### The Hobbitess

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**The Hobbitess**

by yeaka
Summary

A retelling of The Hobbit, from the point of view of Ms. Bilbo Baggins, who travels with her loving dwarves to reclaim the Lonely Mountain and has many an erotic mishap along the way.

Notes

A/N: So I’m actually going to try and rewrite the entire Hobbit book (bookverse events with movieverse knowledge, condensed and altered to go easy on my poor brain) as fem!Bilbo erotica.

Disclaimer: I don’t own The Hobbit or any of its contents, and I’m not making any money off this.
An Unexpected Party

In a hole in the ground, there lives a hobbit.

Not just any hobbit, and not just any hole. It’s more of a house, actually, a beautiful but very small home, stuffed beneath a fat green hill in the meadows of the Shire. The house is marked by a perfectly round door, painted just as green as the grass it sits in the middle of, with a yellow brass handle that’s polished to shine in the light. Beyond that door, the house is very comfortable: the walls are paneled, the floors are tiled and carpeted, maps are hung amply, and pegs for hats and coats are everywhere, as the hobbit is rather fond of visitors.

By hobbit standards, it’s a lovely home, tiny or no. Hobbits are, after all, small creatures, with big hair feet and a peaceful, ordinary countenance. The hobbit who owns this particular hole, otherwise known as Bag End, is well off enough to keep everything clean and organized. She’s a Baggins, which means she’s very reputable, known for doing exactly what one might expect, and she comes from a very long line of well-to-do hobbits, her father very much respected and her mother perhaps a little less so. Her father was the Baggins, her mother a Took. Belladonna Took was, like her infamous Old Took father, prone to mysterious and altogether too-unexpected things, which for a hobbit is very strange. But she was a lovely woman nonetheless, who happened to have very odd friends at just the right times, perhaps most notably when her son told her that she was not a son at all, and any wizarding help would be very much appreciated.

But all that wizarding business was a very long time ago. All in all, Bilbo’s life has been wholly more predictable, which is the ideal hobbit way of things.

On a particularly unremarkable day, Bilbo finds herself outside, sitting on the little bench just short of her gardens’ fence. With a soft wood cushion under her rear and the lush greenery all around her, it’s a perfect day to sit and admire the sky. One of her favourite pastimes is to sit and try to send smoke rings up to join the clouds, although, of course, they never make it quite so far. She rests the end of her long, curved pipe against her lips and sucks in a deep breath. When she releases it, puffing out a tiny smoke ring, her breasts push too tightly against her vest, and she sighs, thinking she might have to change if she’s going to engage in a proper smoke. Instead, she bends to unclasp the buttons—the white blouse beneath is looser and should do the trick, though her trousers, now that she’s looking at them properly, will need a bit of work: the seam along her inner left leg is splitting. Though Bilbo’s never been a particularly thin hobbit—indeed, most are short and stout, with a fair amount of fat around the middle—she has been getting a bit pudgier as of late, having spent a good deal of time in the kitchen with her latest seed-cake recipe. The upshot is that she may have finally gotten it right yesterday evening, but the downside is that, evidently, she’ll need to break out her sewing kit again.

Once she finishes opening her vest, she straightens out, only to squeak and nearly jump off her bench. A very tall, gangly old man is standing on the other side of her fence. He’s dressed in faded grey robes and a pointed hat, with a long, white beard and his gnarled fingers wrapped around a wooden staff. For a moment, she simply stares at him, then remembers in time her manners and greets, “Good morning.”

“What do you mean?” the man asks. “Do you wish me a good morning, or mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this morning; or that it is a morning to be good on?”

This is, of course, a very strange thing to say, but Bilbo, having always enjoyed a bit of company and a good riddle of words, replies simply, “All of them at once.” It is, after all, a very beautiful morning: the sun is out, the birds are flittering across the sky, and all of her flowers are doing quite
well. Having gained the room to breathe, Bilbo lifts her pipe back to her lips, draws in a deep breath, and blows out a proper smoke ring, much larger and impressive.

The man says, “Very pretty,” to which Bilbo smiles proudly.

She feels inclined to offer, “Will you join me?” That is the proper thing to do when guests arrive, however odd they may be. But the man only lifts his bushy eyebrows, even when she holds out her pipe in invitation.

“Unfortunately, I have no time for it. I’m arranging an adventure, you see, and I’m searching for someone to share it with.”

“In Hobbiton?” Bilbo can’t help but laugh. Clearly, the man must be joking, but he only looks at her with the same level expression, and after a moment, it becomes obvious that he isn’t joking at all. That changes everything around, and Bilbo’s mouth drops into a frown. Adventures are exactly the sort of thing that ruins reputations, and Bilbo, having no such inclination to ruin her perfectly good name, tells him, “I can’t imagine you’ll find anyone to share in such a thing. They’re a nasty, uncomfortable business. Make you late for dinner. I can’t imagine you’ll have any luck around here at all.”

Having explained a thing or two, Bilbo returns to puffing on her pipe. She expects the old man to move on with his search—obviously, she’s not a good candidate—but he only stands there, smiling almost fondly down at her.

So Bilbo lowers her pipe and climbs off her bench, strolling calmly over to her mailbox. Opening it, she sticks her pipe into the corner of her mouth and thumbs through her letters, clearly ignoring the man, and frankly, manners aside, hoping he’ll go away.

But he continues to stand there. So Bilbo repeats, a tad firmer, “Good morning.”

“What a lot of things you use good morning for!” Now the man looks on the verge of chuckling, which is quite the opposite effect of what Bilbo was aiming for.

“I’m sorry, my dear sir, but—” and then she has to pause, hesitating, because the laughter in his eyes is vaguely familiar, and on top of that, it seems rude to forcefully shoo someone away when she doesn’t even know their name. So she pauses to say, “I don’t believe I caught your name.”

“Gandalf!” the man spouts, now looking mildly exasperated. “You do know the name, although it seems you’ve forgotten I belong to it. I am Gandalf, and Gandalf means... me. And of course, I do know who you are, Ms. Bilbo Baggins. To think that I should live to be good-morninged by Belladonna Took’s daughter, as though I were selling buttons at the door!”

And then, all at once, it comes rushing back to her, because of course, how could she have forgotten? It’s been a while, yes, and she was very small when last she saw him, but there are very few wizards who come through the Shire. Immediately, Bilbo feels sorry for her flippant remark. Gandalf has done her a great service, on top of always entertaining her and her friends with the most splendid of fireworks, although it seems he’s quite a bit odder a fellow than she remembers from her youth.

And now that she does remember, all she can manage to say is, “Dear me.”

“Dear you indeed,” Gandalf chuckles. “I suppose you remember me now?”

Flushing lightly across the cheeks, it’s all Bilbo can do not to spew forth how much she misses those fireworks. They were grand things, and although Gandalf is responsible for a rather large sum of
nonsense—sweeping folks off into the Blue, for instance—she nonetheless looks up at him kindly. “I
certainly do.”

Which gives him room to suggest, “It’s settled then. For the sake of your old grandfather Took and
poor Belladonna, I will give you what you asked for.”

This is a confusing statement, as Bilbo hasn’t asked for anything. “But I didn’t—”

“Yes, you did, twice now, if not in so many words. Yes, this should be quite amusing for me, and
very good for you. The adventure is yours.”

“The adventure?” Of course, she asked for no such thing, but as she looks at him with big, round
eyes, he only grins wider, clearly having made up his mind. “But I don’t”— flustered, she takes a
step back, her mail clutched tightly in her fingers. There doesn’t seem to be anything to say. Gandalf
is evidently far madder than she remembers, and there doesn’t seem to be anything for it other than to
squeak, “Do come for tea some time!” and abruptly turn on her heel. It’s terribly rude, of course, to
leave in the middle of a conversation like that, especially with someone who’s known you since you
were very tiny and was very good to you in a pinch, but it seems that staying will only get her into a
larger mess. She simply doesn’t know what to do, and before long she’s walking back into her little
hobbit hole, smiling hollowly and waving before shutting the door. Even though Gandalf’s all the
way down the path, it feels like she’s slammed the door in his face.

Feeling very nervous and unduly cruel, Bilbo stalks back into the burrows of her home, needing
some good, strong tea herself, and perhaps some time in bed to make up for such a terrible morning.

By tomorrow’s evening, Bilbo’s all but forgotten the oddness of yesterday’s morning. Although it
was a very out-of-the-ordinary thing, it was an isolated incident. As Gandalf made no further
appointments, she had nothing to write down, and therefore it’s something to be forgotten. It’s just
reaching dusk when anything new at all happens: a loud knock on her door. Bilbo startles in her
largest chair by the fire, looking around in surprise.

Since she’s only in her smallest nightgown—no sense dressing up for a nice cup of tea around the
house—she has to grab a robe off the nearest peg on her way to the door. She’s still tying the sash
around her waist when she tugs the door open, only to have to crane her neck back to peer up at a
very large man that may as well be twice her size.

Thick and tall and outlined with the sort of muscles rarely seen on hobbits, the man is silhouetted
nicely in the setting light. He has an ample grey beard swept across his chest and over his shoulders,
but the top of his head is shaved bald and bearing an array of markings that Bilbo can’t see much of,
no matter how much she tries to stand on her tip toes. Of course, she stops as soon as she realizes
what she’s doing. As attractive as tattoos might be, it’s not the sort of thing a respectable hobbit stares
at, so she schools herself into burrowing the attraction.

Before she can greet him, the man dips his head too fast to be of much use. His expression is serious,
gruff, like the sort of rugged woodsman a hobbit lass might have naughty daydreams about and
never tell a soul. Then he goes and makes it worse by grunting, “Dwalin, at your service.”

It isn’t often that thick, handsome men show up at her door and offer to serve her, so Bilbo’s caught
mildly tongue tied as she squeaks back, “Bilbo Baggins, at yours!”

The man—Dwalin, it seems—nods bluntly and glances over her shoulder. He’s a dwarf, she thinks,
if her knowledge of other creatures from other lands is at all worth anything, and she can’t imagine
having anything in her little hobbit hole at all worthy of a dwarf’s interest.
Yet politeness—and perhaps her own piqued interest—pushes her to say, “I was just about to make tea; would you like some?” It feels like a line out of some terrible schoolgirl fantasy, and she can feel her cheeks turning a little pink at the thought of what ‘tea’ could mean. To be fair to her, ‘service’ is just as vague. Unfortunately, she can’t tell much from the way his eyes scan her; she has little experience with men and none at all with dwarves, and her robe’s done a fine job of hiding her figure. The Took in her almost wishes she’d answered the door in her nightgown, but then, of course, any other hobbits that might’ve been walking by would think her most inappropriate, and then the dwarf might’ve not been so charmingly polite and instead skipped right to the ravishing currently going on in Bilbo’s head.

Finally, Dwalin takes a step forward, and Bilbo hurriedly shuffles out of the way to let him inside. He has to duck under her doorway, which gives her a strange sort of thrill—other than Gandalf just the other day, she’s never seen a man so big as to have to duck in a hobbit hole before.

The dwarf still peers around while he’s inside. Bilbo’s ruined head does briefly entertain the thought that he’s looking for other scantily clad hobbits, but Bag End is no harem. She has to summon quite a bit of courage and discipline to step in front of him and lead the way only to the dining room, where she offers him a seat at the table and sets to check her boiling water. He looks like he could fit a fair bit inside him, so she imagines she’ll have to boil another round if this is going to last until nightfall.

She’s just serving Dwalin a seed-cake on one of her mother’s best plates—leaning over the table perhaps a little too suggestively as she does so, so he gets an eyeful of cleavage down her now-slightly-parted robe and skimpy nightgown—when she hears another knock on the door. Puzzled all over again, Bilbo straightens back out, and Dwalin too-easily averts his eyes.

She bids him a short, “Excuse me,” and heads towards the door. Somehow, she isn’t expecting what she finds on the other side.

Another dwarf, shorter and fatter and with a plush white beard billowing all down his front, bows to her with a kindly smile. He looks much older than the other dwarf, without any tattoos, but she imagines they must know each other, because otherwise it’d be simply too much of a coincidence. And then, of course, she has to wonder why anyone would send dwarves to her door—until, anyway, she thinks of Gandalf.

Gandalf and his mad adventure, which makes Bilbo seize up on the spot. The dwarf carries on as though everything is perfectly normal. He spots Dwalin’s cloak, now hung on a hanger by the door, and says, “I see they’ve begun to arrive already.” Which makes Bilbo wonder they? “Balin, at your service.”

Bilbo mumbles numbly, “Bilbo Baggins, at yours.” Suddenly, the service they offer doesn’t sound nearly so enticing, and Bilbo considers, for one quick flash of a moment, shutting the door on Balin, for a proper hobbit lass certainly doesn’t let two strange men possibly offering adventures into her home.

This would, of course, still leave her with Dwalin, who perhaps she could salvage an evening out of. But that, naturally, makes her feel guilty for not offering Balin the same, so she only sighs, “Will you have some tea?”

“Don’t mind if I do,” he chirps brightly, before shuffling right in. This time she takes his cloak at the door. As soon as it’s off of him, he’s heading right off to the dining room, where Dwalin stands up with a smile twisting his normally solemn face.

The way the two greet each other, it’s obvious that they’re close. But Bilbo isn’t prone to such rudeness as eavesdropping, so she mostly leaves them to their talk and only catches a few of the
louder snippets that carry. While she’s off fetching a larger plate of seed-cakes from the pantry, she overhears that the two of them are brothers, something that shouldn’t excite her nearly so much as it does, and that they’ve traveled a long way to be here, presumably on Gandalf’s word. When she brings them out her plate of seed-cakes, Balin smiles appreciatively at her and Dwalin snatches one up. Balin is obviously the more gentle of the two, Dwalin the one possessing brute strength. As deserving as both qualities are, Balin is the closer fit to hobbit nature, so Bilbo perches on a seat beside him, ready to ask all the proper questions, like how his day has been, what the weather’s been like, and what two big strong brothers like them are doing in such an innocent little hobbit’s home.

But the door sounds again, and Bilbo has to slip out of her seat, hurrying over and fully expecting Gandalf. She’s going to have mixed feelings to express to him. On the one hand, she doesn’t at all appreciate being recruited for an adventure that clearly isn’t a good fit for her. On the other hand, she does appreciate the gesture of giving her two handsome men to feed, but of course, she can’t possibly accept them, and if he’s looking for some sort of pleasure-slave or concubine to travel with a pack of brutish Dwarven men, he’ll most certainly have to look somewhere else. (Not that she would be so rude as to shout that right away, of course; naturally, she’d have to politely listen to his offer first, and hear about what her duties would be and what sort of things would be provided for her to wear, and how much she could expect them to service her back in return.)

