose. Elrond wanted to try and heal her, but in this state… he did not think she would allow him.

“Piemaker. I will be back. You keep holding on. Sixty more years without me, and then you’ll have me for millennia.” Her face softened for just a moment before she wiped away the blood on her face with her arm and bent back over her papers.

Glorfindel stepped into the healing hall and carefully moved around the spill of papers to hold a plate in front of Miwen. She didn’t even look up as she snagged one of the dumplings and shoved it into her mouth before crab walking across her papers to another section, chewing and writing frantically. All the while Thranduil stared at her with a lost, agonized expression.
Glorfindel continued to place easy finger food in front of her as she feverishly scrawled over her notes, sorting them into piles and muttering to herself. Thranduil… would not leave. He sat in a chair in the corner of the room and watched her like a man starving. Anytime he rose to do anything she flinched and clutched her chest before shaking her head and muttering. “Not worth it, not worth it.”

She would not allow Thranduil to touch her, though Glorfindel could see the Elvenking wanted to… he somehow held himself back. It was probably her agonised keening any time he got close that kept him at bay.

Glorfindel would catch glimpses of her fea every once in a while… and it… it was not, could not be Emma… but it was. Mottled, spots that should burn bright were dark, shadowed, torn and shredded, scars upon scars. How did she continue? How did she yet live?

Elrond asked, very tentatively, if he should send for Legolas but Thranduil shook his head and looked… heartbroken. “No, he should not see her… like this.”

A month… for a month it continued, agonizingly slowly, when suddenly… she was gone again. A series of chests with notes affixed to them for different people, instructions. Thranduil screamed in anger and agony again at her loss… but Glorfindel reminded him, hoping she was not mistaken in her pain, sixty years… sixty years she said she would be back… but would not remember.
Aragorn Elessar had been crowned king, Elrond had given the man his blessing to take Arwen to wife. His son, Legolas was returning home, returning to the Greenwood after so long away. Sixty years had passed, and sixty years she had said, after great and terrible things had happened, she would return. Sixty years he had waited, clinging to the hope given by her sharp, agonized words. She had left chests… papers to several people. Elronds had opened his and relayed it was mostly healing techniques and theories… how to cure a wound from a mogul blade as well as a note about the strength of halflings. Galadriel looked wary when presented her chest but did not expound upon what she had found within. His own chest had… held within it a single letter with the words. “I am sorry, Ma’fen.” and a jawbone… from a wolf. The significance he did not know but he kept it with him for the time it became clear.

He found himself roaming the Greenwoods in his elk form, finding a semblance of peace in the simple state as he waited. Sixty years were drawing to a close, and great and terrible things had happened. Parts of the Greenwood’s had been burned by Sauron’s forces, Dol Goldur, the accursed place, had been razed, not a stone left standing.

But it was over… the war… Sauron and the one ring destroyed. His son was returning. And he waited. She would return. She had to. Would she be broken as before? Fea wounded and torn? Would she allow him to hold her? Soothe away her tears and pain?

He walked along the forest paths, listening to the trees as they raged and healed and sought out the sun. A ripple of joy caught his attention. South. He turned and trotted towards the ripple through the trees. They were singing. Singing like they had not for centuries, since- He broke into a gallop, following the trees and their singing until he-

His heart leaped to his throat. Oh Eru. He found her. She was sitting at the base of a tree, her forehead bent to its trunk as she sobbed and laughed. Her hair was long and brown as he remembered it, not cropped and black as pitch, and as he stood, frozen in emotion, the tree bent a branch to her and gave her an arm. She pressed a kiss to the tree’s trunk and stood as she flexed the wooden limb, then turned and her eyes landed on him.

He waited, fearing and hoping in equal measure her reaction. Would she snarl at him again? Would she accept him? Would she drive him away with cries of ‘not worth it’? Her eyes lit up in the brilliant, beautiful silver light of Telperion and she laughed and ran towards him with open arms, her fea reaching towards him, torn and ragged, but bright and longing.

“Piemaker!”

He shifted in just enough time to catch her in his arms. His fea jolting forward to meet hers, her beautiful, bright fea, as she leapt at him, clinging to him and pressing kisses to his mouth, to his face, her fea reaching and tangling, molding with his without hesitation. And he was lost in the feeling of the parts of him missing returning. He could barely register her words as he clung to her, afraid she would vanish again, afraid if he let go she would suddenly snarl he wasn’t worth it.

“Oh, I missed you!” She kissed his mouth. “I was so worried you wouldn’t-“ his cheek. “wouldn’t wait and-“ his chin. “I wouldn’t make it back in time.” She pulled back to look at him and he saw her face soften in mixture of pain and joy. “You- your crying.”
Was he...? She reached up and wiped his cheek, her hand coming away wet with tears he hadn’t realized he had shed. “You’re... letting me touch you.” He couldn’t keep the hurt from his voice.

“Of course I am, ma’lath. I have spent the last six months putting things together to make it back to you.” She laughed. “I had to wait for the right time... the right energies.”

“You wouldn’t... wouldn’t let me touch you last time.” His hand was trembling as he moved it to her hair, touching, fearing that she would suddenly change her mind and draw away. Her cries of ‘not worth it’ burned in his mind.

“Last time?” Her brow furrowed and her fea brushed his, tentative and concerned. “What do you mean last time?”

She said she would not remember, but... “You... you left a chest of papers with instructions, for yourself. You... you would not let me touch you.”

She looked at him in confused hurt. “But I... I wouldn’t...? Thranduil, I-“

He shushed her and pulled her into his arms and kissed her temple reverently, “It does not matter.” And it did not matter. She was here... here in his arms. She was here, and her fea still sang brightly with love, and she was touching him. “You came back.”

“I came back. I will drag myself through hell to make it back to you, Piemaker.” She touched the side of his face softly, the side that was burned, the side he covered with a glamour. “I probably need to look at that chest, but right now... right now all I want is to heal our bond and be with you and hear about everything I missed. How long have I been gone? What... what’s the biggest thing that’s happened?”

“The one ring is destroyed.”

She let out a shaky breath and clung to him tighter. “So long. I’m so sorry, I tried to make it back as soon as I could. Is... Legolas? Did he sail?”

“No.” His voice was raw, he still had tears streaming down his face. “You- He is an ellon grown, a war hero. Miwen.” He cupped her face, still afraid she would disappear. “Mir nin, you missed so much.”

“Part of the Fellowship.” She whispered. “I know. Friends with a dwarf named Gimli. Don’t be angry at him for it.” She took a shuddering breath. “Again I missed my children grow.”

He felt her pain in her fea at the words and held her, knowing that the next thing he had to tell her might break her heart. “Miwen, Mir nin, he- he has no memory of you.”

She shuddered in his arms and he felt guilt bleed into her fea. “I know. I... I hid them. I’m sorry, he just... it would hurt him so much... and he- god, he needed to be so strong.” She buried her face into his chest. “I can unlock them, if he wants. Now that he... he did it.” She laughed but it was watery and shaking. “Oh god, he did it! My little leaf! My baby.”

She looked up at him with silver eyes. Warm, silver eyes, not grey and cold. “I want to go home. If... if you’ll have me, I want to reform our bond. I want... I want to see him again if I can.”

‘Have her’? If he’ll ‘have her’? That she would doubt it was like a spike through his heart. “Yes! Oh Eru, Miwen!” He pulled her back just enough to crash his lips to hers, kissing her thoroughly before pulling away and pressing his forehead to hers. “Mir nin. My Miwen. My impossible edain. Yes, I will always want you back.”
Legolas felt both relief and anxiety returning to the Greenwood. Relieved from the familiarity of the winding mountain halls, and anxious over his father's reception. The Greenwood had been attacked in his absence and the trees had suffered. But still his father had held back Suaron's spawn. He had not asked to join the Fellowship, had done it without his father's knowledge and had left Elrond to give him the news. It seemed... easier.

Legolas frowned as he wandered through the halls of his youth, his kinsmen greeted him with polite smiles, respectful head tilts but... Where was his father? He would have expected to be stopped at the gates, or even greeted in the throne room. Either berated for his risking his life, again, or perhaps welcomed as a war hero. But he was wandering through the private wing, and save for the guard outside, it was deserted. Not a servant to be seen.

Gimli was at his elbow and grumbling, as was his way about 'Elven hospitality'. He heard a woman whisper. “Shoot, someone’s coming! Put your clothes back on, ma’fen.”

And then he heard the same voice squeak and his father laugh, quietly, but his father... laughed. Legolas felt as if he might be dreaming as he rounded the corner to see his father hastily pulling his robes on, and a tiny one armed edain, red faced and grinning as she straightened her own tunic.

What...? Why had they been undressed? Why was his father smiling, no, grinning at the edain? His eyes shining in joy and... A female edain inside their private wing. “Ada?”

“Little leaf?” No one save his father and Glorfindel called him by that epesse. He narrowed his eyes at the human. “Who are you?”

“Seems your father has taken a companion, laddie.” Gimli spoke, quite unhelpfully, in a cheerful tone.

His father looked offronted, but the human just snorted and covered her mouth with her hand, though she was still crying silently. “Hello, Gimli!” She said in a slightly higher pitched voice before she seemed to collect herself and looked up at his father and said softly, “It’s okay, Piemaker. I know he doesn’t remember.”

“Father! Who is this?” His voice came out sharper than he had meant but... Eldar did not have dalliances as men did, they couldn’t. And yet here was his father... with a human woman... and they had been... he had been around the secondborn long enough to know what they were doing. And it was... distressing.

“Legolas...” his father’s voice was... gentle. Quiet, like... like it had been after the Battle at Erebor. “She is your mother.”

His mother? He felt cold anger and hurt settle in the pit of his stomach. His mother... his father had refused to speak of her for... decades... centuries of nothing... not a word until after the battle...
of Erebor. The only information he had of her came from Glorfindel. And he said she was lost at Gundabad. “My mother is gone.” How dare he try to replace her!?

The woman, the small edain that his father claimed to be his mother, smiled even as hurt crossed her features. His father looked at her and his face darkened… that was the father he knew. “Legolas.” His voice was low, warning.

“Hush, ma’lath.” The woman shook her head and to his shock, father subsided at her scold. “He doesn’t remember.” She swallowed and stepped towards him and he immediately stepped back. Her face fell at his movement but she spoke softly. “Legolas, ion’nin, my Little Leaf, I came back. As soon as I could find the way.” The human spoke his name and endearments softly, longingly. Her hand raised and silverish green light pooled into the palm of her hand. “I have your memories if you want them back.”

His memories? He looked at his father, who stood watching them in silence, but looked as if he was ready to pull the human into his arms in a breath’s space. “Ada, what is this?”

Gimli shifted uncomfortably. “Lad’, maybe I’d better…?” He gestured towards the door but Legolas gripped his shoulder in a silent plea to stay, feeling he did not wish to be alone at this moment.

His father didn’t answer but the human chewed her lip before speaking softly. “Your mother gave you your first bow. An oliphaunt only counts as one. A hobbit can eat four lembas. You pretended that elves could not get drunk to mess with Gimli. Glorfindel is your ancestor, though he does not speak of it around Thranduil. Your father told you that I loved you more than life itself, and that is true. I…” Her throat worked and silver tears fell down her cheeks and Legolas heard Gimli gasp but didn’t dare look away from the woman. “I did everything I could to protect you, and that meant… taking your memories so you wouldn’t hurt while I fought my way back to you and my Piemaker.”

“Legolas,” his father’s voice was quiet… pleading. “Please listen, Ion’nin.”

The woman held out her hand the light in her palm not wavering. “This is…” she swallowed. “These are your memories, little leaf. But- but you don’t have to, if you don’t want to.”

Legolas looked over at his father who was… looking hopeful. Desperate but hopeful. “Ada… What…?”

“Please.” His father… asked him. “She is… impossible to explain.”

He looked back at the woman… the edain woman… who didn’t look more than twenty cycles, the woman who claimed to be his mother. It was… it was impossible.

The woman’s brow suddenly furrowed and the odd wooden armor on her shoulder… moved into an arm and she transferred the light of the… supposed memory into the palm of the wooden hand. She blinked, and then in her hand was a glowing acorn. “Here… You don’t have to decide right now. Just break it open if you want them.” She held the silver-green acorn out to him in offer.

“Legolas,” his father spoke again. “Please.”

His father was… pleading… showing more emotion than… since he was a small child. In the span of a few moments he had heard his father laugh, seen him smile, heard him ask, seen him step back from insult. He was… Legolas made his mind and looked over at Gimli, silent communication to interfere if this be a trap of some sort, and this woman… this witch had somehow beguiled his father.
Gimli’s gaze was fixed on the woman’s eyes and tears though, that shined like Glorfindel and Galadriel’s eyes in the dark. “The light…”

“I’m a lot older than I look, Gimli.” The women smiled sadly at him. Then took a breath. “The choice is yours little Le- Legolas.” She corrected herself, though it seemed to pain her.

He frowned, then his mind caught on a faint memory, something that no-one would know, should know. “What did my mother call the Balrog Slayer?”

The woman broke into a shining grin. “Babala. Ma’Babala, my grandfather, the golden fae.”

A few knew of the strange epesse for Glorfindel, but Glorfindel had whispered a song out of the range of hearing of his father when he was younger, had said the song was a family tradition. That his mother called him the golden fae.

Legolas found himself reaching for the acorn. Gimli shifted but didn’t try to stop him and he picked it up from the woman’s hand, it was warm to the touch but there was no rush of magic or compulsions. The woman’s wooden arm curled up onto her shoulder and she smiled softly. “You can wait to open it until Babala gets here, if you’d rather. I sent word I was back and he will be here in a few days.”

Glorfindel was coming, not on his begetting day. His father was smiling. If it was bewitchment… Enough fear. He crushed the acorn in his fingers and the silver-green light flared and sank into his skin.

At first there was nothing… then- “- move your elbow up, Little Leaf.” “Stop trampling through the house ma’lath! We have an entire forest-” “-at do you do with a Golden Fae? The Elder kind eyes bright as day? You-” “Shoot straight, Little Leaf, we don’t have many arrows left.” “I’m so sorry, Little Leaf. I will be back as soon as I can manage. Take care of Ada. I love yo-”

He blinked away the images, no memories, of the woman, the edain... his mother... his- “Naneth?”
She was sitting by the chest he had kept for her. It was open and papers spilled around her, and she was reading one of them with tears in her eyes and her hand over her mouth.

She had not been home long before she asked to see the chest. He had kept the thing for her, not daring to open it… hoping she would return… but now… “Mir nin?”

She startled and then looked up at him with a smile. “We… we have several thousand years together before…” Her face fell and she did not finish the sentence, but he knew what it was. How could he not?

“Mir nin,” he held out his arms and she rose and ran into them, burying her face into his chest and he bent pressing his check to her hair. “we have survived it before… we will again.”

“Even I run out of stories.” She whispered, then shook her head. “Thousands of years. Let’s enjoy them.” She took a deep breath then- “Legolas is secretly building a boat to take Gimli to Valinar.”

Thranduil huffed a laugh. “Of course he is… he takes after you.”

“Stubborn.” She sighed happily. “In a few years, centuries, whatever, I think we should go. Babala too.”

“She got you again, Laddie.” Gimli huffed in amusement as their arrows were counted.

Legolas enjoyed matching his skills against his Naneth. Her skill with bow and knives was near unheard of for an edain… but then she wasn’t really an edain. She just… was.

“Course I did! He’s still young.” Naneth said cheerfully. “My Little Leaf may be tall enough to put his elbow on my head, but he still doesn’t know how to shoot without an arrow.”

“You can’t shoot a bow without arrows, Naneth.” Legolas rolled his eyes at her teasing.

She grinned sharply in that way that meant she was about to do something impossible. “Can’t I?”

"Why are you not helping?" Thranduil asked irritably as Miwen stole another berry. He had flour
on his face and clothes and she was shamelessly laughing at him. “This was your idea.”

"Last time I tried to boil water I set the kitchen on fire, piemaker."

"I think we have just proved that name does not fit."

Miwen cocked her head at the mess. "Better than mine." She smirked and held a berry up to his mouth. “Besides you’re cute with flour in your hair.”

“What are you doing?” Thranduil looked at Miwen in disgusted curiosity as she continued to dig through the abdomen of a giant spider.

"I apparently said ‘study the spiders’ so I'm studying spiders. Ugh.” she shivered in disgust as she pulled out something. “I really hope this is what I meant… because if not I just dissected this for nothing.”

Legolas knelt beside her and wrinkled his nose at the smell. "Why do you need to… study the spiders, naneth?"

"I don't even know. I'm terribly specific and horribly vague, apparently." She muttered before making an interested noise. "Huh. Venom sack. What's that doing back here?"

“Piemaker!” Miwen shouted as she stuck her head around the corner of the door to his council room. “Wanna hunt a dragon with me? Apparently I need dragon blood for a thing and Smaug’s too decomposed... soo yeah… dragon hunting? You? Me? Yeah?”

Thranduil clutched the arms of his chair in quiet terror. No, he absolutely did not want to hunt a dragon, but… she would do it herself if he did not. "Do not jump into its mouth."