It still isn’t Gandalf at the door. When she swings the handle open, she finds two more dwarves on her doorstep, both smaller than the last two—more about her size, in fact, if a bit taller.

Except that they’re both exceedingly handsome, so much so that Bilbo’s cheeks instantly set on fire. The first one tells her, “Kíli, at your service.” With an array of long, dark brown hair and just a bit of scruff around his chin and upper lip, this dwarf looks not only younger than his predecessors, but more vivid and beautiful. The one next to him can’t be much older, and is blond with only slightly thicker scruff and intricate braids around his face.

The second one says, “And Fíli,” but doesn’t repeat the rest, although, naturally, Bilbo can’t help but hope he’s very much at her service too. In her whole life, Bilbo’s not sure she’s ever seen anyone so incredibly attractive, although, as she’s frequently been told, she doesn’t exactly have ‘the normal’ hobbit tastes.

With her thighs nearly trembling and threatening to rub together beneath the cover of her robes, Bilbo opens the door wider and murmurs, “Come in, please.” They both give her wide, charming smiles, and step right in. She doesn’t even have to direct them—they spot the others and head right off to their friends, while Bilbo follows dazedly and tries not to picture being contracted to pleasure them on the road of an adventure. If the other two are brothers, these must be as well—despite their colouring, there’s a degree of similarities, particularly in the way they move and talk. Being squished between them is possibly the most erotic thing Bilbo can think of and easily the most inappropriate, and she tries to put the thought right out of her head as she shuffles away to prepare them tea.

Partially because it’s growing very hot in her home with the big, sweaty bodies of four dwarves and the constant steam of boiling water, and partially because she might just be hoping they find her even one tenth as alluring as she finds them, Bilbo sheds her robe. She shamefully hangs it up on a peg by the kitchen and brings Kíli and Fíli tea in just her tiny nightgown, which barely makes it halfway down her thighs and shows off the bulk of her breasts. It clings to her middle when she moves, draping over each smooth patch of skin, and she’s bizarrely grateful she wore her best one today. As she bends over to place their tray in the middle of the table, Fíli’s eyes dart sideways at her and Kíli’s go straight down her cleavage. Dwalin joins in with the ogling, though Balin only blows on his tea. Which, perhaps, is for the best—she only has three holes, anyway.

As soon as she’s thought it, she’s burning red and scolding herself—this is simply scandalous. Her
Bilbo Baggin's ancestors would be rolling in their graves.

The Took might be laughing, though, and Bilbo tries to remind herself that she’s perfectly entitled to what she likes in the sanctity of her own mind; it’s her words and actions she must keep proper.

...Which she’s hardly doing in her current nightgown, but then, she can’t help it if she happened to be dressed so wantonly just when four dwarves popped up on her doorstep.

She’s standing before the dining room with her empty tray, wondering whether to try and slip onto the bench beside Kili or Fili, when the bell rings again. She puts down the tray immediately and heads off, ready to whine to Gandalf that this really isn’t playing fair.

Just her luck. This time, when she opens the door, it isn’t one wizard at all, but five dwarves. Bilbo has to leap back from the door, yelping, because the front three were leaning against the wood when they knocked, and the back two seem to have knocked the rest in. They all go tumbling down to her floor, the one in the middle nearly landing on her feet. When he looks up, she’s sure he can see up her skirt, and she hastily shoves her hands down over it to hold the shimmering fabric tightly against the v of her legs. The dwarf grins warmly all the same, announcing, “Dori, at your service!”

“Nori, at yours,” the dwarf on Dori’s right says, grinning rather more lecherously than Dori is. Where Dori’s hair is white and drawn back in an elaborate set of braids, Nori’s is brown and quaffed into three triangles.

On Dori’s left, a smaller dwarf with flat brown hair and a cute smile adds, “And Ori.”

“Glóin!” one of the dwarves on top announces, this one bigger and with a giant red beard.

He has to elbow the grey haired one beside him before that dwarf asks, “What?”

“Introduce yourself!”

“What?”

“Introduce yourself!”

Shaking his head, the grey-haired dwarf spots Bilbo and says, “Ah, hello, there! Óin, at your service.”

Bilbo, feeling horribly unequipped for this many improper visitors at once, mumbles weakly, “Bilbo Baggins, at yours and your families.”

“This is the family,” Dori says, as he tries to push himself up, before looking over his shoulder to bark, “Except these two! Off you get!”

Óin starts digging in his pocket for something, but Glóin does scramble off, which leaves Nori to clamber to his feet. He then sidles up to Bilbo, his eyes hungrily eyeing her exposed body, and he takes her hand, shaking it tersely as he coos, “Like I said, Nori’s the name, and I’m quite pleased to make your lovely acquaintance, my dear—”

“Oh, leave the poor girl alone!” Dori insists, already shoving Nori out of the way and down the hall. Óin and Glóin follow, Ori lingering behind just long enough to bow his head to her. It leaves Bilbo standing, dumbfounded, at the door, wondering how in the world Gandalf expects her to please nine dwarves.

He can’t possibly, of course. There must be some other reason he’s dumping them all on her, although she can’t for the life of her understand what. Even if it’s only for other domestic things,
Bilbo’s hardly equipped to feed so many or clean after them or even handle something so small and specific as tummy rubs times nine. And she has absolutely no interest in ‘dwarvish’ things, judging by their general talk—mining sounds a messy business, she couldn’t imagine being a warrior like Dwalin or even a scribe in the sort of stuffy, underground places Balin describes, and the way Fíli and Kíli talk about archery and swords makes her chest beat nervously. She can only hope they won’t start fighting in her home.

With the addition of so many others, Bilbo has her work cut out for her. She runs through a vast supply of tea leaves, but some of them want ale, which she’s not entirely certain she should break out with them; she’s having enough trouble keeping her head straight as it is. But in the end, serving them what they want is easier than having a whole exasperating discussion with nine different men, so she gives them what they like. Dori, at least, helps her with the tea, but Glóin wants coffee, which is an entirely different thing. Ori and Óin set right into the food, and Bilbo’s whole evening is quickly swallowed into running back and forth, trying to be a good host to entirely too many strangers.

When the door bell rings again, she’s nearly in tears—all the seed-cakes are gone and she simply doesn’t have the beer Balin wants, and Nori throws all of her sausages around his shoulder like a rope, getting them thoroughly dirty on his stained clothes, though he continually stuffs them into his mouth anyway. She knows she has to answer the door, but to get there she has to squeeze out of the pantry, right between Fíli and Kíli, which indulges far too many of her fantasies, and feeling their firm bodies against her curves, if only for that short, unassuming moment, makes her feel hot. A louder knock bangs again, and she all but runs for it, her skirt riding up her thighs and her heart hammering in her chest.

She wrenches it open, panting lightly with her thighs clamped together, only to find four more dwarves and one wizard.

Gandalf actually has the nerve to scold her, “It’s not like you, Bilbo, to keep friends waiting on the mat. Now, this is Bifur, Bofur, and Bombur.” And he points in turn to one dwarf with a big scruffy beard and a horrifying shard of metal imbedded in the skull, a somewhat trimmer dwarf with brown braids and a two-pronged hat, and a very fat dwarf with an impressive wreath of an orange braid draped across his stomach. “And this is Thorin Oakenshield.” With a fond grin, Gandalf adds, “As a matter of fact, I met him in much the same way I met you.” Which, of course, is a very strange thing to say right out in the open, but then, Gandalf is a very strange man.

Bilbo can only assume that Thorin has also had the benefit of Gandalf’s spells. Given Gandalf’s choice of pronouns, it’s in reverse order of Bilbo’s. But there’s more than that unusual common ground to Thorin’s presence. For starters, he seems to be the only dwarf with any kind of surname. He’s also the only one to stand on his own without a pair. And then, of course, is the fact that he’s devastatingly handsome, much in the same way that Fíli and Kíli are, except that they were a beautiful sort of attractive and Thorin is more composed and mature, and all together the perfect blend of what makes all of the other dwarves so interesting.

Already more excited than she should be, Bilbo finds herself flushing hotly under Thorin’s haughty gaze. She should’ve worn trousers, she realizes, because as musky and unwashed as all of these rugged men seem to be, she’s sure the faint scent of her arousal must give her away. She can’t help squirming, and she can feel her panties lightly sticking to her lips. While the other three dwarves chime into the usual chorus, Thorin is the only one who doesn’t offer to be at her service, which is very disappointing, because thinking of inviting a man like him into her home is enough to make her dizzy.

He’s clearly the leader, and again she wonders, if she’s meant to be some sort of whore for them,
would Thorin be the central one she bowed to? Not Gandalf, of course; he’s much too old for her and something of an estranged friend, but Thorin is clearly the sort of master that could handle servants—he has a regal air about him. She only belatedly realizes she’s staring, and then she starts to splutter hurriedly, “I am so sorry to keep you all waiting! So sorry!” Even though, of course, she hadn’t had any notice at all, and as soon as she’s stepping aside to let them in, she shoots a glare at Gandalf’s back for twisting it as though she’s the one acting silly.

She forces the door closed behind them, feels the distinct urge to trail after Thorin, but instead forces herself to grab at Gandalf’s robes and whine, “Gandalf, what is going on?”

He chuckles, “Don’t worry, my dear Bilbo, this is the last of them.” But of course, that still puts them at thirteen dwarves and one wizard, which is much too much for any one hobbit to entertain. Yet Gandalf only sweeps away, leaving her to it.

Under a slew of new food orders, Bilbo finds herself scrambling around her kitchen, trying to feed them all. By now, her stores are amply depleted, and it doesn’t help that several dwarves help themselves—Bofur starts eating the sausages off Nori’s shoulder, and Bombur takes all of her cheese wheels at once without even taking a cheese knife. Bifur picks at her store of berry tarts and doesn’t listen when she whines, “Must he eat them with his hands?”

Sitting beside Bifur, Bombur stops eating the cheese wheel long enough to say, “Xe,” which Bilbo makes a mental note of, though it doesn’t at all help her current predicament of having to see her food mishandled by a swarm of barbarians. Thorin, Balin, Dori, and to some small extent, Dwalin, are the only ones that seem to have any sense of table manners, and it almost seems as though Fíli and Kíli go out of their way to be uncouth. When Nori burps loudly after a mouthful of ale, Bilbo’s sure she’s going to faint. What might’ve started off as a lewd fantasy has now morphed into entirely the wrong kind of naughtiness. She wants to turn to Thorin, because appeals of this nature should be made to the leader, but he quickly slinks off to speak with Gandalf.

To make matters worse, try as she might to stay on top of things, a large pile of dirty dishes piles up at the end of the table. After bringing Glóin and Óin a new plate of scones, only to find three of her mother’s best plates stacked in a triangle, Bilbo can’t help but whimper, “My dishes!” Only Balin, sitting at the end of the table, looks at her, but she moans anyway, “And who’s going to clean all these?” Of course, she knows it’s going to be her.

A few paces behind, Thorin’s booming voice calls over, “Well, you heard her, clean up after yourselves!” Whirling around, Bilbo looks at him with wide eyes, unsure if she should say thank you or not, but he only settles back down in a misplaced chair to speak with Gandalf.

Of course, the second Fíli plucks the plate out of Ori’s unsuspecting hands, Bilbo realizes she’s made a horrible mistake. Fíli chucks the plate right at Balin, who bounces it up over his shoulder via his own plate, only to have Kíli catch it midair and toss it at the sink. Horrified, Bilbo squeaks, “No, thank you! I can do it myself! Don’t trouble yourselves!”

But then a pair of hands is on her waist, and she’s pulled backwards into Bofur’s lap. She stumbles over him, gasping in surprise, as both her legs fall around one of his. His knee lifts up to secure her in place, his arms locking around her stomach while her back rests against his chest, and he tells her cheerfully, “Not to worry, you don’t have to lift a finger! We’ve got it!”

Indeed, all the dwarves are joining in now, tossing her silverware between each other. She nearly cries, “But those are my mother’s best dishes!”

No sooner has she spoken than Bofur’s shouted, “Chip the glasses and crack the plates,” right over her shoulder. She’s seized instantly with panic, only to realize a moment later that he’s singing, of all
things. The other dwarves burst into a chorus of truly awful lyrics, none of which they actually do, but all of which center around traumatizing her poor kitchenware. All Bilbo can do is whimper and bury her face in her hands so as to not watch their horrible dish-collecting methods.

To make matters worse, two stanzas in, Bofur starts to stomp his feet along with the rhythm of the music. It bounces her up and down on his thick thigh, and with how wet the mere sight of some of the dwarves has made her, it’s not at all an innocent thing. Bofur must mean it that way, but Bilbo’s jostled against his chest with her ass rubbing against his crotch, and no amount of squirming makes it any better. His warm flesh is continually slammed against her wet panties, her nightgown stretched across her thighs and bunching up around her waist, while her breasts bounce freely on her chest. She hadn’t thought to grab a bra, but now, obviously, she wishes she had. On each bounce of Bofur’s leg, her chest threatens to spill out. The only saving grace is that all the dwarves seem too preoccupied with their song to notice, until the very end, when Nori looks around at her and stares unabashedly at her jiggling chest. Bilbo latches one arm across her breasts to try and hold them down, the other hand still clamped over her face to hide her embarrassment. She can feel her nipples rubbing into hard little numbs against her arm, and the nightgown isn’t nearly thick enough to hide it. If it weren’t for the sweaty musk of all the larger dwarves, her arousal would probably be shamefully obvious in the air.

Bilbo only notices when the song stops because Bofur stops stomping along, and she’s left to settle in his lap, breathing hard and officially soaked through her panties. When she first opened the door for Dwalin, she’d hoped to ride a dwarf, but this isn’t at all how she thought it would happen. And Bofur doesn’t even seem to be hard—she can feel, when she shamelessly rubs against him, the outline of his cock through his too-thick tunic and trousers, but it isn’t prominent enough for her to expect to be thrown over the table and taken right there.

After the song, Bofur lets her off his lap, and she stumbles on her feet, her knees feeling weak. She takes a step around the wall to see the kitchen, where a big stack of gleaming dishes lies, all clean. On the one hand, she appreciates it—she’s never had a man do her dishes before, and of course she would love to have a nice set of domestic husbands. On the other hand, she feels very nearly like she’s going to faint, or else run off to her bedroom to abandon all decent hobbit pretense and furiously touch herself. Before she can do either, Gandalf comes up behind her and gently suggests, “There, now. I think it’s time we take a seat by the fire and get to plans, don’t you?” Bilbo dazedly nods—sitting down sounds like a good idea.