She blinked. "Why would-?" She shook her head. "Nevermind. Let's go. There's apparently a young one in the east."

“Naneth!?” Legolas started and jumped to cover the still crude boat.

“Don't worry about that, I know about your super secret project. But I think…” Naneth frowned at a paper in her hand. "I think I figured out how to tie Gimli to your life force so he lives as long as you."

Legolas felt his mouth drop open, how did she…? nevermind. It did not help to wonder how she knew things. "What… would we have to do?"

"Get him to your super secret destination and I'll come by in a while to sing it into place if he agrees. I think I'll need the ambient energy." She paused and looked over his boat. "Don't forget a
rudder.”

She… she wasn’t… He picked her up in a spinning hug. “Thank you, Naneth!”

Glorfindel watched wistfully as Celebrian welcomed Elrond. He had sailed with his lord but only with Emma’s promise that she and Thranduil would meet them, in time. It had been enough… but watching as his lord and lady reunited after so long… his heart ached for his Beth.

“Laurefindil.” He started at the name he’d long set aside and looked over to see the Lady Varda. He instantly dropped to a knee in reverence. He was young… an elfling still when he had last seen her… but it was her. One did not soon forget Manwe’s bride. She graced him with a soft smile. “Come, Laurefindil.” She turned and began to walk away and he rose to follow.

Absently, he wondered why no one seemed to react… could they not see her? See him? They walked and he followed. He did not realize how far they had gone before he was standing in front of a gate… His father’s old estate.

“We have kept it for you.” Varda’s voice was soft, gentle. “It is yours, a reward for your service.”

He knew he should be honored, grateful. But… “My lady, I can not… that is, I mean to say-“

Varda smiled at his lack of words. “It is not what you wished. I know.” She waved her hand and the gate opened. “Come with me.”

She led on and he followed, what else could he do? She did not enter the grand house as he expected but instead, led him into the private gardens. “This place used to ring with your laughter. A child of gold. Pure. Slaying any and all who would dare endanger your family.”

He swallowed. “The imaginations of a young elfling, my lady.”

“Was it?” Varda asked with a small knowing smile. “Your… happenstance made a wonderful thing possible, you know. Telperion and Laurelin’s lights kept safe and passed on through the strength of your blood. Loyalty and Protection.”

He shut his eyes. They knew. Of course they knew. They were the Valar. “Laurelin was lost, my lady.” His voice was not as strong as he would have liked.

Varda shook her head. “Not yet. Time is tangled around the lights. It is… confusing. Lost, but not yet, or maybe never will be or have not ever been.” She looked over at him and smiled. “Those of your blood are strong, and not so easily swept away. But I did not bring you here to discuss them. Time will reveal their purpose.”

He frowned at that but the Lady Varda continued as they turned the corner to the innermost part of the garden. “Her spirit was strong. Very… stubborn. Very entangled with yours.” She sounded amused. “It took a great deal of effort to contain it until we could… Well, you will see.”

He was about to ask what she meant but… he froze as his eyes landed on a form. There… under a willow, was Beth. Or… a vision of Beth as she had looked the day she had bound him to her room, young and strong. His Beth, laying beneath the branches as if asleep. But she could not be here. It could not be so… his heart nearly broke at the sight. “Why?” His voice was a croak. Why would she show him a vision of his lost love?
Varda spoke but he could not tear his eyes away from the vision. How long… how long had it been since he had seen her? Held her? “We meant to bring her to Mando’s Halls when she passed, but she was so… stubborn, that she brought you as well. We had to sing her a new vessel in order to untangle her from you and allow you to live.”

A new vessel… Beth… his Beth. He moved as if caught in a waking dream, stepping up and kneeling next to the bed under the willow. She… his Beth, laid there, soft breaths moving her chest, her face lax in peaceful sleep, wild, glorious black curls haloing her head. Beautiful, young, untouched by age. The brown ovals… fae marks. His Beth.

“She was not aware of the passing of time, Laurefindel.” Varda’s voice seemed like an echo on the wind. “To her you were just parted for a second. I believe your granddaughter refers to it as the ‘Great Sleep’. Uthenera. A word not yet born.”

He turned his head to… thank her … to swear to anything to repay this… this gift beyond measure. But Varda was gone and he was alone in the garden… with Beth… His Beth.

His hand trembled as he reached out gently, ever so gently brushing the soft coils of her midnight curls. His Beth. He could barely breathe for fear this was a dream he would wake from. His Beth. He pressed a kiss to her forehead and she was warm and solid, and still there as he sat back to look at her.

Her eyelashes fluttered open and she blinked, her dark eyes bright but confused as she smiled at him. “Del?”

Beth always knew the fae would take her. She had thought that fate fulfilled when she had married Del. But now… They said they were Eldar, or Valar, or Sindar, any manner of words to sort themselves by. But they were fae, and she was in their court. Del’s court.

She remembered growing old, remembered her great grandchildren being born, remembered the aches in her joints. But… she was young again. Still fae marked, still small and soft, still… Del’s. And she was definitely no longer in the human realm.

One of the fae, half fae, according to Del, stared at her. A lot. She would feel uncomfortable if it was not for the breathtaking fae that was obviously his wife, and for the fact that he just seemed… stunned. “That is what the little meddler meant.”

“Fiadh?” Was Fiadh here? “Fiadh spoke to you?”

But Del shook his head with a sad smile. “One of Mirwa’s descendents. She promised to come here, eventually.”

The half fae looked at Del in surprise. “You believe she will sail?”

Del smiled again and pulled her closer to his side. He hadn’t let her go since she woke in the garden. “No. She said she would fly.”

Fly?! She jabbed him in the ribs. “I blame your blood for that.”
Miwen was so engrossed in her work that she didn’t see him shift, didn’t feel him pad up behind her quietly. He rested his muzzle on her shoulder and she absently reached up and petted the white fur on the side of his face. “Aneth are, ma’Solas.”

Solas. Glorfindel said it meant light in the language of his secret love.

Suddenly she froze and he felt her fea flare in surprise and confusion and then pride and joy.

“Thranduil?!” She squealed and tried to look at him with wide eyes and he huffed in amusement. “You- you shifted… into a wolf?!”

He sat back and gave her a wolfish grin, hoping the expression translated with the new face shape. She blinked and then grinned with just as many teeth. “Ma’fen.”

“Two parts dragon blood to two parts sun cleansed elf blood, mixed with-” Miwen was muttering to herself over her notes and vials. “Maybe some fire? No, fire is included in the sun ritual and dragon blood…”

“Miwen.” He tried to keep the strain out of his voice while he attempted to hold the writhing and hissing orc down.

“Just a second, ma’lath.” She flipped a page in her notebook before making a satisfied noise. “Ah. Almost forgot the poison resistance.”

“Miwen!” He knew they should have used elven rope, the beast had chewed through the hemp rope in seconds, but Miwen had insisted that the ‘ambient magic’ was interfering, so now he was bodily holding the twisted creature down.

“One moment.” She grabbed one of her vials from her chest and dropped a single drop into the ‘syringe’ she had crafted. She narrowed her eyes at it, then nodded. “Okay.”

She raised the syringe above the orc’s chest and slammed it in, forcing the liquid into the creature. Immediately they both backed off as the creature began writhing and screaming on the ground. It fell still after a few moments and Miwen watched it pensively, chewing her lip as she made notes in her book.

Thranduil subtly stretched his shoulders, holding the thing down had taken quite a bit of effort. “Maybe you could modify the potion before we catch one next time?”

“You had it handled.” She gave him a sunny smile and he sighed.

“Your faith in me, Mir nin, is flattering as well as stressful.”

The creature suddenly turned on its side and retched, coughing up black bile and sludge before shuddering as its skin turned an ashen gray. It blinked and looked up at them with grey eyes.
Uncorrupted, sane, grey eyes.

Miwen raised her eyebrows. “Oh.” Then her eyes widened. “Oh!”

“Shall I dispose of it?” He asked warily as the orc- or whatever it was now, sat back on the ground and looked around in confusion.

“Um. No. It worked, I think…” she suddenly paled. “Shoot. I just made a Kossith.”

He drew one of his swords. “Is that bad?”

She shook her head and pushed his hand back. “No, it needs to live. It’s just unsettling. Crap!” She sighed. “We have to do this a few hundred more times.”

“No, look, the knights move three spaces in one direction, then two over.” Miwen illustrated with her piece.

“That makes no sense. Horses cannot move so.” Thranduil grumbled playfully, trying to get a rise out of her. She had placed the board and pieces in front of him that morning with the announcement she was bored and wanted to play. He had been trying to learn the rules since, and it was shaping to be an interesting game.