With that, the wizard sweeps them all off into her living room, where, to her astonishment, the fire’s already blazing. That’s probably for the best; she’s not sure she has the wherewithal to tend to it. Unfortunately, she also doesn’t have enough seats. The dwarves all crowd into the small space, some dragging chairs from the kitchen, and Thorin takes the big, comfy armchair that Bilbo normally sits in. She’s tempted to drift to his lap, but he looks too brooding and like he wouldn’t much enjoy it. So she only comes toward it, then sinks slowly to her feet. She sits against the base of the chair, too frightened to touch Thorin’s legs, and then she feels vaguely like a king’s pet, because everyone else is sitting up and so thoroughly dressed, and here she is in only her thin nightgown, kneeling before their leader.

Nonetheless, there’s simply no room for another chair. So Bilbo stays where she is, surprised when, a moment later, Dori bustles over and hands her a biscuit. She realizes belatedly that she’s been so preoccupied with them that she hasn’t eaten. To her embarrassment, her stupid sex- addled brain has her leaning forward and plucking the biscuit out of his hands with her mouth. That only makes her feel more like a cat, and she starts to wonder if maybe that isn’t it—maybe she’s to be marched along
as some sort of mascot, a little creature they can pet and play with when times get too stressful. But
of course, being brought along as a platonic plaything is just as ridiculous as being brought along as a
sexual plaything, so she schools herself back into having no expectations. Surely, Gandalf will
explain himself now, and Bilbo will have to say no, she can’t accept any adventures, even with all
these handsome dwarves on the table.

It takes a minute for everyone to get settled. During this, Bilbo nibbles timidly on her biscuit, trying
to let as few crumbs dribble down onto her breasts as possible, even though a few of the dwarves,
having seen her heaving chest and protruding nipples, look like they wouldn’t mind licking them off.
Behind her, Gandalf offers Thorin a pipe. When she tilts her head to look up, she finds Thorin
blowing the most magnificent rings she’s ever seen, save, of course, for Gandalf, who makes them in
all sort of colours and shapes as only a wizard could do. Bilbo’s instantly struck with the urge to send
her own tiny smoke rings through Thorin’s, but she doesn’t have it in her to go searching for her
pipe. Besides, she’s much too curious.

After awhile, Bilbo looks expectantly at Gandalf. But Thorin’s the one to sigh, “Let’s have a song.”
His voice is deep, almost troubled, and Bilbo can’t seem to place his tone with the jubilance of their
earlier music.

But that was all just acoustics and the banging of Bilbo’s poor plates. This time, the dwarves produce
instruments. Some have to shuffle back near the door to retrieve theirs, and others pull them out of
their clothes, while Bifur produces a clarinet out of hir hair. When Dwalin and Balin return with
theirs, they hand Thorin a large harp, which of course draws Bilbo’s interest. As soon as he plucks
the strings, a beautiful melody wafts out, and the music starts.

All of them jump in at once. Their voices are all grave, but they make a gorgeous harmony, fitting so
smoothly together. Their worlds fill the air and begin to weave a great tale, first of treasures in a far
away mountain, and then of a dragon stealing in to claim it all. Bilbo finds herself in awe: the music
carries her away. It transports her, in a most magical way that she hasn’t felt in some time, far out of
the Shire, over mountains and into deep caverns and through hills of gold. It’s powerful and ensnares
her.

It’s easy to get lost in the music. The song is slow, booming but gentle, and her own little hobbit hole
ebbas away while she listens. She finds herself relaxing, after all the tension of the day, slumping
against the warmth of Thorin’s legs. None of the dwarves are looking at her anymore; they’re just as
lost in their own tale. The Tookish blood in Bilbo stirs. If she’d never let in such strange guests,
she’d never have heard such art.

When it ends, she doesn’t want it to. Yet their voices and their instruments slowly die out, leaving
her alone in the midst of reality.

She’s almost startled when Gandalf finally speaks, shattering the quiet. “And that,” he sighs, “is a
very good prelude to business.”

Bilbo’s woken up by this, because she wasn’t aware of any business going on her home. She forces
herself to sit straighter, looking at Gandalf, but it’s Thorin that caries on.

He leans forward in the chair, sparing only one glance down at Bilbo. “My friends. You all know
why you’re gathered here, in the home of our fellow conspirator.” Bilbo doesn’t at all know, but
worse than that, being called a fellow conspirator runs a shock of ice down her spine; she never
agreed to such a thing and has no idea what their business even entails. “You know that we are
preparing for a very long, very difficult journey, from which some of us may never return.” This
makes Bilbo turn rigid, looking at Thorin with wide, horrified eyes, an internal shriek starting blaze
in her ears. “The perils will be very great, and I am proud to have each and every one of you braving
it with us, through the hoards of orcs we may very well encounter, the goblins that pervade the mountains, the wolves and worgs and other dangers of the wild, the elves, who, of course, cannot be trusted and might not mind having all our heads, and naturally, the dragon, who very well might burn as all alive before we get a foot on the mountain, if he doesn’t spare us long enough to skin us alive and pick his teeth with our bones.”

And Bilbo doesn’t hear anymore, because for a poor little hobbit who’s never known anything but peace in their life, all of those perils are too much to bear, and Bilbo, without ever understanding why she’s going to have to be dragged through such dread, faints dead in a wave of sheer panic.

When the world comes back into focus, it’s very blurry. There’s a sharp ringing in her ears, and though she can hear voices, they sound very far away and muffled. For a few moments, she lies there, blinking up at the tile of her ceiling, and the different faces of strangers.

Then she realizes that she’s lying with her face burrowed into Fili’s lap and her legs curled up in Kili’s lap. She instantly checks her skirt, but it’s safely over her rear. Fili and Kili smile down at her, and all she can do is blush and splutter, “Sorry.”

Then she realizes that, as kind as it was to cushion her against the hard floor, this is hardly an appropriate place to be. She tries to sit up, rolling off of them in her haste, and lands at the end of their knees.

Across the room, someone snorts, “She looks more like a grocer than a burglar!”

Bilbo’s head whips around. Glóin’s the one that said it, and as far as she knows, she’s the only woman in the room, so he must be speaking of her. Stunned, she opens her mouth to say that she isn’t a burglar at all, but Gandalf jumps in before she can. “If I say she’s a burglar, then she’s a very good burglar! I promise you all, not only is Bilbo Baggins quite brave, but she has more to offer than any of you—or even her herself!—know.”

This makes Bilbo blink at him. She’s never stolen a thing in her life, she isn’t particularly brave, and she thinks the last thing was a compliment, but still, none of it makes any sense. Pausing to take a long puff of his pipe, Gandalf adds, “Besides, Smaug will know the scent of dwarf. Not only is a hobbit much smaller and therefore easier to fit inside the mountain, but she has a mite better chance than any of you do making it through unnoticed by the dragon!”

Though there was mention of a dragon both in the song and Thorin’s speech, Bilbo squeaks, “Dragon?” Squeezing into a dragon-invested mountain certainly isn’t something she’d agreed to.

Yet the other dwarves seem not to notice her reservations, and Thorin says above her, “She looks terrified.”

“She can’t do it,” Glóin huffs. “You might’ve picked the wrong hobbit, Gandalf.” This does actually hurt, if only because she can’t imagine another hobbit would be able to handle a dragon any better than her—and, of all the hobbits she knows, she’s the one that’s taken the greatest risk in her life and blazed a more difficult but very rewarding path, even if it was something very private and not at all as unacceptable as other general adventures—but before she knows it, several of the dwarves are clamouring with her inadequacies, and Gandalf can’t even keep up with them all.

Finally, Bilbo has to say over the noise, “I didn’t say I couldn’t do such a thing!” There is a big difference. No one seems to notice her until Thorin waves his hand, and then they all settle down, while Bilbo announces rather crossly, “I’m no weaker than any other hobbit, thank you very much!”
And over her, Gandalf booms, “There now! Haven’t I already said? Bilbo is the right woman for the job, and if you want my help at all, that is simply that.” At this, the other dwarves say nothing. With all the perils they’ll apparently be facing, a wizard would be, indeed, very helpful.

And that gives Bilbo room to wonder aloud, “Now... what is it exactly I could do?”

Nori snorts. Gandalf shoots him such a glare that he looks away, and then the wizard bends to fiddle around in his robes, only to pull out a rolled up parchment a moment later. This he puts on the floor and tosses in Bilbo’s direction. It rolls neatly towards her, and she unfolds it across her floor, looking down at an elaborate map, much more expansive than any of the ones in her home. Having always had a strange love of maps, Bilbo’s momentarily in awe—the map goes all the way past the Shire, east over a line of mountains and across a tall forest, up a little lake and into a large, solitary mountain with the outline of a dragon depicted over it.

“The Lonely Mountain,” Gandalf tells her quietly, while the dwarves lean in to listen. “Currently, it’s occupied only by Smaug the dragon, and, of course, the massive hoards of gold in his keep.” At this, Bilbo looks up, startled, while some of the other dwarves look on with mild longing. Of course, Bilbo realizes, there had to be something worth risking all this danger for. “It is the hope of this quest to divide that treasure between all here in the end, but the treasure itself is not what we must go for. It is time to reclaim Erebor.” And here he stops to look at Thorin, who’s bent over his chair to stare intently down at the map.

Given the solemn nods around the room, Bilbo imagines that she’s the only one who doesn’t know what that means. Still, she murmurs, “Erebor?”

“Erebor,” Thorin answers, softly and without looking at her, only at the map, “Is the kingdom of my father and his father. The greatest kingdom of dwarves on Middle Earth. Once, it was ruled by my family. It was my home—all our rightful home. ...But then the dragon came. It killed my people. It decimated our home. It devoured Dale, the city of men below our gates, and very few of us survived.” Thorin pauses to take a deep breath. The pain is evident in his words. “It claimed my grandfather and drove my father to the orcs that took him, too. Those that lived were not enough to offer any challenge, the men of Dale were just as destroyed, and the elves would not help us. There is gold at the end of this quest, yes, and it is rightfully ours. But we journey not for gold but our homes.”

Finally, Thorin pulls back into his chair, and Bilbo is left alone with the map. His words change everything around, though, and suddenly Bilbo sees this ‘adventure’ in a whole new light. When she looks at Thorin and sees the hurt in him, in all of them, she can’t help but feel deeply sorry for them. She has a nice home, as much as she’s always enjoyed maps of elsewhere. But these dwarves don’t. For all their impoliteness, they’re not a bad lot. And everyone deserves a place to belong.

But she still can’t help but notice: “I don’t see how I can be much help with that.”

“You can steal past the dragon,” Gandalf says simply. “There is a door; a small, hidden one that Thorin’s grandfather and father used to escape. And there is a key. And I have that key, along with this map and the ruins in the corner that were given to me by Thror.”

Bilbo has no idea who Thror is, but Thorin’s head whips to Gandalf, who hands him a large, worn key. Thorin takes it in his palm and looks at it with a sort of reverence, while Bilbo examines the runes in the corner of the map. She can’t read them, but she still finds them, and the whole map itself, incredibly intriguing.

And then there is the story, of course, and the romantic notion of helping save a king and his people, and, naturally, the perk of traveling with so many enticing men.
It still wouldn’t be at all a proper thing to do, but a part of Bilbo yearns to help them.

The rest of her is conflicted. But she doesn’t have to say so, because no one else asks her if she’s coming. Which, she supposes, is an improvement on telling her she isn’t particularly impressive.

Then Ori yawns, and Bilbo looks up at him, only to have Balin suggest, “Perhaps we should have a good night’s rest before we start out. It seems to me that you two might have a bit to discuss, but the rest of us don’t need to know the details; I’m sure we’re all quite happy to follow our king to the ends of the world, but until then, we’re tired.” A few rounds of agreement circle through the crowd, but before Bilbo can throw in her two cents, they’re all getting up to leave.

They stay in her house, of course. No one even asks about it; the simply filter off into different rooms, pulling sleeping bags out of nowhere and setting up camp. Bag End has plenty of room for overnight visitors, but that was never meant to be thirteen dwarves and one wizard, so they wind up all over the floor.

Thorin is the one that gets the guest bedroom. Fíli and Kíli, who are apparently his nephews, try to tag along, but Bilbo leaves them to their arguing before they find a resolution. Bilbo, thankfully, is left to her own room, and as soon as she can, she pulls the door tightly shut behind her and slumps down against her wall. All in all, it’s been a very trying day.

The sad story killed her mood. When she lies in bed, she isn’t ready to unleash all the naughty daydreams she collected over the evening.

That is, until she hears a faint humming next door, and she realizes it’s Thorin’s erotic tones whispering their alluring song. The music calls to her just as much as it did by the fire, though now it’s far more intimate. She’s never had a man like Thorin sleep in her guest room, and the more she thinks of him, and all the other dwarves, the more her earlier feelings filter back to her. She remembers bouncing in Bofur’s lap and being squished between Fíli and Kíli, and the dirty way Nori looked at her, and first greeting Dwalin at the door. She wonders what it would be like to thread her fingers through Balin’s beard, to have private tea with Dori, to feed Bombur biscuits with her fingers to his mouth. She tries to stop herself before she’s run through the whole list of them, but soon her own thoughts and Thorin’s deep voice have her biting her lip, and she starts squirming under her blankets.

She’s just about to cover her mouth and run her hand between her legs when a muffled knock sounds on her door. It’s much quieter than all the other ones she’s heard this evening, but it’s still undeniable, and Bilbo, fantasizing wildly, slips out of her bed.

She comes to the bedroom door and creaks it open, to find Nori grinning down at her through the darkness with a very hungry grin. She mumbles, “What is it?”

“I want to thank you for your hospitality,” he tells her, which is very kind but probably not actually what he’s going for. There’s a suggestiveness in his tone, and he looks over her shoulder at her bed, the invitation clear.

Bilbo absently chews her bottom lip. Blushing already, she murmurs, “Thank you.” Flattered, she feels vaguely relieved that she’s attractive to dwarves, or at least, one dwarf. Most of them have longer hair than her short curls, and of course she’s very small compared to them, though they don’t seem to have the large, hairy feet she does. Evidently, Nori doesn’t mind these differences, and in a rush of pent-up hormones, Bilbo steps aside and asks, “Won’t you come in?” After all, if she does wind up shooing away all these dwarves in the morning, she might never get another chance to have a dwarf in her lifetime.
He squeezes past her immediately, and she’s careful to shut the door behind him. Hopefully, the others won’t notice he’s missing, and if they do, hopefully they’ll knock as well. Terrible though it might be, Bilbo knows she wouldn’t mind more of them joining in, but she’s not so improper as to hope to be witnessed in the midst of her scandals.

Nori marches right over to the bed but doesn’t sit down. Instead, he extends a hand, bidding her closer. He winks and offers, “Let me show you some gratitude.” Bilbo walks right over to him, even though she isn’t quite sure she’s ready to go that far.

Suddenly, his big hands are on her waist, and Bilbo squeaks, expecting to be thrown down to the middle of the mattress. He picks her right up like she weighs nothing, but instead, he only places her at the side of the bed. There he pushes her legs apart and sinks down between them, which makes Bilbo flush completely red. She wasn’t expecting that. She’d assumed that, if they did go further than kissing and perhaps a few touches, she’d be made to get on her knees and pleasure him, but evidently, Nori means his gratitude. His intentions are unmistakable. He gives her face a big grin, as though checking she’s alright, and then he’s looking down at her crotch and running his thick fingers up her thighs. His skin is rough, slightly calloused, but warm, and she can tell right away that he’s not new to this—there’s no hesitance in his touch. He pushes her knees wider apart, and that makes her tiny skirt scrunch up her waist.

He bunches it up higher, then dips below the hem to hook his fingers into the laced sides of her panties, and he asks in burly voice, “May I?”

Bilbo, lifting one hand over her mouth to stifle her embarrassing gasps, nods. So Nori draws her panties right down her thighs. There’s no pretense, no foreplay: he simply reveals her body to him, tugging her panties all the way to her knees, then down her legs, and they’re stretched so tautly that she worries they might rip. He lifts one of her feet off the ground to pull it through, then the other. Once they’re removed, he holds the panties up between his thumbs, takes a raunchy sniff, and tosses them onto the bed beside her. Bilbo looks down at the broadness of his shoulders, the thickness of his chest through his many clothes, the strange points in his hair and the detailed braids that adorn his beard. But most of all, she looks at the wickedness in his expression, the sharpness of his eyes, and the grin beneath his hefty mustache. His gaze fixes on the lustrous patch of honey curls below her stomach and the bright pink lips that lie beneath. To Bilbo’s shame, she can already see the faint shimmer of moisture in the moonlight; she never had a chance to clean up since growing wet from Thorin and Bofur. Whatever arousal she lost is quickly coming back in the new situation. For a moment, Nori just looks at her, taking her all in, and Bilbo starts to quiver under the scrutiny, caught up in nerves and anticipation and want.

Then he dives into her, all at once, shoves his nose against her stomach and his mouth against her pussy, and Bilbo screams into her hand. His bristly mustache tickles, his beard pricking along her sensitive skin, but more than that, he’s nuzzling against her, dragging his face back and forth, and the heat and friction of it makes her tremble, whimpering pathetically. Nori’s fingers tighten around her thighs, digging in to leave glowing red marks along her pale skin, and he rubs his face against her over and over, until her voice breaks so loud that it squeezes right out between her fingers.

Her other hand she fists in the sheets, needing that to steady herself. He switches abruptly to staying still, except that his mouth opens wide and she can feel his hot breath all over her. His tongue pokes out, long and broad, and it swipes all the way from the bottom of her slit to the top, soaking her in saliva. Bilbo shivers in delight, and Nori sets into licking her pussy with a wild sort of fervor, petting her and coaxing her slit open. A few times he pauses at the top to swirl his tongue around the tip of her clit, swelling hungrily under the attention, and then he’s poking his tongue inside her. He pushes it in, his thumbs climbing to pry her pussy open. He dives his tongue in over and over, fucking her
with it, and it’s all Bilbo can do not to cry. She loses control too quickly. Her hips start bucking into his face of their own accord, and Nori only holds her steadily back, faithfully eating her out. Soon Bilbo finds herself bending over him, her hands scrambling into his hair. It’s coarse and rough beneath her fingers, but she can’t stop herself from holding him, and he doesn’t at all seem to mind.

He pulls out a wild array of tricks, swirling his tongue one minute only to suck at her lips the next, rubbing her walls and suckling her clit, and Bilbo drowns in the pleasure of it, her cries now bouncing freely off the walls. She completely forgets about the other visitors, because what do they matter when she’s got an eager tongue in her pussy? Halfway through, Nori shoots a hand up to grab onto one of her breasts, and she doesn’t even mind. She lets him squeeze her tit hard, lets him crush it back against her and knead it and swirl it around. In this moment, all Bilbo wants is to be thoroughly fucked, and she doesn’t even care how he goes about it, so long as he keeps making her feel this way.

Bilbo’s halfway through a languid moan when the door suddenly bursts open. If there was a knock, she doesn’t know—she was engulfing everything with her own noises. But she freezes up when she sees Fíli and Kíli standing in her doorway, and Nori halts immediately.

He pulls his mouth away from her, which leaves her whimpering shamefully. Before either of them can say a word, the two brothers are storming in, and Kíli hisses angrily at Nori, “What do you think you’re doing?”

“Get out, right now!” Fíli growls. “If Thorin knew you were in here—”

But that seems to be all Nori needs, because to Bilbo’s disappointment, he stands up, rubbing his mouth on his sleeves, and marches right past them, saying hastily, “No need to tell him—it was a simple misunderstanding—won’t happen on the quest of course!” And then he’s out the door, shutting it firmly behind him, while Bilbo sits, stunned, empty, and panting hard, exactly where he left her.

The brother looks at her with sympathy. Fíli tells her, soothingly, “Thorin heard noises and sent us to check—”

“Let us sleep with him after all,” Kíli interrupts, as though boasting.

“If Nori hurt you at all...”

Bilbo’s already shaking her head. She means to talk to them civilly, but she’s still so aroused, and of course it had to be just her luck to have it be two incredibly handsome dwarves to burst in on her, which doesn’t help at all. She whines, “He didn’t force me.”

Kíli says, “Good.” Fíli nods, but on the downward movement of his head, he doesn’t move back up.

His eyes, instead, stay fixed on her pussy. With her legs spread, it’s still very much exposed, now dripping in her own juices and Nori’s saliva. Fíli’s cheeks instantly turn pink, and Kíli’s follows as soon as he realizes what’s caught Fíli’s eyes. The correct thing for Bilbo to do, of course, would be to shove her nightgown down. But something in her can’t seem to manage, and slowly, Fíli says, “We’re sorry for interrupting.”

Bilbo, to her surprise, sniffs, “It was quite mean of you.”

That makes them share a startled look between themselves, while Bilbo drops her face into her hands again. She can’t seem to make her legs stop shaking. She can still feel both of their burning gazes on her, and after a moment, Kíli says slowly, “If we could make it up to you...” And Bilbo just moans,
bites her bottom lip and nods, because she wants them so badly.

She shares without meaning to, “I... I admit one of my reservations about coming on this trip would be... ah... controlling my... my urges.” She whispers this last part timidly, but of course, it’s very true; how is she going to travel with so many men when she can’t stop thinking about undressing them? Of course, she hasn’t had the privilege of undressing any yet, but she doesn’t care if they keep fully clothed tonight, so long as they finish her off. “If I... if I knew there were dwarves that didn’t mind my... my strange predilections...”

A hand loops under her chin. The fingers aren’t quite as large as Nori’s were, but they’re still quite a bit bigger than her own. Fíli tilts her face up to look at him, and he bends down to tell her quite seriously, “Dwarves don’t have such prejudices.” Which, of course, makes her burn for the quest even more—to be with a group of such attractive people and not be judged for her shameful thoughts... well... it’s a difficult thought to resist. Particularly when she’s wet and desperate to be filled.

She shivers in Fíli’s grip and quietly begs, “Could you... finish me off?” Her eyes fall shut as a wave of shame and desire overwhelms her, and when she opens them again, it’s only half way. Her vision feels almost hazy, and the two of them look at her once more before nodding.

“You’ll have to be quiet for Thorin not to hear,” Kíli says, but his hands are already on his belt, and that’s all Bilbo can see. She nods, wondering how’s she’s going to do this—is she really going to get both of them at once? Fíli withdraws his hand from her face and starts on his own belt, just as Kfíli’s finished.

Kíli’s on her a second later, and she yelps in surprise at having his body draped over hers, but he only grabs her face and tilts her up for a hard and fast kiss. Bilbo, caught off guard, takes up the first few seconds being surprised, while he presses his slightly chapped lips against hers. Then she’s moaning, because the scratch of his stubble and the raw, meaty scent of him is too much to take. His kiss is insistent, pushing in for more, and when she opens her mouth, his tongue runs along her bottom lip and then dives in. It claims her instantly, pushing hers back, tracing her teeth, and then there’s a hand in her curls tugging her away from him. She turns her head, only to have Fíli flatten into her, his tongue slipping right into her open mouth and claiming her mouth just as fervently as his brother. Another hungry mouth latches onto her chin, then her neck, warm and wet and trailing down her throat. While Fíli’s still kissing her mouth, Kíli presses a kiss over the top of her breast, and Bilbo’s tempted to rip the whole nightgown away and let them have at her.

But they’re pulling away too soon, and instead she’s left making little keening noises and trying to follow them. Fíli, who’s taken a seat next to her on the bed, tucks a lock of hair behind her ear and makes a hushing noise, kissing her cheek sweetly.

Kíli sits down between her legs, but he doesn’t dive in like Nori did. Instead, he pulls her forward, right off the bed, and she goes toppling into his lap, gasping and latching onto his shoulders. He only pushes her off and turns her to face the bed. When she looks over her shoulder at him, he’s lying down on the floor.

Fíli takes her chin again, tilts it up to him, and asks her through a wide grin, “Will this make it up to you, Bilbo? If we let you sit on Kíli’s face?” The words, and the image it creates in her mind, send a jolt of electricity up Bilbo’s spine—she’s never thought of sitting on someone’s face before—a proper hobbit would never do such a thing. But Fíli says it so simply, and Kíli’s already moving to do it, and the thought of it is thrilling for more than just the forbidden factor. While Fíli says it, he’s parting his long coat, and then he’s lifting up the tunic underneath. She can see a large bulge pressing insistently at the front of his trousers, and she knows instantly where this is headed.
She can’t help but moan, “Oh, is that fair?” Because she’s clearly going to pleasure Fíli, while Kíli pleasure her.

Below her, Kíli groans with clear hunger, “I think I get the best end.” His hands reappear on her hips, although he’s reaching from behind. Then he lifts her up so easily, and Bilbo rises in her knees, looking down in wonderment while Kíli pushes his head right below her. His long hair fans out around him, catching on the slightly sweat-slicked, bare skin of her thighs, and he grows cross-eyed staring at her pussy. Bilbo has no control over it. She simply lets him do the work of lifting her in his strong arms, then slowly lowering her back down, until the scruff of his beard is tickling the bottom of her ass and his nose is digging into the tip of her pussy. She tries to support her own weight, but she’s quickly weak from the feeling of his warm mouth against her, made all the worse when he laps his tongue over her slit. Bilbo moans instantly, only for Fíli to clap a hand around her mouth.

She looks up at him, he shakes his head with a nod towards Thorin’s room, and Bilbo screams as Kíli’s tongue worms into her. His incredible strength holds her up, and all she can do is tremble around him, so wet that she’s sure he’ll have to swallow over and over again just to clear the mess. Her hips keeps bucking into him hard enough to break his nose, and she can only hope that she doesn’t do any damage with her eagerness. She’s never felt any pleasure so great in her whole life—her hands never come anywhere near the sensation of being dropped right onto a man’s mouth. Kíli launches right into eating her wildly out, his enthusiasm enough to make her eyes water. It’s so good, and she whimpers into Fíli’s palm with every swipe of Kíli’s tongue.

With Fíli’s other hand, he opens his trousers, and she watches in awe as his impressive cock springs loose. Compared to what she’s always assumed other hobbits would be like, Fíli’s cock is huge. It’s long, thick, darker than the rest of him and pink on the end with the tip already crowning through the foreskin, and all Bilbo wants to do is bury her face in it and worship such a magnificent thing. But she knows she needs to be quiet, so she prepares to have it all stuffed inside her. Fíli asks quietly, “Do you think you can take this, Bilbo?” While he asks, he grips his hand around the base and points it towards her, rubbing the tip between her eyes, down the slope of her nose. Bilbo moans filthily and nods in his hand, then cries out at another well-places stab of Kíli’s tongue. Fíli draws the head further down her face, until it’s just at the top of his palm. She opens her mouth in preparation.

Then his hand darts away and his cock shoves into her mouth, just a little bit but enough to make her gag. She’s never had a real cock in her mouth, though she’s tried to practice once or twice with various fruits and vegetables, which she’d never admit aloud. Of course, she never thought her first chance would be on a dwarf, and the learning curve is made all the harder by being pleasured at the same time. She can’t concentrate on the cock in her mouth anymore than on her pussy convulsing around Kíli’s tongue. At first, all she can do is try to suckle at it, drawing in little beads of salty precum and reveling at the taste. Fíli moans above her, and the first buck of his hips pushes more inside than she can take, and she gags again while he mutters a hasty, “Sorry.”

At least it muffles her screams. Kíli has her whole body wracked with spasms, but Bilbo tries to return the favour. Even though her jaw’s stretched almost painfully wide, she tries to adjust to it. She’s careful with her teeth, just in case, and she tries to move her tongue along the underside. She wraps her fingers around the base, her hands brushing against his tight balls, and then she tries to move her head. She can only bob a little up and down at first, but Fíli moans and seems to like it. So Bilbo does more and more, slowly getting the hang of it and having to stop every so often to regain herself. He keeps a steady stream of precum trickling into her mouth, one little drop at a time, and she has to wonder if that’s a mark of dwarves, or if Thorin’s family is just particularly fertile. Either way, she’s starting to think she won’t need breakfast. But then, Kíli might be the same; Bilbo’s never been so wet in her life, and she’s no longer sure how much of that fluid is because of Nori, how much because of Kíli, and how much because of Fíli. The combination has her longing to hump Kíli’s
face. It takes everything she has to keep her hips in check. The more she sucks on Fíli, the more she feels addicted to the taste, as strange as it is, and that only makes her hotter; she’s burning up, covered in sweat and trembling all over, and her breasts are heaving against the bed, longing to be touched. Her nightgown is clinging to her body. She impales her mouth over and over again Fíli’s cock, wishing she could be good enough at this to take him down her throat, until she’s so dizzy from it that she can’t even see straight.