She huffed and shrugged. “I know, right? But that’s how the game is played.” Her mouth twisted into a wistful smile. “Damon loved this game but I’m terrible at it.” Her smile turned sly. “Which makes me wonder why I keep beating you.”

“Only because I do not yet know the rules, mir nin.” He grumbled playfully as he moved a small carving… pawn.

She hummed and then grinned at him mischievously. “Well what if you had more incentive to learn, Ma’fen?”

He raised a brow at her and sat back in his seat. “I’m listening.”

Thranduil felt massive… out of shape. Cumbersome and awkward in a way he had not felt since his youngest years when his limbs had grown fast and suddenly. It did not help that there were more than he was accustomed to.

Then the spell slipped from his grasp and he was thrown back to his first form, and had to kneel on the ground, gasping in air as a heavy wave of exhaustion hit him.

There was a squeak of excitement and he looked up just in time to see Miwen running towards him. “That was amazing!”

He had just enough presence of mind to catch her as she barreled into his chest and despite his exhaustion, he couldn’t help but grin in pride at achieving the form. The more he stretched his fea
Legolas finished his boat... for the dwarf. Thranduil pinched his brow but kept quiet, he had already been elbowed by Miwen the last time he had said anything on the subject.

She wanted to see them off, even though she promised that they would be meeting them when they arrived in Valinor. "Be careful! Dwarfs aren't good swimmers." She said as she pulled each of them into a hug.

"Hare brained, half cooked idea." The dwarf grumbled through a smile. "But the Elf won't listen to reason."

Miwen giggled. "He comes by it honestly."

"Stubborn and Impossible." Thranduil muttered fondly.

There were sharp gasps all around, and Elrond looked up only for the blood to drain from his face.

Dragon. Here.

There was a massive white and blue dragon, flying directly for them. He felt frozen for an instant before chaos erupted, people scrambling for cover or weapons. Suddenly, silver light flared and flashed from the dragon, and Glorfindel appeared, his edain wife at his side.

"Peace! It is Miwen!" The ancient warrior shouted.

"It is a dragon!" Elrond couldn't help but shout in return.

Glorfindel shrugged, apparently trusting the silver light, and pulled his wife against his side affectionately. Elrond, wisely, stepped back near cover as the dragon hovered, then slowly tried to land. On its back, Miwen waved excitedly.

Oh Eru. What had the little Meddler done now?

The dragon touched ground... awkwardly, stumbling a bit before it turned its head and huffed at Miwen, who slid off and stepped back with a grin. There was a flash of green, and then...

The dragon disappeared and Thranduil staggered as if exhausted in its place, and Miwen steadied him with a bright smile.

"Ai dia!" Glorfindel's wife muttered in resigned shock. "Doh pashteh."

Glorfindel's chuckle morphed into a full blown laugh when Miwen squeaked and ran to him, throwing her arms around the ancient warrior's waist. "Babala!"

"Hello, Miwen." Glorfindel laughed before dropping a kiss to her hair, then untangled himself from her arms to turn her to face his wife. "Miwen, this is Beth your.... grandmother."

Elrond glanced at Thranduil, who was approaching them slowly with a tired smile, and began
trying to ease backwards before Miwen could call for a 'group hug'.

"Oh, no you don't, Peredhel. You're getting hugs even if I have to chase you down." Miwen announced without even looking at him.

He sighed and resigned himself to the... affection.

Legolas and Gimli made it, and Legolas would never admit to being surprised because then Gimli would never let it rest. But, They made it.

And so did Naneth and Ada, apparently, by how they were attacked with her hugs almost as soon as the boat touched land. He was barely released before another tiny edain was presented to him by a... practically shining with joy Glorfindel.

"Your mamaela. My bonded."

Beth has to admit... it was like having both Mirwa And Fiadh back just... in one person and not towering. Emma, or Miwen as she preferred to be called was... intense. She had Mirwa's love of the bow and trees, Fiadh's sight and distaste for dresses, and both of their absolute stubbornness. She was delightful and a breath of fresh air when around other fae.

Eldar fae were... very formal and restrained, and Beth had done her best to acclimate to the court rules, but then Miwen swept in on a dragon's back and happily ignored all of the rules. And the fae let her.

Elrond suffered her hugs, Celebrian would braid her hair while sitting in the grass, and one day she even found Del letting her ride on his shoulders as he had when their own children were young.

Elrond had jokingly called her ‘The Little Meddler’ in front of the court... and the name stuck. Miwen had accepted it with an uneasy smile and a joke about the missing eye of the ‘all father’ that no one understood and she would not explain beyond it was a bird joke. Then she turned into a silver raven and sat on Elrond’s head.

Beth liked her.

Glorfindel found her pacing and counting, her eyes closed. She paused, turned in a circle, then sat down with a sigh, her fea grieved. "Found it."

“Found what, child?” He asked as he moved to sit next to her... he had not seen her this grieve since... a long time.

"The place that holds the sky back."She gestured in the direction of the sea beyond the mountains.
"All of that will be Plains and forests in a few thousand years. Right here where I'm sitting will be the heart of the castle. And... if-" She trailed off and looked at him helplessly. "I left notes but it... it's just-"

"You need help." He said quietly, she never told him what the older version of herself had left for her and he would not ask... that kind of knowledge was a difficult thing to bear.

"Yeah. But what I need to ask is... big, Babala. Dangerous, uncertain, and..." She teared up and looked away. "Selfish."

"What is it?"

She chewed her lip before hesitantly asking. "There's a word... uthenera... it means-"

"The great sleep." She looked at him in surprise and he shrugged. "That was how the Valar kept your Mamaela for me."

"Oh. There's... there's a ritual. That would call me to... to my family. Wherever, whenever, I was. But... it needs..." She hugged herself. "You. The first."

Thranduil was not opposed to making their home within another mountain. The halls were not as vast but... it was more than enough. His title of Elvenking was more honorary than anything else now, yet he was given respect for ruling over the only realm that held back Suaron’s corruption without the use of a ring... this was mostly due to his training with Miwen but they didn’t seem to care.

Inspired by Miwen’s easy, casual use of magic, more and more elven learned to stretch their feas to manipulate their surroundings.

The Valar held an obvious fixation with Miwen, due to the nature of her light, yet they did not approach her. They instead watched from a distance and let her do as she pleased.

Beth eyed the marbled mausoleum nervously, it had beds inside and... Emma was pacing, walking around it and looking down at a brittle looking book in her hands. It was near falling apart from age and use. She sighed and shrugged. "Yeah, that’s it. It’ll take me a few weeks to finish the wards since I’ll have to heal in between..." she bit her lip. "I’ll have to lay them after."

“I... am scared, Miwen, love.” Beth felt very, very small when compared to the magic and strength of the fae. She knew she was strong in her own way... but being locked in a tomb for thousands of years was frightening.

Her granddaughter looked at her and smiled sadly, “Yeah... so am I... but if I do it right it’ll be just like... waking up from a nap.” She paused, then snorted. “A very deep one. You might be eating soup for a while. Abelas-” she stopped and looked down at the book in her hands. “God, I hope I'm right.”
The panic started slowly… rumors mostly… Iluvatar had stopped speaking to the Valar. Thranduil was content to wait for Miwen’s reaction to the growing unrest, and she seemed… resigned to it. Until she met one of the reimbodied from Mando’s halls. The Elf sought her out and introduced himself as ‘June’, his eyes fixed on her intently, and the blood had drained from her face, her eyes sparkling in her panic.

“It’s happening.” She whispered, then turned on her heel and ran. June had moved to follow her, and Thranduil blocked his path, feeling incredibly unsettled at the jealous look the elf gave him.

When he returned to their home, he found her… using her blood to lay wards. “I- it’s started, they need to sleep.” She grit her teeth and opened another cut on her arm. “They need to sleep and then we need to run.”
Miwen was frantic. She eased her ancestors and their son and Gimli into the ‘uthenera’, and then she sealed the vault with blood and magic and a song, and then began walking circles around the vault, dripping blood and magic in her wake, muttering under her breath the whole while. It took weeks for her to finish, to heal between circles and replenish her blood, and she was weak and pale by the time she finished.

Thranduil had to stand guard outside their home, often in his drake form, to deter the ‘June’ that seemed so intent on speaking to her. A pair joined the June on his visits, an ellon and elleth. When Miwen had seen them she had whispered. “The twins... Oh. They’re his sons, not married.” The pair called themselves Elgar’nan and Mythal. Miwen said her language was being born.

She warded and bled, and he guarded and listened to the rumors swirling around. Sides were being drawn, reincumbed elves were gathering followers and tensions were high.