She thinks she’s about to burst, but Fíli beats her to it. His cock twitches in her hands, and suddenly a wave of hot, sticky seed explodes in her mouth, splattering all her walls and rushing down her throat. Bilbo chokes on it, but Fíli’s hands are suddenly in her hair, holding her down, and she understands why; she’d be screaming if he wasn’t. Instead, she can’t do anything but try to swallow enough to keep up. She swallows load after load while his hips buck against her, rubbing his leaking cock across her tongue. His cum wells up faster than she can take it, and it starts to dribble out the corner of her mouth.

He’s barely done when her orgasm hits her. It slams through her harder than it ever has, taking over her body to leave her non-corporeal, lost in the pleasure. For that glorious moment, her entire existence is nothing but ecstasy, quivering in the wake of Kíli’s tongue against her clit.

And then, too soon, it’s over, and she’s left shaking, slumping in Fíli’s grip. If he hadn’t kept her impaled, she probably would’ve wakened the whole house. As soon as his grip loosens, she slips off his cock, letting a thin trail of seed drape between her lips and his head.

She’s lifted up again by her hips a moment later, and Kíli weasels out from under her. It takes a few seconds of panting furiously, her heart hammering against her chest, before she can turn to him and mumble, “Sorry.”

He only wipes a gloved hand crudely over his mouth, grinning, and says, “Don’t apologize; I came before you two.” Bilbo, blushing furiously, looks down at his trousers. There’s a small wet patch in it, and judging by how much Fíli came, she can only imagine that Kíli’s underwear caught the brunt of it. Bilbo’s mouth is still overwhelmed with Fíli’s seed, and it takes several minutes before her tongue’s managed to wipe it all away. It’s slick and a little sticky, too thick for a proper drink, but it isn’t bad tasting at all, although, Bilbo’s well aware that that’s probably due to another of her personal oddities. While Kíli watches her, he adds with a slight smirk, “Of course, I am hoping for more on the journey.” And he winks, while Fíli laughs, and Bilbo flushes horribly, not saying that she does very much hope this happens again. She never thought her first real experience would be with three men in one night, and while she does feel a little sorry for Nori, she’s rather pleased with how it all turned out.

It would be better, of course, if Thorin would come tuck her in, but she isn’t crazed enough to say that.

Instead, the two brothers pick her up together. Their thick arms encircle her waist and loop around her legs, and before she knows what’s happening, they’re laying her down on her mattress, placing her head gently in the pillows. Then they pull the blankets up on either side of her and lean in to peck her forehead, their short beards nuzzling against her temples.

Somehow, Bilbo manages to mumble, “Good night.” She means to ask them to stay and let her drift off between their warm bodies, but she’s too spent to manage it, and they’re already waving, grinning, and heading for the door. Fíli’s now tucked back in and Kíli’s rearranging his coat to hide the mess. Bilbo’s left to stare at the emptiness of her bedroom and wonder just how many other dwarves she could coax between her legs.

As she lies there, thoroughly satiated and exhausted and traitorously excited, Bilbo knows, without a
doubt, that she will be going on that adventure.
Roast Mutton

Chapter Notes

A/N: Sorry I had to do a sudden time skip in the middle of this; the book covers months, which is very easy since dry traveling isn’t nearly so interesting as sleeping with different dwarves, but obviously I can’t write every moment, so I did the best I could. ♥ Trigger warning for forced stripping, bondage, and breeding talk during the troll scene. (The trolls don’t do any of this sexually, but it’s still a factor.)

Also, if you’re the type to track fic progress/suggestions/behind-the-scenes-stuff, I’m kinda doing that for once on my tumblr.

At first, it’s just another day. The sun comes in through her curtains, spills over her pillow and slips into her eyes, and Bilbo yawns, stretching out. Her bed is as empty as it usually is, but she’s had enough wet dreams to make up for it—after all, she feels sticky almost everywhere.

And then it all comes rushing back to her, right at once. Bilbo bolts up in bed, flustered and lost and trying frantically to recall if she has anything left to feed thirteen dwarves and one wizard for breakfast.

For a moment, Bilbo falls back to her mattress, curls up under her blankets, burrows into her pillow, and wonders what in the world she’s doing. The whole thing is utterly insane, of course. It wouldn’t be wise to leave her bed, certainly not without a shower, but she can’t figure out how she’s going to shower and dress and get herself all nicely together without bumping into at least one stranger.

She contemplates this for quite awhile before it occurs to her that her house is just as quiet as it normally is. Last night, it was an ongoing wild raucous. But now, she can’t hear a thing but herself.

So, finally, she climbs out of bed. Clutching her nightgown to her, Bilbo creeps to her door and carefully creaks it open, peering both ways down the hall.

There isn’t anyone there.

There’s no one in the spare bedroom Thorin would’ve occupied, either, and there’s no one in her living room, nor in her kitchen, her pantry, or anywhere else. Everything is spick and span, just the way it always is, except for the faint imprints of dirty boots just short of her front door.

She should, naturally, be ecstatic at this. Clearly, she’s just been spared a grand adventure. She isn’t put in the awkward position of having to rudely turn anyone down, and she isn’t at risk of doing anything unexpected, and she can now go on with her life being plainly predictable without any hassle.

Except that Bilbo, now for the second time in her otherwise regular life, would’ve chosen the hassle, however unpredictable, because it would’ve just represented her better than sitting here alone does. She is a Baggins, yes, but she’s also a Took, and, more importantly, a Bilbo. She’d already decided this quest was right for her, and they were the rude ones for so sneakily snatchng it away. Perhaps worst of all, every last one of them left without even a goodbye or thank you. If they were going to out-and-out snatch away her choice, they should’ve at least done it to her face.
But there’s no sense being bitter. She goes on feeling that way, but she forces herself to push on, because there’s nothing worse than wallowing in dirty clothes and an empty stomach.

For once, Bilbo doesn’t linger in the shower. Her normal daydreams aren’t of any good, because trying to think of pleasure only brings back memories of Nori and Fíli and Kíli. None of them promised her anything more than they gave, except, of course, an exciting quest, and she’s still cross with them for it. So she just cleans herself off, scrubbing away the sweat and the mess between her legs. She doesn’t even bother with the extras of her usual routine, like giving her breasts an exam, washing the hair on her feet, and plucking out a few stray strands that pop up in other random places on her body. It’s possibly the shortest shower she’s ever taken, and easily the least fun in a good many years.

Next she dresses in a plain white blouse and a brown skirt, then settles in for a cup of tea and what few remnants of food are left in her pantry. She’ll definitely have to go down to the market and restock in an hour or two when it opens, lest she be completely unprepared for visitors in the future.

At the moment, she’s not very keen on more visitors, not if they’re going to fill her head with wild stories they won’t follow through on. And rather addicting music. Not to mention the only other person she’s ever met who was born into quite the wrong body, without so much as one decent conversation. If anything, she blames Gandalf for telling her that little tidbit and then sweeping everyone off before Bilbo could do anything with it.

Bilbo’s scrounging in her pantry for enough crumbs to make up second breakfast when a loud harrumph startles her from behind, and she nearly jumps out of her skirt.

When she spins around, Gandalf’s standing there. He has the nerve to look cross, and he asks her, “My dear Bilbo, whenever are you going to come?”

Flustered, Bilbo splutters, “But you’re all the ones that left me!”

“Great Elephants,” Gandalf says, shaking his head. “You are not at all yourself this morning—haven’t you dusted the mantelpiece?”

Clearly, Bilbo hasn’t. Seeing that, Gandalf sighs and brushes on towards the living room. She hurries to follow, but her legs are shorter than his and he moves very quickly. She arrives just in time to see him pluck a note out from under her clock, scribbled on her own notepaper.

He hands it to her, and her eyes scan it, becoming slowly wider at every line. Evidently, the dwarves didn’t want to wake her, but they didn’t at all mind moving on, and now they’re all waiting for her at the Green Dragon Inn in Bywater, expecting her to show at eleven. She repeats dazedly, “Eleven,” as she lowers the note back down.

“That’s in ten minutes,” Gandalf tells her like it’s nothing. He simply snatches the note out of her clutches and shoves her off towards the bedroom. Bilbo stumbles into a run, and soon she’s throwing clothes and supplies willy-nilly into her bags, only to be pushed out the door by Gandalf a minute later.

She’s already halfway to Bywater with no time at all to turn back when she realizes she hasn’t packed a sleeping bag.

She just barely makes it to the Inn on time, sweating and panting with very sore feet. There’s so little air in her that she can’t afford to be cross, so all Balin gets is a gasped, “Sorry!”

Waiting outside alone, he simply claps her on the shoulder and cheers, “Bravo!”
explain that she only just got the note and had not nearly enough time to pack, he’s heading inside the building.

One by one, the dwarves come streaming out, with Thorin at the head, announcing, “Let’s get on with it—we’ve wasted enough time!” Which makes Bilbo close her mouth. There’s a fervent determination on Thorin’s face that she doesn’t dare interrupt for something so inane as handkerchiefs and a sleeping bag, even though she’s never even gone so far as the market without a handkerchief and this is clearly going to be disastrous.

Without really being spoken to directly, Bilbo is herded amidst the throng of dwarves around the back of the Inn, where the stables are full of more ponies than she’s ever seen in her life. Having never ridden and finding the smell somewhat unpleasant, Bilbo lingers back while all the others filter around her. Their packs are all much larger than hers, but then, they had time to be prepared. Nori turns to wink when he passes her, and Fíli and Kíli pat her back, grinning mischievously. Blushing hotly, Bilbo smiles back. She tries not to show how immensely relieved she is that they didn’t forget her or leave without her, even though it might’ve been wiser by hobbit standards to be left alone.

Eventually, all the dwarves have passed her and mounted their ponies, and Bilbo’s left standing there, realizing belatedly how awkward this is. She saw the size of the map; obviously they can’t walk the whole way. Yet she didn’t think of this and isn’t at all prepared. She takes one cautious step deeper into the stable, looking down to make sure her bare feet don’t squish into anything unpleasant, but can’t bring herself to go any further. There’s only one pony left, but it’s loaded with supplies.

Finally, Thorin leads his pony up to her, towering high above her head and looking particularly handsome in the morning light that streams in through the wooden pillars. He frowns, while she nervously tries to stay out of the pony’s way. Its muzzle keeps trying to nudge her, its mane and tail flicking each time it snorts at her.

“We’ll have to put you on the pack pony,” Thorin decides, only for Bilbo to stiffen and shake her head.

“No, that won’t be necessary!” Although, of course it will be. She thinks of suggesting she run to keep up; she might be out of breath now, but she’s not a bad walker when the situation demands it. But she can tell that Thorin won’t take well to that, so instead she mumbles, already feeling like an inadequate burden, “I can’t ride.”

Thorin makes an expression that might be a scowl but isn’t quite so cruel. Bilbo just stands there looking sheepish, until Bofur shouts from the middle of the troop, “Dibs!”

“Aw,” Nori whines, slumping immediately, while the other dwarves differ between disappointed and confused looks.

Bilbo continues looking at Thorin, because obviously it’s going to be up to him, and she might be silently hoping she gets to ride with him. At the very least, she’d like to speak with him—alone—before they get separated again and she loses the opportunity forever.

But Thorin just nods back towards Bofur, and Bilbo decides she can’t hold them up any longer. She picks her way carefully through the stables, equally wary of horse droppings and heavy hooves, until she reaches Bofur. He looks just as chipper as he did last night, with his two braids defying gravity almost as much as his hat, and his smile lifting the ends of mustache. Before she can do anymore, Bifur reaches down to take her heavy bags off her shoulder and pass them along the other dwarves, all the way back to the supply pony. It’s a relief not to have that weight baring down on her anymore, but she’s still left with her own body to worry about.
This presents another problem; she doesn’t even know how to mount an animal. But Bofur solves it by reaching down to grab her by the scruff of her shirt, and before she knows what’s happening, she’s being hauled over the pony’s back. Straightening out is a frightening mess, but Bofur helps, pulling her upright and guiding her legs to part around the edge of the saddle. He pulls her up tight between the pony’s shaggy neck and his body, which brings back a flood of memories from bouncing on his knees last night that she doesn’t at all need right now. It occurs to her belatedly that she’s going to have to do this for the whole trip: snuggle up with the dwarves for the bulk of the journey.

She could, of course, learn to ride a pony on her own, but the more she thinks about it, the more she knows she’d prefer it this way, however shameful. There’s something comforting about the way Bofur’s strong arms reach around her sides to grip the reins, his thighs tight against her rear to hold her in. She doesn’t have to worry about the animal itself and where it’s going; she can just relax against Bofur’s chest, with his beard and mustache tickling her exposed shoulder where her blouse’s sleeve is slipping.

With everyone ready, Thorin leads them out. The first step the pony takes is jarring. It tosses her up, only to have Bofur quickly wrap one arm around her waist and chuckle, “Whoa there, girl!” But she doesn’t know what else to do—the pony’s mane looks un-brushed and a little dirty, and she knows that if she were a pony, she wouldn’t want anyone pulling her hair. But there isn’t really anywhere else to hold onto, so she just lets Bofur do the job and tries to be thankful that, at the very least, he can’t see her blush.

They’ve just set out the stable doors and onto the street pavement when Gandalf comes riding up on a white horse. There are only a few hobbits out and about amidst the Bywater streets—it is, after all, about the time for second breakfasts. Every one of those hobbits gives them a strange look that the dwarves seem not to see and Bilbo tries very hard not to notice. She doesn’t even want to think about the wild tales that are sure to pop up in her wake; it’ll only erode her resolve.

Fortunately, Gandalf comes with good tidings. He rides up along side her and reaches down to pass on her pipe and a big wad of handkerchiefs, which she’s very grateful to accept.

Riding with Bofur is an... interesting... experience.

It’s a beautiful day to be out. The spring sun has no clouds in its way, the air is warm and pleasant, and the dwarves, for the most part, are in good spirits. They swap stories and songs as they march, and Bilbo catches snippets and slowly learns more about them, though she’s mostly quiet in return. Riding is a strange business, but Bilbo grows used to it soon enough, though the constant slam of the pony’s back against her thighs is a bit rough for her tastes. She knows nothing can be done about it, so she tries to bare the abuse as bravely as the rest of them whilst contemplating whether or not she should have them pull over so she can pull on several pairs of trousers for padding.

Near the middle of the day, or at least, what feels like it to Bilbo, Bofur starts to linger at the back. They’ve had only a few, light conversations up until this point, the ride itself being too distracting for Bilbo to be very coherent and Bofur having so many louder people to talk to. From what she can tell, he’s friends with every last one of them, though he’s related to Bifur and Bombur, and he and Nori share a few choice ideals. Unlike a few of the others, Bofur isn’t from the Lonely Mountain at all. She doesn’t have to ask why he’s going there, though; she imagines, or rather, knows, that if Thorin showed up on her doorstep asking for aid, she’d follow, too.

And now here she is, out in the middle of nowhere, leaving her lovely Shire behind for a group of rowdy dwarves and a wizard who sticks to the head of the pack. While he and Thorin fall into discussion, Fili and Kili trying to interject and the others not far behind, Bofur lets his pony slow.
She doesn’t say anything until they’re at the very back of the herd, and then she means to ask what he’s doing.

But he settles his chin down on her shoulder first, and she gasps at the tingling scratch of his beard and his long mustache against her neck. He purrs in her ear, far too quiet for any of the others to hear over the wind, “Nori told me everything.”

Bilbo, naturally, goes stiff as a stone. She knows exactly what that entails, and for one horrible moment, she thinks Bofur’s going to scold her, tell her what a naughty girl she’s been and how they’ll have to drop her off right here, because whatever Fíli and Kíli might’ve told her, how different can dwarves really be from hobbits when it comes to secret sluts like Bilbo?

Bofur doesn’t say that at all. To Bilbo’s surprise, he tells her quite simply, “If you don’t want me to speak of this again, I won’t. We can catch up with Dori or Ori and you can ride with one of them if I’ve made you uncomfortable. But if you’d like me to keep going... nod once.”

Bilbo sucks in a breath. On her exhale, her round stomach presses into Bofur’s arm, and she has to stifle a needy little moan. He handles the pony expertly with just his one fist clenched around the reins, arms occasionally switching off, sometimes both wrapping around her when the land is flat and easy. She runs over his words, just once, and knows that if she shouted now, Dori or Ori, the two closest to them, would probably hear. But it’s not something she even remotely considers.

Instead, she opens her mouth, meaning to ask what exactly he’s going to do if she tells him to keep going, but she only shuts it again, because she’s not sure she wants to spoil the surprise. The constant thrusts of the pony makes it easy to fall right into the mood he offers, and the secure way he keeps her safe makes her want to arch back against him and turn to nuzzle into his cheek. Only a strong dose of willpower has kept her from doing it up until now. Bofur is completely still against her while the offer lingers. She isn’t really considering it; she knows what she wants. But she still has to fight with herself to nod, because she’s not sure if she can think of anything more shameful than discussing having a strange man between her legs with another strange man.

Except, of course, having that man between her legs in the first place, and it was never something she wanted to lock up entirely in the past. Trying to restrain her enthusiasm, Bilbo tilts her head. The gesture is exaggerated, making her intent very clear. She’s game for more, maybe for as much as these dwarves can give her.

Bofur’s already shown her a good time once, even though he didn’t mean to, and the thought of his jubilant singing voice and his generous smile makes her very into whatever he has to say. At her approval, his arm tightens around her stomach, and he murmurs in her ear, “Good. Let me know if you want me to stop at any time.” Bilbo nods again, even though she knows she probably won’t want to stop—this is a can of worms she’s wanted to open ever since she came of age, even if she wouldn’t have admitted it. When Bofur kisses her cheek, it tickles and makes her gasp. She expected to laugh, but she wants it too much and all her noises come out desperately aroused.

When she tries to press and squirm her ass back against him, she thinks she can feel the bulge of his cock between his legs. It’s hard to tell through her own skirt and all his layers, but she doesn’t think it’s as hard as it could be, and when she tries to picture it in her mind—having only Fíli’s to go on, though Bofur would have brown hair instead of blond—she wants it all the more.

Bofur opens his mouth against her jaw, scraping his teeth lightly down the bottom, while his hot breath curls under her chin. She has to fight to keep her eyes open and keep her expression relatively normal, lest any of the others look around. “He told me you invited him into your room,” Bofur murmurs, and his foreign accent gives each word an exotic punch that filters into eroticism in her floundering mind. “He said you were all too happy to spread your legs for him and have him kneel
before you. He said you looked gorgeous, flushed and panting for him, but I can already see that. Did you like letting Nori touch you, Bilbo?”

Bilbo nods fervently, squirming back against Bofur. His voice falls deeper, and he practically growls, “He said you had a delicious pussy. Nori’s quite the connoisseur; you must taste very, very good... if we get a chance later, I’d be honoured to have a shot, even if it’s only a few licks...”

Bilbo makes a tiny whining sound, arching back. She can’t help but picture Bofur digging between her legs to find out, lapping at her just the way his friend did. She’s flattered, in a bizarre, sick way, and her eyes try to seek out Nori, but there are too many dwarves ahead of them to pick him out. She realizes a second later that Bofur’s hand is moving across her chest, his fingers now toying with the first button at the top of her blouse. Bilbo makes a keening noise and pushes out against him, delighted when he interprets it the way she wants. He pops the button loose, and the tight fabric stretched across Bilbo’s chest falls just that little bit more open. Bofur’s already on the next button. Bilbo knows, of course, that she can’t let herself be entirely stripped, but her bra should protect her somewhat, even if it’s nowhere near heavy-duty enough to handle this pony. The more she’s jostled, now both breathing hard from Bofur’s attentions and from the pony’s gait, the more her nipples start to pebble, chafing against her bra. Bofur undoes another button, enough that her top is almost slipping off of her, but not quite. The sleeves are far down her shoulders, the cups of her bra almost completely exposed, and she knows Bofur’s getting an eyeful over her shoulder. From the way his breath catches and he starts to kiss harder at her neck, she can only imagine he likes the view.

Bilbo is quickly discovering that she rather likes her neck being kissed. The way Bofur nips and licks at her spreads a cloying heat all along her skin, her head fogging up with pleasure. The slight pain of her chafed nipples is more than worth the luxury of being kissed, and the idea of him staring right down her shirt is the most alluring of all. She’s always known she was dirty, but this is absolutely sinful.

And Bofur makes it better with each hissed word. “I bet you were nice and wet for him, too,” Bofur purrs, “Nori said he was too excited to tell; he was covering you in his own spit, but I bet it was a lot of your own sweet juices. Was that it, Bilbo? Were you dripping wet for him?” His voice dips again to ask, “Would you be wet for me?”

Bilbo nods frantically: yes, of course. She’d be wet for any of them, and even now she wants to clamp her legs together and squeeze her thighs around her clit. She can feel her panties starting to cling to her again. Bofur switches his head to the other side of her neck, and Bilbo leans her head out of the way, arcing her throat to give him as much room as she can. “You’re so eager,” Bofur moans, sounding impressed and full of approval that makes Bilbo want desperately to please. “I bet you’d be wet for any of us... and here I thought it was going to be tough, surviving on rations so long... if only I’d known I could eat you out for dessert. And would you let any of the others join in, I wonder? You’ve seen the way Bombur eats; I’m sure you’d love to have his big, fat tongue between your legs, pushing into you over and over. He’d drench your walls and gobble you up, but I bet mine’s longer—I could fill you deeper. And I always please my partners. I’d figure out just what you like, and I’d deliver in spades, and I’d make sure you came so hard, again and again...”

Bilbo whines, now writhing wantonly against him, squirming along his chest and thighs and trying to reach back to hold onto his legs. She can feel his crotch growing, the press of his cock now an insistent tent nestled against her plump rear. Her panties are getting moist, and she tries to grind into the saddle, but she doesn’t even have to, because each step of the animal drives it up into her. She wants Bofur to stick his hands inside her shirt and squeeze her breasts, but of course she knows he can’t; they’re right out in the open. But then one hand starts to slide up her thigh while he talks, pushing back her skirt. “I’d treat you right, Bilbo, I promise. I’d worship your sweet pussy, kiss you over and over and fuck you with my tongue so hard...” When Bilbo moans loudly, Bofur chuckles
and growls, “I might even share you with Nori, if you wanted. Would you like that, Bilbo? The two of us on you at once? I could bury my face in your front while he took you from behind, lapping over your little hole. We could both kneel at your feet, eating you out from both ends... or maybe we’d fuck you from both ends, if you wanted it. Would you like that, Bilbo? Skewered on two thick dwarf cocks? We’re good at working together; I promise. We’d give you a good rhythm. We’d be gentle. Or rough, if you wanted it rough... and then there’s the rest of your perfect body we’d love to worship with our cocks and hands and mouths...”

Bilbo’s noises don’t even sound like a hobbit anymore. She’s panting and writhing and whining like an animal, mating right now her only concern. Finally, Bofur’s hand reaches her inner thigh, nestled just against her crotch, hidden under her skirt and behind the pony’s neck from the view of the others. He rubs his palm flat along her panties, and she bucks into him. He shushes her like a skittish horse and curls his huge fingers around her, cupping her and rubbing through the crease in the middle. He keeps kissing her and touching while he purrs in her ear, “What a beautiful thing you are, all squirming and wet for me. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything more fuckable in my life. You know, Bilbo, this whole trip was worth it, just to see you and feel your warm pussy in my hand.”

Bilbo can’t take it anymore. Mewling desperately, she shoves her hands under her own skirt, finding his and pulling it off, only to pull her moist panties away from her body and shove his hand inside. Bofur lets himself be moved, his fingers instead cupping her beneath the fabric, just his hot, rough skin against hers. He rubs her all the harder, while she pulls her hands back out to throw up over his shoulders, clinging on to his cloak as best she can, her body thrust out. Bofur’s middle fingers pushes in at the middle, rubbing along her slit, and it’s all she can do not to come on the spot. She’s just about to snap at him to keep talking when he picks it up again, “Is that something you like, Bilbo? Dirty fantasies? Well, you came to the right dwarf, although it’s no fantasy what I’m going to do to you when I get you alone, and then again if I decide to let Nori join in on the fun...”

Finally, the blunt tip of his finger pops inside her, just shallowly between her lips, probing around at the crinkled folds of her walls and the little holes there. His touch is expert, deliberately teasing her and playing with just the right spots, and his voice is nothing short of wicked. “I should’ve brought some toys along. I’m a toy maker, you know, back at home. I should’ve brought you a nice, big toy to stuff inside yourself to enjoy for the ride... I could make it shaped like any of us you wanted. I could give it extra ridges, little bumps, even veins like the real thing... I could even make you a replica of Thorin’s dick, if you wanted, so you could ride our king’s cock any time you felt too empty...”

Bilbo doesn’t even know what Thorin’s dick looks like, but the thought of it still drives her mad. She’s sure her face is completely wrecked, red and hazy with heavy, dilated eyes and a mouth that can’t seem to close. She’s thrusting back into his hand with each downward move of the pony, humping him in desperation. But the thing that really pushes her over the edge is when his teeth sink into her shoulder, and Bilbo shrieks, tossing up and into him while he bites her hard and shoves his finger up inside her. Her body has no time to adjust; her walls flail wildly around it, bursting with natural lube, while his other fingers rub at the outside of her lips and his mouth sucks at her skin. Her orgasm is so colossal that she barely realizes several of the dwarves have turned around to look at her.

Only when Bofur’s mouth pulls off of her does she start to come down. His finger slips out, too, and she’s left shaking, trembling, nearly crying from being so over stimulated. Dori and Ori are looking back at her, stunned, and she doesn’t even have the wherewithal to smile at them. On the surface, all her clothes are still on and they can’t see between her legs. But she still can’t help but feel they know how dirty she is.

And the worst part of that is that it only excites her more.
They eat mostly in the midst of travel, stopping only here and there for short washroom breaks and to
feed the ponies, each time of which Bilbo has to change her panties. By the time they’re finally ready
to set up camp for the night, Bofur’s brought her off three times, and he’s come once against her.
Several times, she’s offered rides with other dwarves, but she answers all of them with ‘tomorrow.’
She imagines their quest is going to be very long, with more than enough time for rounds, and she’s
not sure she wants to give any of them Bofur’s sloppy seconds. She’s not sure if any of them would
treat her the same way he does—Nori, obviously, would—but there’ll be time to find out another
day, when she’s not totally addicted to having Bofur finger her and whisper obscenities in her ear.
When they stop, she tries to pull one of her bra straps over the bite mark he left her with, and the
fading light mostly hides it, but come morning, she thinks she’ll have some explaining to do.

All of that’s rendered moot when the rain starts coming down, first in drips and drabs and then
enough to soak her white shirt tightly against her skin. On the bright side, it helps muffle the scent of
her arousal, although the stench of wet fur from the ponies isn’t any good. The water helps make her
feel a bit cleaner, and cool her down, but it does make the ground too muddy and completely outlines
her bra through her blouse. Some of the politer dwarves try not to stare, although she irrationally
feels like they all must know how naughty she is by now.

They try to find a place amongst the trees that crop up here and there in the hills to shield them from
the rain. While the others set out their sleeping bags, Dori complains loudly, “What good is it having
a wizard with us if he can’t even keep us dry?”

But Nori chimes in, “What wizard?” And then, as they all start looking around, they realize that they
have, in fact, managed to lose Gandalf. This is especially worrisome for Bilbo, as he’s the only one
she knew beyond two days ago. She tells herself he’ll pop back up as he’s prone to do, but it’s still
disconcerting.

In the meantime, she stands awkwardly amidst them, wondering if she should just slip into Bofur’s
sleeping bag. He’d probably let her, but he also might be getting tired of her by now, and she’s not
quite sure if she could even handle another round. Her legs are very shaky and her thighs are very
sore from the ride, and Bofur’s the sort who has everlasting energy that’ll probably wear her out.

So she weaves through the crowd, again, to find Thorin. She tells herself for the umpteenth time that
this is a thing to see the leader about, although he’s still intimidating to approach. Working on the
pack pony with Dwalin, Thorin looks around at her asks, “What?” The rain’s flattened his hair
attractively around his face and beaded him with little crystals. The sky’s transitioned back into a
calmer sprinkle now, but everyone’s still thoroughly wet.

It takes a bit of courage-gathering for Bilbo to admit, “I... I forgot to pack my sleeping bag.” She
leaves off the part about how she probably would’ve had time to think of it if they hadn’t left without
her, because she isn’t looking forward to being accused of excuses.