Elrond and Galadriel seemed to be the only voices of reason within the courts... urging others not to act hastily on rumors alone. They would often visit and bring news of what was happening within the cities. It was as if Morgoth had returned to sow discord as he had before.

He mentioned the thought to Miwen, and she had looked... heartbroken before she shuddered. “I’m almost done and then we can flee. Keep the bone with you, please.”

He did not like the idea of leaving ‘the vault’ but she promised their family would be safe and they would return to open it once the coming war was over. She had yet to be wrong in her predictions. He kept the wolf’s jawbone she had left for him years ago on him, hanging it on a leather string to keep it near his heart. Once she had laid the last ward, she asked the mountain to collapse the caves that were their home, sealing it from all others... and they flew... away from Valinar, back to Middle Earth.

Varda was dead. Murdered. Elrond felt as if his heart had been shattered. He wanted to disbelieve, wanted to deny it... but he could see her body there. Her blood on the sword of the self-named ‘Falon’Din’.

‘Run. Flee. When the unthinkable happens, promise me you’ll take Celebrian and flee.’

Miwen had begged him and he had promised. And the unthinkable had happened. Varda was dead. Every instinct in him demanded he fight, slay her murderer. Varda was dead.

And Miwen had begged him with tears shining with Telperion’s light to run. He had humored her. Had promised. What could happen in Valinor that would be so terrible?

Varda was murdered.

He took hold of Celebrian’s arm.
And he ran.
But they did not get far.

During their self-imposed exile, Miwen helped her ‘Kossith’, helped them find a sense of order and self governance. It was… difficult. They were aggressive and angry, but they could be reasoned with… but they listened to their ‘Bright Mother’, and they tried. It was… strange to see the previously corrupted and savage beasts try to form themselves into a civilization, try to rule themselves out of barbarity.

It felt hopeful, though at times they were over zealous… going further than needed.

Rumbles of the distant war reached them occasionally. Dwarves were digging deeper into the hearts of mountains, and Miwen would occasionally gather up their Kossith and move them away from a mountain before it could ‘wake’. He wanted to see what a woken mountain looked like, but she said their songs would drive him mad, so he contained his curiosity.

Then one day, Miwen woke from her sleep with a scream, and scrambled for her bow before she had fully woken. She bared her teeth, furious tears in her eyes. “Falon’Din has Elrond.”

“What is Falon’din?”

She opened her mouth… then shut it. “I can’t say. I have to keep their true names until I find someone who can use them. But he’s… bad. Real bad.”

He flew her to Valianor once again and… it was not the Valianor he remembered. The land was charred black… blood seemed to cry from the ground. He had not felt such… despair from a land since Mordor. Dread seemed to cling to him. Miwen had a plan, but now that they were above the carnage… it did not feel possible.

Miwen had her eyes closed, her fea reaching out in search of Elrond and Celebrian, guiding him with nudges until she opened her eyes with a snarl. “Crap. It’s a trap. Should have known.”

Almost as soon as she had spoken, something… a javelin struck his side. It glanced off the scales, but Miwen’s fea flared in panic. “They have Black Arrows down there. Land!”

She jumped off of his back with a shriek of rage, turning to her raven form, and then her lion form as soon as she neared the ground and began tearing through the armored forms trying to surround her. He gathered his legs under him and dove, slamming into a mounted group and crushing them beneath his feet.

They fought until he could not hold his form a moment longer. The battle seemed endless, and Miwen was panting as she snarled and shot arrow after arrow from her bow. He called out to her as his fea waned from his grasp, and he fell into his first form, fea exhausted, and forced to draw his swords. She was at his side at an instant, guarding and fighting as they tried to fall back.

And then… the attacks stopped. The soldiers still circled, still faced them with weapons drawn, but
they were still and waiting. Thranduil struggled through his exhaustion to stand, keeping his swords raised defensively with shaking hands as the ranks parted and a masked figure stalked towards them.

“Ah… you must be the Meddler and her dragon. How kind of you to visit.”

“Falon’Din.” Miwen spat, taking a cautious step backwards. Her eyes darting around… as if looking for more.

“You have something I want.” Falon’Din tilted his head and spread his hands. “I have something you want.”

Thranduil snarled in anger as a bleeding and bound Elrond was dragged forward and his friend was thrown on the ground at Falon’Din’s feet. He was thin… his hair had been shorn in uneven clumps… half healed and new cuts, bruises, and burns covered his barely clothed form. He had been tortured. He wanted to step forward and fight, but he was swaying and weak from his drake form.

“You have a marked fondness for the halfblood, do you not? It would be no small thing to have him returned for you.”

“For what?” Miwen’s voice was tight and wary, and her eyes flicked from Elrond and Falon’Din, her knuckles white on her bow.

“The secret to the dragon form.”

The blood drained from her face, and then she shuddered. “I’m sorry, Peredehl, but no. Never.”

Falon’Din’s voice lost all trace of pleasantness as he drew his sword and drove it through Elrond’s chest. “I guess he is useless then.” He kicked aside Elrond’s body carelessly.

Thranduil could not help but cry out in rage and grief, and Miwen snarled as she reached out with her light and… twisted something, yanking and flinging something bright but intangible from her. She stepped forward, trembling in rage, but he could feel her panic beneath the rage. She was drained as well.

She hissed and turned to grab his arm, gathering the threads of the world to her to yank them through space. She Stepped, but not before Falon’Din’s sword arced towards her. He had half a heartbeat to turn them, half a heartbeat to feel the pain of steel through his belly, and then they were falling.

“Come on, ma’nas. Focus. Focus on yourself, you are real, you are here. Focus. Can you do that for me, ma’lath? Please. Please, Ma’nas. Ma’solas.”

He was… she was there. He felt… intangible. Like he was trapped in a dream. But he was real, and she was there. Ma’Solas. My Light. He blinked, but the sensation felt… off. No relief to it. NO, there was relief, hers. She was relieved he had blinked. He did it again and she let out a quiet sob.
“There you go. That’s good! Focus, something small, something real.”

“Miwen.” That was small, and real. And… she was shining brightly before him, almost blinding in her silver beauty. He could see flashes of green within her silver, and when he brushed them, they clung to him like burrs that melted into him. He was green. Odd.

“Thranduil?”

“I’m green.”

“Yes. You’re… green. And talking. That’s good! That’s really good.” She was happy, relieved, sad, angry, happy. Happy… he felt himself slip sideways somehow, then was jolted by something within him.

“Yeah, hold onto that, ma’lath. It’s keeping you with me.”

The jawbone. It was on him, covered in blood that sparkled with the same green as him and a bit of silver of her. Blood. Because… “Oh. I died.”

“Yes… and no.”
He learned it was not hard to be dead and not. Thoughts tended to stray from him, emotions were... tantalizingly easy to get lost in. Especially hers. The jawbone she had told him to keep with him at all times tied his fea to the physical, though he had to use his will to keep himself tangible. It was... interesting. Less so with how if his attention slipped her fingers would pass through him.

It took a while, a decade according to Miwen, to learn enough control but soon it was not any more different than controlling his fea when it was housed in a physical form. Time passed differently when he could just... stop thinking for a while and start thinking again, and days had passed. Those times made Miwen worry that he would fade, so he focused harder, tried to hold onto his sense of self for longer and longer periods of time.

His self was also easily moveable. He just had to... think about where he wanted to be, and he would become there. It made Miwen’s games much more fun, though she could find him unerringly. She had another spirit, a small wisp of blue and memories that she was carefully keeping, pulling threads from it with her magic and sealing them away. It grew stronger under her attention, until it was tangible enough for him to recognize, scarred and weak as it was.

“That is Elrond’s fea.”

He felt her grief and determination. “Yes. He will sorrow, but he will survive to the end of the war.”

She glanced up at him. “You can find my dreams, you know. Visit them.”

Visiting Miwen’s dreams was... It had been a long time since he had a physical form, a fact that she dreamed about apparently. It was fascinating to slip into his role in the dream, and pleasant.

She was very, very pleased when she woke, and her bright happiness was extra reward for the adventure.

He began reaching out to other’s dreams. The Kossith that served her, the few elves she had taken under her wing. He learned to slip in unnoticed, then to affect them, then to speak to those dreaming. It became simpler and simpler to find dreamers, further and further away.

He found Celebrian’s spirit, taught her the key to keeping his form and and how to subtly influence dreams of others, she preferred to soothe nightmares away, giving the dreamers peace. He wished her peace when she thanked him for sharing his knowledge of how to survive beyond one’s body.

Shortly after that, he discovered that he could be called to dreams. Not forced, but called. His name drew his attention now, a tug on his being that gave him direction. And then it was simple to match the shape of the tug to the shape of the dreams.