Thorin scolds her anyway, “That was foolish of you.”

She tries not to wilt too much. “I know. I’m sorry.” And then, very timidly, she mumbles, “Um,
perhaps I could... share with someone?” And by that, she very much means him. As he spent most of
the time in her house and on the road off with Gandalf, and aside from maybe Bifur, who doesn’t
really talk at all, she knows the least about him.

That’s made all the clearer when his expression changes. She expected a flat out rejection and hoped
for a suggestive invitation, but Thorin actually looks uncomfortable. It irks Bilbo and makes her
immediately want to snatch the idea back. Thorin doesn’t say anything for a moment, and it leaves
Bilbo’s imagination to fill in the gaps. She can’t help but wonder if it has anything to do with his
body’s change. When she first had her outside adjusted to match her insides, even with Gandalf’s spells, it wasn’t an immediate thing. Apart from coping with herself, she was nervous to be close to other people too, worrying both that they would find out and how they would react if they did.

But that was a long time ago, and she’d assumed that Thorin’s was an easy, far off transition, too. She wants to apologize and reassure him that she won’t press him about it, except that these are still all just assumptions in her head, and for all she knows, Thorin is simply uncomfortable at the idea of any of his subjects sleeping with a sinful hobbit.

Over the hump of the pony’s back, Dwalin saves them both by grunting, “She can sleep with me.” Which suits Bilbo just fine. There’s something to the irony of spending her first night on the road with Dwalin, since he was the first one she invited into her home and let her thoughts run wild over.

She tries to give Thorin a warm smile, hoping he doesn’t think her too much of an idiot. His face has become stony again, and Bilbo has to wonder if Dwalin knows and was specifically jumping in to rescue his king. From what Bilbo understands, Dwalin is also from the Lonely Mountain, and he’s, perhaps, the most fiercely loyal to Thorin.

Thorin nods to Dwalin and says in all seriousness, “Treat her right.”

They eat first. It isn’t an impressive meal, because although the dwarves stocked up on food from the Inn, they talk of making it last. It’s far from the civilized, sit-down meals she’s used to, but then, so is everything on this trip. They don’t bother with a fire, because by the time the rain’s completely gone, everyone’s in too sour a mood to go looking for sticks. Even Bilbo, who enjoyed most of her trip here under Bofur’s helpful care, slinks off to bed in something of a funk. No matter how much she wrings them out, her clothes are damp, and she’s sure there’s no point changing; the supply pony got soaked as much as the rest of them.

At least Dwalin doesn’t complain about it. The two of them tuck back on the edge of the circle, as though guarding the others, and Dwalin drops his heavy cloak off his shoulders and kicks away his boots. It leaves him a little drier underneath, and it also gives Bilbo a chance to ogle his feet, which, surprisingly, are about the same size as hers, though not nearly so hairy. When he catches her staring, she quickly looks away.

He settles into the flap of his bag, lifting up the top blanket, and Bilbo squirms into it, murmuring as she goes, “Thank you.” There’s very little room in the bag. Although he’s far from the fattest of the dwarves, Dwalin might just be the biggest, and it squishes her up tightly against him. She briefly entertains the idea of tugging him on top of her, under the excuse that the rain might come again, but then she decides she’s burdened him enough. Most of the fabrics that cling to him are coarse, but some are soft, and it’s warm inside the sleep bag despite the dampness. Through the darkness all around them, she can just barely see his outline, looking down at her with a contemplative expression. Judging by his stoic personality, she keeps expecting him to roll the other way and ignore her, but he doesn’t.

She doesn’t either. She faces him, holding her arms against her breasts to keep them from crushing against his broad chest. She tries to keep her legs from rubbing against his, but they feel raw from riding and she just can’t get comfortable. After a good deal too much rustling, she mumbles a hoarse, “Sorry.”

Dwalin looks down at her. He’s been rod-still this whole time, and after a moment more of her wriggling around, he grumbles, “Stop squirming. You’re making me hot.”

Of course, that could just refer to the growing temperature inside the sleeping bag, but it turns Bilbo’s
cheeks pink nonetheless. Dwarves can be oddly... blunt.

Finally, because this situation is getting difficult and of course she wouldn’t mind having Dwalin, Bilbo mutters, “I don’t mind.” She really doesn’t. She wanted Dwalin from the moment she first saw him. His fingers are just as thick as Bofur’s are, maybe longer, and he’s tall and strong and probably has a giant dick to match, and Bilbo’s already squished tightly against him with her shirt soaked through. She can’t help but think about all the possibilities. It was no fun, sleeping alone last night after Fíli and Kíli left her, but this time Dwalin wouldn’t have anywhere to run.

Dwalin says slowly, “That isn’t something you should start...”

The smart thing to do would be to shut up. But Bilbo only murmurs, “Nori, Fíli, and Kíli already... well, and Bofur...” They didn’t quite take her, not so definitively, but that seems to be enough. In the faint moonlight, she can see Dwalin’s expression softening. She can tell, suddenly, that it isn’t that he disapproves, it’s that his sense of honour’s holding him back.

After a minute of Bilbo rubbing herself shameless against him, because now her body’s moving out of her control, Dwalin says even slower, “I won’t defile a maiden. I’m not a good first. ...But...” His voice hesitates, and when it returns, it’s a heady growl. “I suppose there’s no harm in rubbing against one.”

And just like that, he rolls her over.

Suddenly, Dwalin’s on top of her, his arms holding him to either side of her, supporting all his weight even while his body bares down on her. Her thighs eagerly part around him, legs hooking over his, and Dwalin rolls his crotch against her skirt. She’s too busy fidgeting into place to notice much the first time, but the second time he grinds into her, she can feel the imprint of him, hard and engorged. It rubs between her legs, her skirt half hiked up around it, over and over, while Dwalin’s mouth lowers onto hers. Bilbo gasps into the kiss, expecting to be ravaged.

Half of it is hard. His tongue shoves into her, but only after she’s opened for him, and it fills her up, playing with her own, but it never chokes her. He nips at her bottom lip but doesn’t leave marks, tugs at her but not too hard, licks at the corners of her mouth, but not too messy. He kisses with such respect and an intoxicating sort of protectiveness, but he’s strong at the same time, and she can feel him ravishing her through all his reserves. Bilbo runs her tinier arms over his shoulders to wrap around his neck, fingers threading in his hair. She wants to strip all her clothes away, show him and let him feel what she’s like bare, but there’s no time for it. He takes her efficiently, with a steady rhythm against her trembling hips. All Bilbo has to do is lay back and receive all his gifts.

Dwalin’s good. They’ve all been good, but this is the first time she’s been kissed consistently through it and the first time she’s felt a cock grinding against her pussy. There’s too much fabric between them, but she can still feel him through it, and the kisses make up for any missing intimacy. Dwalin doesn’t even touch her with his hands, just holds himself up to keep balance and control. His mouth and hips do enough work. Bilbo came in shivering, but now she’s wracked with pleasure. Her hips try to hump him on their own, but she’s much weaker and smaller next to him and she winds up just being ground into the sleeping bag. She’s soaking her panties again, channel flexing and wet for him, but she doesn’t want to stop kissing him long enough to convince him to do more. Instead, she just surrenders to the flow of it, while her head thins more and more in the wake of carnal bliss.

And then she’s bursting all at once, crying into his mouth and thrusting up into him. He growls fiercely down her throat and slams her harder into the ground. She spasms, clutches on, cries and croons and moans as she spends herself inside her panties, and Dwalin just keeps thrusting into her, right through her orgasm. She’s still dizzy and boneless when he finally roars his own release, his hips stilling to stay where they are, crushed low against her. For a few more lust-filled minutes,
Dwalin rumbles shallowly against her and their kisses dissipate into smaller, lighter things, until they’re just exchanging a peck here and there and Bilbo’s too exhausted to keep her head up. She lets it fall back against the bulge in the sleeping bag that substitutes for a pillow, and Dwalin hovers over her, breathing hard.

When he rolls off next to her, Bilbo latches right onto him. It occurs to her belatedly that they should’ve tried to be quieter, but then, their kisses probably stifled most of it, and when she tries to listen past the blood pounding in her ears, a few loud snores from the other dwarves drown out everything else.

This time, Dwalin lets her cuddle against him. He even throws one heavy arm over her waist, after gently brushing a few honey curls aside and pressing a kiss to her forehead. Her murmurs a spent, “Good night, Bilbo.”

Exhausted, Bilbo falls off to sleep too easily, sure, more than ever, that she made the right decision.

For a good many days, their trip is much the same. Bilbo winds up mostly riding with Bofur and Nori, a few times with Fíli and Kíli, and once or twice with Dwalin. She means to get a chance with all the dwarves, but for the first few days, it’s easier to ride with those she knows. Each is a different experience; riding with Dwalin is very safe and secure, and she tries not to act on her arousal because he often rides up front with Thorin. Fíli and Kíli are excitable and like to play with, but they don’t seem quite experienced and skilled enough to pull it off the way Bofur and Nori do, so she mostly only gets fondled by them whilst hearing their lewd fantasies. Bofur and Nori can sneak her off to the back and bring her to her peak several times in one trip, sometimes with fingers inside her and sometimes just with their words or their mouths on the back of her neck and shoulders.

For all of these days, she sleeps with one of the dwarves she rides with. There’s never enough privacy to go as far as she’d like, so she only ever gets one at a time and fleeting touches or humping. In a week, she gets Dwalin again, and after he’s brought them both off by rocking against her, she falls asleep to the thought of who she’ll branch out to next, maybe tomorrow. Choosing different men to sample in different ways does make the days interesting, and she hasn’t gone a single one dry, though the rest of the trip is monotonous and tiresome.

Gandalf shows up again during this week and disappears twice more. On the night she falls asleep curled up next to Dwalin again, Gandalf’s missing.

When she’s gently nudged awake, she murmurs, “No,” and snuggles back into the warmth all around her. She was having a very pleasant dream and sleeping quite well, and now that her body’s returned to the waking world, she finds it much heavier and sore than its counterpart in her dream.

But the voice says, “Bilbo,” somewhat sternly, and Bilbo whimpers and blinks her eyes open, expecting to get bombarded with light.

Except that it’s still dark. She realizes that she’s burrowed herself inside the sleeping bag, tangled up in Dwalin’s legs, and he’s now trying to tug her out at least enough to see his face.

She lets him, mainly because by now all the other dwarves are starting to get up, and it’s still so dark outside that Bilbo doesn’t understand why.

Balin is the closest to them, and when she catches his eye, he points over her shoulder. She twists around to look up the hill and finds a flicker of light through the trees. Apparently, this is noteworthy enough to rouse every last one of them from a perfectly good sleep. At first, only Balin wanders
closer to it, farther up the hill. She’s learned by now that he’s usually their lookout, but now he
comes creeping back and shakes his head, apparently unable to tell where it is.

Bilbo would much prefer to go back to sleep. They’ve made enough of their own fires, and she
doesn’t see what’s so special about that one, so she only tugs on Dwalin’s tunic and hopes to drag
him back to sleep with her.

But Dwalin gets up, and Bilbo glumly follows, coming to sit in a little circle while they all discuss
the fire. Glóin and Óin argue the loudest, which makes it very difficult for Bilbo to go back to sleep
as much as she would like. Through her sleep-addled haze, she does come to realize the situation
better; they’re low on food and supplies, and, at least, for the dwarves that haven’t touched her,
they’re getting bored and restless and need to do something. They’re out of hobbit land by now, but
the fire could still be a friend. It could be men, or even elves, which Thorin doesn’t at all want to see,
but it could also be something more menacing. Here Ori points out that goblins are hard to picture
sitting around a campfire, preferring underground, dark places, and this is true. It must be a controlled
fire, so it couldn’t be any beasts.

Finally, the dwarves decided it’s worth looking into, and that sparks another argument over who
should go, until Glóin says, “Well, what did we bring a burglar for if not to sneak about?”

That’s enough for Bilbo to wake up properly. She blinks at him in surprise, feeling wholly
inadequate to sneak about the woods. But then, as they quickly remind her, she hasn’t done anything
else on this trip, and since she’s made it clear she won’t be joining in any fights, this is the task she
gets. Some of the dwarves shake their heads and say not to send her, mostly Dwalin and Balin, but
Fíli and Kíli chime excitedly that she’s perfect for this sort of thing, and in the end, Thorin decides
loud enough to silence the rest of the din, “It’s the burglar’s turn.”

When Bilbo looks timidly up at him, Thorin says, “Be careful, and come back as soon as you can. If
not, hoot twice like a barn owl, and we’ll do what we can.”

Bilbo has no ability to hoot like any owls, but the way Thorin looks at her makes her keep quiet. She
realizes, of course, that she hasn’t done anything else on this trip other than have his men service her,
and of course she does want to be useful. Finally, Thorin’s giving her a chance to prove herself. She
knows that some of the others still think her a poor choice to bring along, and that’s not something
Bilbo wants them to spend the whole trip thinking. So she nods sullenly and resolves to do what she
can.

The others linger with her up most of the hill, but they fall away the nearer to the top she gets, until
she’s slipping through the trees on her own. As frightening as it is to be alone in the tall woods,
going by herself does make it easier to stay hidden. Hobbits are very good at moving absolutely
silently, and she doesn’t snap a single twig as she weaves through the different trunks and logs,
which grow thicker and thicker the farther she goes, though the warm orange lick of the fire stays
fixed ahead like a beacon. In that light, she can see the wisdom of inspecting the fire: it looks very
comfortable.

Or at least, it looked comfortable, when it was just a lone fire in the distance. When she reaches the
edge of the clearing and peers out from around the massive trunk of the nearest tree, her blood
freezes in her veins.

The creatures that sit around the fire aren’t dwarves at all. They’re not hobbits, or men, or elves, or
even orcs. They’re great, towering beasts with crinkly grey skin, wearing rags like loin clothes and
lumbering over a large fire with a pot hanging above it and three huge mugs in their hands. They
must be giants, she thinks, or maybe trolls. Either way, they’re the ugliest things she’s ever seen, and
Bilbo spends a good few minutes just drowning in her nerves.
“Mutton yesterday, mutton today, and blimey, if it don’t look like mutton again tomorrer,” one of the trolls mutters, which causes the other to snarl at him and tag a big swig of his drink.

The third one mutters, “Shaddup!” And then promptly launches into a tirade of insults, while Bilbo’s head grows dizzy—she thinks she might faint again.