The one known as Mythal was calling to him. He circled her dreams warily, staying unnoticed and untouchable as he searched out her intent. She wanted help. She wanted advice.
He could give advice.

Mythal called more and more, his advice was used and she had been able to protect her people from the war still raging. He was satisfied his advice was being used to good effect. Miwen felt… resigned to his dreaming trips. Not disapproving, but sad. She focused on the Kossith and the race of men who now hunted them for labor slaves due to their unnatural strength.

So he answered Mythal’s calls as oft as he was needed and advised and discussed, and together they managed to pull a semblance of peace together between the leaders of the warring forces. They formed a tentative truce and binding of customs, and the outright war ended, though they still fought among themselves, all seeking power.

The spirit of Elrond grew stronger, more settled and substantial, until Miwen cradled it in her hands and sighed. “Aulë knows how to sing a form into being. I need to learn so that I can re-embbody him.” The brilliant silver of her flared in resignation and grief and hope. “I need to go back and find them.”

Miwen flew as a raven to Valanor, and he went with her like a kite on a string. She had laughed, chattering in her bird form, when he had said as much. They flew to Valinor, and he used his insubstantial being to keep them from notice. It was too hard for the average person to keep him in their mind when he did not make himself memorable.

The land had changed. Mountains where there had been none before, seas lowered, forests grown. So much time had passed the very shape of the earth had been affected, though Miwen seemed to have no trouble navigating.

They travelled and searched until Miwen stopped at the base of a new mountain, yet… it burned from within. She looked at him with a satisfied hum. “Here. I think.”

She paced a little, then shrugged and knocked on the stone. “Hello? I have questions!”

They found the Valar… what was left of them. Varda had been the first to be slain, and Manwë was maddened in his grief… he had disappeared and they knew not where he went. Others had disappeared as well… or met the same fate as Varda. Those that had rebelled took to calling themself the Evanuris… separating the land into kingdoms, taking subjects from those caught between and declaring the remaining Valar to be shunned and forgotten.

Dread filled Miwen’s fea even as she convinced Aulë to teach her to sing a form, and while she learned and practiced, Thrandruil wandered the remnants of Valinor, secure in his insubstantial form. He was unnoticed and forgotten until he found a dream that interested him. Mythal called again, and he visited her dream.
She asked him to meet her, to look at an enslaved elf that she wanted to save, but needed help.

It had been a trap. He felt as if his being was being ripped apart. They had blood… his blood. They had his blood and his name and… They chanted Quenya words meant to bind him. These things combined forced him into Being enough for them to force him into a vessel they had created. Miwen’s fea screamed in panic and fear within him and ‘coming… I’m coming. Hold on!’ It hurt, every inch of the vessel burning and sensitive as they locked him into it with blood and magic. One of them touched on the silver curl of Miwen’s fea within him with a greedy flare and he couldn’t- He couldn’t let them have her! He couldn’t let them grasp her fea as they had his, take her.

It hurt and they were locking him into the physical but they were not finished, there was a gap, a way to escape. He summoned his will and took every bit of his self that was touching Miwen, every memory and emotion and silver glint of her, and he tore it away, rending his soul in the process as he shredded their bond and shoved it through the gap.

The gap disappeared, cutting her off from him, and he screamed and shook in pain… pain… and bleeding… from what he didn’t know but his being ached as a dark figure leaned over him, smiling in greedy anticipation. “Oh, it will be fun to find your secrets.”
Chapter Summary

C_L cried .... so did A&F
I listened to ‘Far From Home (The Raven) by Sam Tinnesz during the writing. —C_L

Chapter Notes

trigger warning for torture

EXTREME TRIGGER WARNING for implied rape. If you do not want to read that, the section had been marked before and after by a row of asterisks so you can skip it.

Mythal tried… she tried to ignore his screams. Falon’din promised he would not be killed, promised he would survive and would heal. This was necessary, they needed the secret to the dragon form to keep the old gods at bay, and he would survive, so she tried to ignore his screams. In truth… the screams were easier to ignore than the shuddering, muffled gasps.

She had not realized how… fond of the spirit she had become until he had started screaming. She hoped he would break soon, would give them what they needed so she could claim him and bring him under her protection.

June was enraged that they had not managed to catch the Meddler with him. She had been tied to him, should have been easy to draw into the second form prepared for her, they had her blood, had her name from the halfblood, but a split second of inattention had allowed the spirit to somehow cut her from himself, taking even her memory and sending it away.

They could not reach her through him now. June had hoped the Meddler would come after him, but Falon’Din scoffed at the idea. Was curtain the Meddler would abandon the spirit as she had done the halfblood.

And the once wise and proud spirit that taught her so much screamed.

He had told them.

It felt pointless now.

He wasn’t even sure why he had refused, only that it had felt… vital, felt as if something terrible would happen if he did.

So long he had held out, had suffered, for what? He had broken, and the suffering had been for nothing. Every breath was an agony, and there was no purpose to it.
“It is so strange to see you so meek, Pride.”

Andruil. She had watched… countless of Falon’din’s… administrations. Had admired Falon’Din’s work, he had felt her glee even through the poison they forced into his blood to keep him from calling on his magic. His stomach turned violently as her hand found his hair, tugging his head upwards. “We’re having a council tomorrow, to figure out who will keep you. I feel I have a rather strong case, do you not agree?”

He wanted to flinch from her touch, but that would only bring a knife or some other pain. There was no point to the pain any more. Her hand moved to his ear, and then was suddenly pulled away with a hiss that had him opening his eyes despite himself.

Andruil’s bow was drawn and pointed just to the side of his head, he flinched when feathers bumped his cheek. The softness was startlingly foreign. He turned his head to see and… there was a raven, black and white, sitting carefully on his shoulder. It opened its beak and a ragged, genderless voice emerged. “Once upon a time, a being that hated the sun found something fair and beautiful in their lands. They trapped them, kept them, possessed them.”

Andruil started… “What are you saying?” He could see her fingers gripping her bow tightly.

“What is this bargain?” Andruil’s eyes were wary but greed lay in her eyes.

“Do not lay claim at the council. Ensure that Mythal gains him. Do this, and I will tell you where to begin your hunt for the being you lost.” The raven ruffled its feathers.

“I will.” Andruil agreed. Readily. Eagerly. “I will ensure Mythal claims Pride, and you will tell me where to hunt for her.”

“It is done.” Acidic, hot magic washed between the raven and Andruil, and he felt relieved and unsettled as Andruil turned away from him and left. Mythal… he was to be hers…. she had tricked him… pulled him here. He never wanted this… he was happy where he had been. Visiting dreams and sharing knowledge and wisdom. But Mythal had never once taken part in Falon’Din’s games. Her attention was better than the others.

He felt soft feathers brushed his cheek again and turned his head to find the raven stared down at him, its black eyes seemed to be searching… then it flew away and he felt… lost.

Mythal had claimed him. Bound him with her will. Pride was hers but… he was broken. His magic was wild and volatile, unstable. Elgar’nan and Dirthamen were beginning to suggest that if she could not control him it would be best to put him down before it was seen as weakness on her part.

She allowed herself a moment to lapse in her composure and sigh. She did not want to destroy Pride, but she could not allow herself to be seen as weak, she had been able to help with the power she had gaine, but she could not control him, because he could not control himself. Falon’Din had truly broken him.

An acidic current of magic caught her attention and she whirled, her magic at her fingertips, only to find a black and white raven sitting on her desk and staring at her, a bone within its beak. A croaking voice seemed to come from the creature, though it did not move.
“You seek to tame Pride. A memory lingers when it is remembered not. A muscle can move without the mind.”

One of the Meddler’s creatures. They had been seen more and more as time passed. Mottled black and white creatures carrying messages and bargains. Falon’din and June hunted them but never found the Meddler. “You have a bargain? Or a message?”

The bird set the bone onto the desk. “There is an elf child that will stumble onto your territory, unclaimed, young, strong. Place it under your protection. In return, you may have a forgotten token to settle Pride.”

“The way to settle Pride in return for protecting the elf child.” It was agreeable and would bring another under her protection away from the others. “I agree.”

“It is done.” acidic magic washed from the creature and to her, a geas laid across her aura. It would disappear when the bargain was completed. The bird pecked the bone, and then flew away.

Mythal knew Falon’din would be angry that she had accepted a bargain from the Meddler but… she would not be the first. She stepped forward and picked up the bone. It looked to be a wolf’s jawbone, dark with age, hung on a simple string. No enchantments within.

This had better work.

He knew… he knew his life was better than most. He was given his own room while others slept in the slave hall. Mythal didn’t demand anything… yet. Her will was still burned into him, he could feel it strangling his being. It was wrong. He felt… wrong. The body he was trapped in fit wrong, looked wrong, was wrong. Too small. Too weak. Wrong.

He wrapped the wrong fingers around the bone Mythal had given him. It felt right. He closed his eyes and turned his attention inwards, as was his habit when idle moments were available. Mythal’s will burned like a blue brand over his aura, digging deeper with every reflexive struggle. And he could not help but struggle. Even when he wanted to… settle, to make things easier for himself, he could not help but struggle.

His pride would not let him. He called her Mythal, even when her will demanded ‘Mistress’ as the others called her. She had rescinded the command when he had begun bleeding from his nose as her will burned his aura and still he had refused. That is what they called him now. Pride. He had another name… he knew he did… Falon’din had said it as he… he shook himself and gripped the bone tighter.

It did no good to dwell on the past. Right now, he wanted to see exactly how Mythal’s Will sat on his being. Pride they had named him, Pride he would be. The pain of his past life did not serve him, and so he locked it away.

He was being difficult. She knew it was not his nature to bend, but… she could not be seen as allowing him to defy her. Pride he may be, but he belonged to her. And the thought brought her problem to full circle. If he was not hers, she could call and ask for advice, for help. But he was no
longer a free spirit, he could not advise her.

Oh.

But he could. A higher position... something where he could choose and act as well as he could within their rules. She had seen him fight, had lost several guards before she had ordered he be left alone. Perhaps... perhaps she could make him a captain, to train her forces. If they fought as well as he did, she would be stronger, and perhaps his pride would settle at having a semblance of command.

Andruil had finally caught the spirit she had been hunting, caught and bound it to a form and named it Ghilan’nan. She had bonded with her. Ghilan’nan served by Andruil’s side faithfully and obediently.

If her Pride could not serve by commanding, she might be forced to bind him so.

It had started fairly innocent, meals shared, games played, time spent pleasantly. But, as it ever seemed, there was a catch. She had ordered him to- to bond with her. He had been her general, her advisor, her friend, for centuries but it had not been enough for her, her control over him too tenuous for her ‘liking’. She had ordered him to bond with her, and logic told him to comply... but he could not, would not. He defied her until her will had begun to shred apart his aura and he had fallen to the floor, seizing and bleeding as he had resisted the binding of her will.

She had stopped once she realized he would destroy himself rather than obey, and had taken back the command. But he was injured in spirit and body, her marks on his face inflamed and bleeding and his aura ragged.

She had had her slaves return him to his room to heal.

But...

His struggle against her will had shredded his aura, and when he focused he could see the way to slip out of her binding.

It hurt, but everything hurt. A little more pain did not matter. He pulled and burned and fought, and he felt blood drip from his face as he tore her will from him.

It was an ill thought action, there was no plan for after as he knelt by his bed and panted and gasped, blood dripping from his face and his aura raw and aching. A wisp of acidic magic had him forcing himself to raise his head.

A raven. Black and white. The same that had made the deal with Andruil. He had heard of it since, the Meddler’s messenger, dealing and bargaining with the evanuris. Why was it here? With him?

It opened its beak and a ragged voice croaked out. “A wolf runs free and proud.”

“A… Bargain?” He gasped the ritual words.

“To take you to safety, you must free the elf named Shadow.”

He could hear footsteps running, coming for him. Mythal would have felt him burn her from
himself. “I will free them in return to being taken to safety.” He promised through gritted teeth.

“It is done.” Acidic magic washed over him, laying a gentle geas against the wound of his aura, and then the raven touched him, there was a gut wrenching shift of magic, and he was alone, kneeling in the middle of a grassy field.

Healed.

Free.

He wasted no time in finding the elf, Banal’ras, the shadow, and had freed him from June’s Will. The spell was gentler now that he knew how to work it. The geas lifted from his aura, leaving him to choose his own purpose. Banal’ras dropped to one knee, his head bowed, named him his ‘Lord’ and Pride shook his head. “You are free.”

They needed a sanctuary. A place to stay, to hide and lick their wounds. To… bring others. He was going to steal as many as he could from the Evanuris. He was going to free everyone he could.

Through it all, Banal’ras followed him loyally like the shadow he was named, the first freed working to free others.

Fen’harel they called him… an intended insult, yet it had only made him grin… in wolfish Pride. It was the only thing that felt right. He was the wolf who hunted alone, who took their slaves from them in the dark of the night.

* * *

He freed them from Andruil’s fields when he could. She so enjoyed hunting her ‘Halla’. He snuck in at night, during her absences, any chance he could to burn her will from them and lead them to safety.

He had found a child, alone, marked with Andruil’s ‘halla’ mark. His instincts had warned him to be wary, but he had been too eager to free the child.

A trap. An arrow laced with magebane struck him when he tried to reach the child. Andruil taunted
him with the fact that she knew the sweetest bait to bring the dreaded wolf to her snares as she bound him with her horrid void chains. He was caught. He bared his teeth at her when she grabbed his face, forcing him to look at her as she straddled him.

“Oh, what to do with a wild wolf? I know a collar will not hold you.” She bent and ran her nose along his throat and he felt his stomach turn at her touch. “Perhaps a bond like my precious Ghilan’nan can hold a wild wolf.” She seemed to revel in his struggle, in his revulsion and he could feel her trying to coax out his aura. “You would be a prize.”

She tried her best. And failed. He would not release his being to her. Would not let hers within him. She was furious, though she was not so enraged she could not laugh when he vomited.

“I’ll just have to keep trying, won’t I?” She seemed pleased by the idea as she adjusted her armor. “I’d say it would only take a year. You’ve been stealing my halla, it is only fair you serve me in return.”

“I have rights to him.” A hoarse voice made Andruil whirl and draw her bow. It was Anaris, a Forgotten One met only in passing, respectful sidestepping of the other or polite nods when the Meddler’s bargains brought them in proximity. “He has committed deeds, and I claim my right to see him dealt with.”

He had done no such thing! He avoided the Forgotten Ones respectfully, and they left him alone in return. But he remained silent, watching, subtly trying to ease himself from the chains. He could not shift within them.

Anaris and Andruil argued, scrabbling over him as if he was a thing to be possessed, then drew their weapons and began dueling. It was as Anaris cast a spell that he realized the shape of the incident. A scent of acidic magic. The Meddler’s geas. “Her belt is loose!” He called out, and Anaris did not hesitate to strike at the weakness.

She fell, and Anaris turned to leave, the acidic scent dissipating from him, his end of the bargain held. The Forgotten One turned tired eyes onto him, regarding him for a long moment before it left. He was still trapped, and Andruil would wake. He could hear her breath still, she lived, but slept away her wound. He could see the frightened eyes of some of Andruil’s ‘Halla’ watching, but he knew they would not dare draw near to help him.

One of them gasped, and he looked up to see a massive wolf padding towards him, its fur mottled black and white. One of the Meddler’s. He faced it, waiting for its ritual greeting words to start a bargain, but it did not speak. It snarled at the ‘goddess’ viscously, at first he believed it would attack but instead it raked its claws across Andruil’s unconscious body, ripping her belt and keys from her, as well as her armor and flesh, before it picked up the keys in its massive jaws and carefully placed them across his legs. Still, it did not offer a bargain, and he did not know the consequence of asking for one out of turn. The Meddler was… They just were. The laws they followed were different, but still absolute, old enough to be forgotten by all else but them.

The wolf huffed and touched the top of his head with its muzzle, and he felt acidic healing magic wash over him, acidic and… angry and apologetic? It stepped back and spoke raggedly. “I was not swift enough, wolf. I sorrow.” And then it turned away and stood over him as if guarding him.

It took much straining and effort, but he managed to unlock the horrid chains, and as soon as he did, the Meddler’s wolf took the chains in its jaws and bounded away, leaving him with Andruil’s unconscious form. He hesitated… tempted to kill the Huntress. He could… she was felled already. He wanted to kill her, even if it would not last.
But to do so would start another war, the others scrabbling over her territory and slaves until blood soaked the streets. Falon’Din would ensure it. He snarled in disgusted rage and shifted, snatching up the child that had been used to lure him in and running.

Later… much later he learned that Andruil had found her Void Chains… chewed through… they blamed him.

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They began to worship him… the Rebel God… he hated it. Hated that they revered him, left offerings for him, called him their god. But it was useful. They prayed to him, he could feel their calls when they dreamed, could find those who longed for freedom and glean information. As one of the gods, he was afforded a bit of protection by the laws the Evanuris had themselves laid out. He managed to crash their balls and slip away with a slave or two, tricking others into bets or deals and claiming others ‘honestly’. He gained a reputation for being a trickster with his rigged bets and strategies, and the Evanuris delighted in it in their perverse way, trying their best to get the upper hand on him, trying to trap him in his own words and deals.

He always honored his deals. His reputation as a trickster was balanced by that fact, made it seem more enticing to deal with him. The only being who was more absolute with their dealings was the Meddler, who rumor whispered favored him. He doubted it, the being went centuries without sending a messenger to him.

Except for Falon’Din, who smirked at him and would laugh into his wine when he could not help but turn away.

He had to participate in their balls and Parties… if only to enforce the useful titles he had been given. He had to bring guests, beautiful guests to hang on his arm, to give him the rougieish reputation he needed to dance along the edge of the rules of the Evanuris, one of them, but not. Sometimes he managed to show up with one guest, and leave with two. The scandal solidified his reputation.

Mythal approached him many times during these… parties. Never outright apologizing for her betrayals, but often saying that she wished him well, which, for an Evanuris, was tantamount to an apology. She began asking advice once more… and a tentative friendship was formed.

Sylaise began speaking to him regularly, they circled each other warily, dancing with words and games, testing each other out. She seemed intent on gathering every elf she could under her will, but those he had taken from her were never pursued, and they said she treated them well and were the easiest to acclimate to freedom. He could work with that.
Falon’din started yet another war. It was a bloodbath. The Meddler’s creatures were spotted within battlefields but would disappear before Falon’din or June could capture them. June and Falon’Din had been allies at the break of the war, but when both of their efforts to catching the messengers clashed and allowed it to escape, they turned on each other.

June was obsessed with wanting to find the Meddler, to bind them. He had often approached him in order to subtly question how much he knew of the mysterious being. Falon’din wanted the threat they posed removed. Their fighting over the Meddler’s creatures allowed a shift in attention, and the war ended. Whether that was the Meddler’s design or not he didn’t know, only that many were relieved.

One of the Meddler’s creatures found him after, and silently laid a book at his feet before leaving. A book, filled with the half mad scribblings of… a genius. A book filled with the secrets to magics he had not known could exist.
He found a mountain… he was expected to build a stronghold and the mountain felt right. So there he built his base of operation, his fortress… his home… it felt like his. It felt as right as the wolf bone necklace he kept. During its building he studied the Meddler's book, some writings half finished as if missing pieces.

It became a way to pass his idle time, puzzling out the missing pieces, experimenting and filling the gaps with his own findings. Crude drawings gave way to him trying to improve upon them… he discovered he enjoyed drawing… drawing gave way to painting… and eventually even more complicated forms of art. Sylaise's invention of the veil fire made… so many things possible. She used it for light, he used it to imbed the memory of knowledge, visions, even keys in its false light.

And… he found the way to end things. A risky plan, there was no way to know how it would end… but if the evanuris warred in earnest… well, better an uncertain end then a complete and bloody end.

So he set things in place, a failsafe, that something might linger if the evanuris warred in earnest.

It would take time…. a lot of time to set things into place in such a way as not to alert them of his movements. So he would have to move slowly, divert their attention, distract them by taking their pawns as he moved to topple their kings. A game. Chess.

He acquired a new agent… Felassan… the mage came to him with a mottled raven on his shoulder, a recommendation from the Meddler. What did they want? Their bargains made no sense, had no pattern except that more people lived than might have.

Felassan could walk through dreams as he could, and the skill was useful.

Time passed, he freed those he could, caused trouble for the evanuris, and the future stretched on in an exhausting vision of endless struggle.

Until…

Falon'Din. Again.

He murdered Mythal. Mythal, who for all her faults, was the best of them.

She was murdered, Andruil scrambled to claim new territory and Elgar'nan raged, lashing out at any and all and Dirthamen stood by his brother and…

The Dread Wolf was angry.

It was time for this to end.
He had done it. Had sealed the evanuris from their slaves. And had doomed the world. An overlooked page, a smudged word, and… how can a people made of magic last when it is sealed from them?

He had used all he had to raise the veil, he wandered his creation, the fade as his vessel slept. It felt right.

The flexibility of the fade called to him and he roamed it in his wolf form, trying to help where he could, howling in helpless rage and grief when he saw what became of his people, of the world.

The Meddler was silent.

Ages passed… and his people fell further. He could feel the vessel he was bound to was nearly healed, nearly ready to wake. So he formed a plan.

Felassan betrayed him, after countless millennia of faithful service, his true colors showed… the Slow Arrow was and always had been the Meddler’s… he could not allow the betrayal… his heart hurt when he met his once friend when he slept… he was ready… ready to deliver the blow… make it quick… painless.

“The slow arrow breaks in the wolf’s jaws.” A serene voice gave him pause. Wisdom, one of the spirits who followed him as he dreamed, who he counted as a friend.

“I must.”

“The Meddler would ask that you do not.” The spirit said.

“A bargain?” Had his friend also been taken by the enigmatic being?

“No. A request.” Wisdom sent a curl of reassurance. “No strings, no binding, a simple request. They ask that you spare him.”

A request. He… owed the being. They had rescued him once, and had asked nothing.

“Very well.” He stepped away from Felassan, who had remained silent the whole time. “But I do not want to see you again. Leave.”

Felassan slipped away, and Wisdom gave him another curl of reassurance and he scented a wisp of acid leaving her. “I do not follow the Meddler, dear friend. I made a bargain, and my end is done.”
When he woke in the physical… he felt heavy… burdened… under a heavy wet blanket trying desperately to breath. Desperately trying to breathe, to move, to remember how to eat and drink, how to be physical. Banal’ras did what he could, but the air was lifeless, the people blank, the world… was dying, and he was weak. And he was desperate. And desperate men… do desperate things.

He had failed… again. The veil had been ripped open… It should have never happened. The magister should be dead. His orb was nowhere to be found. He did not have enough power to seal the breach as he was… he decided to wait and listen to rumors, until he was forced to flee the growing breach himself.

“There were survivors.”

“Two… a Qunari, possibly a mercenary or bodyguard… a girl.”

“No, fully grown just small…noble.”

“…with a fade green mark on her hand that crackled in time with the breach.”

“Guilty.”

Two innocents… caught in his mistakes… the girl possibly held his anchor within her palm. It would possibly be how she survived the explosion. He needed it back. He approached the seething mess of humanity and allowed them to take his staff when he offered his services. They were desperate, and desperate people do desperate things, like allow an ‘apostate’ into their camp and to their prisoners.

The pair were as opposite as could be. Two beings trapped by his mistakes, one, a… unique, giant qunari that watched him silently, menacingly, as he knelt over the girl, who was small and unconscious, his magic eating away at her flesh.

He tried to remove the anchor, to take it back, feeling… unsettled beneath the silent qunari’s gaze as he tried to take back what was his.

It would not come to him, had woven and sunk into the being of the girl, who was somehow… keeping it from him. After a particularly forceful tug at his anchor, the girl whimpered in her sleep and the qunari finally spoke, his voice a deep, hoarse growl. “You’re hurting her. Stop.”

Solas pretended to ignore the blank shadow of a person, but stopped trying to take back what was his, and instead tried to contain it so it would not consume the vessel before he could figure out how to reclaim it.
He did what he could, and then he was ‘asked’ to go help the soldiers fight the demons spilling from a nearby rift. He did what he could, feeling the strain of stretching his weakened aura in order to fight the corrupted spirits. He was nearing exhaustion when he felt the call of his own magic. The dark qunari dropped the girl at a safe distance and threw himself into the fight. The tiny human was a fair shot, and the massive qunari was strong, and between their combined efforts they quickly defeated the demons.

He could see the girl struggling, practically crawling towards the rift, determined despite her weakness. He went to her, wanting the rift healed quickly, and was forced to lift her up and carry her to the rift and push the anchor to it.

She screamed in agony, but the rift was sealed. She went limp against him, small and… right in his arms. Right… as if she belonged there. He had the odd urge to clutch her to him, as if she was…

He dropped her, stepping back and away. What was this?

The girl crumpled to the ground, small and weak, but she was not irate at him. Instead she looked up at him, her gray eyes knowing and amused even as her qunari rushed to fuss over her. She…

She…

Felt Right .

Who was she?

Chapter End Notes

Full circle, people. Back to Virtually Faded!

End Notes

playlists as collated Celtic_Lass: Emma and Damon
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5566iYezupZ389sIpXlr0u?si=3lMHxgJ1QW-Qov_a0veIVQ

Emma and Solas
https://open.spotify.com/playlist/11v5Got5hR0ljrhF8sfVe7?si=l9y6XdZESuWpRfw6uKsEgQ

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