Luckily, her grip on the tree holds her up, and one of the benefits to large hobbit feet is excellent balance. She stays where she is, quivering, and wonders if she should scramble back to Thorin and the others right now and say it’s all utterly hopeless; they’ll have to move, immediately, far around these trolls, and go on with their quest only when they’re at a safe distance. Or at least, that’s what she’d recommend.

She has no way of knowing if they’ll actually listen to her. Dwarves, as far as she can tell, are brash, and a little reckless, and judging from their songs, they don’t like to avoid a fight when they can. Which makes Bilbo wonder if warning them is any good at all—it might just make them rush out and get them all caught.

Of course, she can’t go back empty handed and without anything to say. She’ll have to do something. For one wild moment, she actually considers trying to rob them. She’s supposed to be a burglar, after all, and that would certainly quench any of their doubts about her, if she showed back up having not only survived but properly burglared trolls.

It sounds all very nice in theory, but Bilbo isn’t quite foolish enough to do it. Instead, she takes a step away from the tree, and in her terrified haste, she steps on a branch. Having never made such a horrible mistake before, Bilbo instantly freezes up, and that instant is all the trolls need to look around at her. She doesn’t dare turn to see, but their guttural conversation’s abruptly broken off.

With one tremendous gulp, Bilbo lunges into the air, ready to run as fast as her stout legs can carry her, except that at that exact moment, one of the troll’s hands punches through the trees. Its meaty paws close around her, covering her entire torso and plucking her right off the floor. She’s pulled back towards the fire, held right in front of the troll’s giant, slumping face, with its beady little eyes and uneven teeth. Its grip is crushing, and all Bilbo can do is stare up in horror as it exclaims, “Bert, look what I caught!”

“What is it?” One of the others asks, peering over. All three of them smell horrible. It’s easily the most obnoxious scent she’s ever smelled in her life, and to make matters worse, the troll that caught her has cold, almost slimy skin, and Bilbo’s pitiful whimper is as much from disgust as fright.

“Lumme if I know!” the other squawks. “What are yer?”

Somehow, Bilbo manages to mumble, “Bilbo Baggins, a bur—a hobbit.” She’s shaking all over, which makes her voice come out higher pitched than usual, and she’s frantically trying to think of how to hoot like an owl.

“A burrahobbit?” one asks.

“What’s a burrahobbit doing out ‘ere?”

“And can yer cook ‘em?”

The one called Bert suggests, “You can try,” while Bilbo groans pitifully. They then launch into a soul-crushing conversation about how they’re going to eat her, how she’ll hardly make more than a mouthful, but how maybe if they cook her first, the flavour will be worth it.

Unfortunately, they take much too long to argue. At first, Bilbo can’t think of anything, because her
mind is both numb and racing and simply not coherent. But then she starts to worry about the
dwarves, because surely she should’ve reported back by now, and instead she’s stuck in a troll fist
and can’t even warn them. If they can’t hear the bickering trolls down the hill, they certainly won’t
hear her tiny voice.

She’s still fretting, and they’re still arguing, when Balin suddenly stumbles through the trees, only to
look up at them in utter shock. Bilbo spots him first, but before she has time to shout at him to run,
the trolls are on him. Balin shouts and kicks and spits, but the two trolls that aren’t holding Bilbo
tackle him easily. One of them produces a sack out of their pile of supplies in the corner, and they
pop Balin right inside, tying him all the way up to his chin. He shouts at them the whole time, but the
troll holding Bilbo simply plucks Balin up in the other hand and squeezes him around the middle
until he runs out of air and starts choking instead. Nearly crying, Bilbo shouts, “Stop!” at the troll,
but it doesn’t seem to hear her. It holds both of them tight while the other two examine the woods
where Balin popped out of. There’re enough boulders and trees to mostly hide them when they
crouch, helped along by the fact that it’s dark and their skin isn’t that far from a rock’s.

A moment later, Fíli and Kíli come looking through the trees, only to each get grabbed in a bag
before they can shout. Dwalin’s next, then Glóin and Óin, and then the others all pour through at
once, now running and poised like they’re prepared to fight, but there isn’t much they can do when
sacks keep dropping over their heads out of nowhere. One by one, they’re plucked up and tied,
Thorin last, who screams the loudest and puts up the biggest fight but gets caught nonetheless. It was
a poorly formed plan at best, and none of them were prepared, and by now the trolls are fully woken
up with delighted, hungry grins. They toss all of the dwarves down together next to the fire. In a few
minutes, everyone’s stopped shouting, intent on trying to squirm out of the sacks instead. Balin’s
dropped with the others, but they keep Bilbo up.

“Let’s eat this ‘un first,” one announces, while the other two seem to decide that no more dwarves
are coming. “And that ‘un!”

The one he’s pointing to is Ori, who looks quite as terrified as Bilbo does, except that he’s struggling
more. A troll obliges and scoops him up, while Dori shouts, “No! Put him down! PUT HIM
DOWN!”

The trolls of course, don’t listen, and instead hold Bilbo and Ori up, grumbling, “They’re the two
smallest! Why eat ‘em first?”

“Save the best fer last!” the other snickers.

“We haven’t got all night,” the third one grumbles. “Do ye want to turn to stone when the sun comes
up? We spent enough time catchin’ ‘em; let’s get to eatin’!” And that sets the others in motion, while
the words play over in Bilbo’s ears: turn to stone. She’s not good enough with time to figure out how
far away dawn is, but she feels the need to try. She looks frantically over at the pile of dwarves,
hoping they can think to make some sort of distraction, but they’re all too busy trying to get out of
their sacks. One of the trolls starts shaking Ori upside down, until his cloak and scarf fall off and a
small cup topples out of his pocket, which Ori tries to snatch for with wide eyes. Bilbo’s turned
upside down next, which makes her skirt fall down around her and the blood rush into her head,
which makes it very difficult to think.

“This ‘un’s dressed different!” her troll says, while Bilbo tries to think straight and ignore the
circulation cutting out of her legs where he’s gripping her. “It’s got just skin on the bottom!”

“That’ll taste better,” another one jumps in. “We should strip ‘em!” The dwarves, of course, all start
shouting angrily, but Bilbo can’t help feel a bit of relief; at least that’ll take more time. She’s abruptly
flipped around. Her head lulls around, dizzy, while the trolls big fingers probe at her body, trying to
clutch onto her clothes.

Finally, a troll says, “Just cut ‘em!”

“No!” Bilbo squeaks. She can already tell from the way they hold and jab at her that they wouldn’t be dexterous enough to just cut off her clothes, so she pulls her blouse right over her head before they can. The troll above her leans back, looking down in surprise, as if it didn’t think her capable of dressing and undressing herself. Since it’s still holding her tightly around the legs, she shouts, “You’ll have to let me down if you want the rest off!”

“We ain’t putting yer down!” another troll snorts. “Ye’ll run away!”

“No if we tie it up,” another interjects.

Bilbo tries to punch the troll holding her, but it has no effect. The troll barks, “Take that other thing off, first!” It takes Bilbo a second to realize that the troll means her bra. She gives it one frantic look, then glances back at the dwarves, some of which are looking at her but most of which are busy trying not to die.

In light of not dying, modesty doesn’t seem very important. When she glances over her shoulder, Ori’s sitting in the other troll’s hand, stripping away his clothes. This gives Bilbo pause, because when his tunic’s off, his chest is very feminine, although his breasts are much smaller than hers and he isn’t wearing a bra. It occurs to her that she has no good concept of dwarf genders, but now really isn’t the time to be contemplating that.

The troll pokes her again, and, filled with Ori’s bravery, Bilbo does the same and reaches back to unclip her bra. There’s nowhere to put it, so she drops it to the ground, like her blouse.

Then the troll plunks her so hard on the ground that her knees buckle and she falls over. The scratch of the hard ground, full of pebbles jamming into her, is painful against her bare back, and she hisses. Before she can stand up, it’s tugging her skirt right off her. She can hear the material make an awful ripping sound, dragging her forward, and her legs are thrust into the air as its jerked away. She realizes too late that she isn’t wearing any panties—Nori took them earlier when they stopped for a bathroom break, though he’d promises to give them back. That leaves her completely naked from head to foot, sitting between all her bound friends and the fire, with trolls on either side and Ori squirming next to her, frantically pushing off his boots and pants before the trolls get any ideas of stripping them with knives.

Bilbo tries to look away from Ori when he’s naked, trying to be polite, even though it’ll hardly matter if they’re about to die in a few minutes. But it’s rendered a moot effort when the trolls shove her against Ori a second later, hard enough to knock them both back down. With Bilbo pinned, naked, against an equally naked Ori, the trolls pull a length of rope out of their supplies. She can only assume the trolls are going to hang them together and string them over the fire, which she very much does not want to happen.

It’s hard to think of a distraction at a time like this. She’s terrified out of her mind, and Ori doesn’t seem any better, except that he keeps squirming, and now she can feel it all. He’s softer than the other dwarves have been, and he has supple curves that seem to slither so sensuously against her own, his perky tits rubbing into her heavy breasts. It takes him a second to get his hands and knees under him and be able to sit up, but by then the trolls are back and squish him tightly into Bilbo. The rope’s wrapped around their waist, and one of Ori’s legs kicks between hers. She feels, as they’re rolled over so she’s on top of him, that he’s no different between the legs than she is.

She doesn’t plan on saying anything about it, because she’s too busy struggling to breathe, but Ori
moans as he wriggles beneath her, then whines forlornly, “I’m going to die before switching again!”

Maybe just for a distraction from the terror of having her arms pulled behind her and clumsily bound with rope, Bilbo mumbles, “Switching?” Once her arms are fastened together, the trolls roll them over again, Ori now on top and crushing her with his warm body, their legs hopelessly entangled. He’s stopped squirming, but she can still feel his hips lightly trembling against hers, and the slightly-prickly patch of short brown hair below his stomach. It scratches when it runs through hers. In another setting, at another time, this might not be so bad a situation, but at the moment, Bilbo doesn’t have the luxury of giving in to Ori’s thrilling body.

Yet Ori grumbles bitterly, “I thought it would be easier to travel as a man, but since you were doing so well, I thought I’d switch tomorrow to being a wom—” but he—or she, if that’s where the conversation was going—cuts off before she can finish, because now the trolls are picking them up, and they both gasp as they’re hefted into the air. Ori looks like she’s going to start crying, but the last minute explanation’s given Bilbo an idea. She’d kiss Ori for it, but there isn’t any time.

Before they can be tied across the fire, Bilbo shouts at the top of her lungs, “WAIT!”

The troll holding them freezes so abruptly that Bilbo and Ori go swinging in place, which is the last thing Bilbo’s addled brain needs right now. But she still has the wherewithal to insist, “You’re making a terrible mistake!”

“What’d yeh stop for?” another troll grunts.

“The burrahobbit says we’re makin’ a mistake!”

“Well, o’ course it does, it doesn’t wanna get ate now, do it?”

“It’s not that,” Bilbo pipes in, while Ori looks at her in confusion and the other dwarves go strangely silent below them listening. “Us two—we’re women!”

The trolls look at each other and grunt, “So?”

“So,” Bilbo continues, now hoping trolls understand reproduction well enough to follow her desperate plan, “If you eat us all now, you’ll only eat tonight! But what about tomorrow?”

“Mutton,” one grunts bitterly.

“We can save a few,” the second suggests.

The third shakes his head and barks, “What’s that got ter do with women?”

Bilbo, trying to sound as matter-of-fact and obvious as possible, says “Because if you breed us, you can have dwarves every night!”

“‘Ere now, I thought you was a burrahobbit.”

“Shaddup, Bill!” While the troll that got barked at frowns, the one holding Bilbo pulls her closer, repeating slowly, clearly not fully understanding, “So... if we... breed yer, we get a bunch more?”

Bilbo nods her head, though Ori looks just as dumbfounded as the trolls. “That’s right! If you put us with the men down there, say, six each tonight, then you’ll have twelve new dwarves—ah, burrahobbits—tomorrow! Plus the fourteen you already have! That’s twenty-six things to eat!”

She can see the trolls already trying to work that out in their head. The entire suggestion itself,
obviously, couldn’t work at all, but the math seems to have tripped them up enough to make them overlook how long it actually takes to make a child and whether or not dwarves and hobbits are even compatible that way. After a few minutes of looking dazedly around at each other, during which Bilbo whispers to Ori, “Help me stall,” the trolls lower them back to the ground.

Bilbo and Ori are unbound around the middle, though the trolls tie their ankles together so they couldn’t go far apart. Ori now looks sure of what to do, though the first thing both of them do is try to cover themselves up. They’re still kept near the fire, right between the trolls, so it would be foolish to try and run. The trolls don’t even seem to be thinking about that. Instead, they hover over the dwarves, trying to pick which ones. In the end, they choose the two tallest—Dwalin and Thorin.

Dwalin’s pulled out of his sack and dropped right on top of Ori, while Thorin’s pushed onto Bilbo. She expects him to look at her like she’s gone mad, but at first Thorin is all panic, scrambling back up after being released from the troll’s grip. He straddles her lap, still fully clothed, while she looks up at him, her ass dug into the ground and her hands pushing her body up. His eyes stray once to her chest, then hurriedly divert away, his cheeks pink, and again she gets the distinct impression that he’s incredibly uncomfortable, but then, none of them are right now.

Because Thorin isn’t doing anything, and Bilbo knows she has to make it look good, she crawls out from under him. Her leg is tugged aside once by Ori, who’s pulling Dwalin down on top of her and writhing against him like they’re really making love. Bilbo climbs into Thorin’s lap. There’s no telling how much the trolls know, but they probably know the basics. She just feels lucky, more for Thorin than herself, that they don’t seem to realize no children are going to happen while Dwalin and Thorin still have their pants on.

Bilbo goes on as if this is all perfectly normal, and she wraps her arms around Thorin’s shoulders, lifting up to mumble, “I’m sorry.” Even though she’s got a plan, she’s still trembling. It’s horribly embarrassing to do this with all the dwarves and trolls watching, but the worst of it is Thorin, who she knows she’s distressing. The fact that he’s so handsome and she does want him doesn’t help at all. She feels ashamed for finding any silver lining in this, until Thorin’s strong hands clap onto her waist.

He holds her while she starts rocking into him, gyrating her hips the way any animal would know to do, and he looks aside before ducking close enough to whisper back, “What are you doing?” When his long hair trails over her shoulder, she can’t help but shiver.

She gasps into his ear, “Stalling for time.” She crushes closer as she does it, because he’s so warm and the air is cold, and she’s been terrified this whole time, and even if he’s as helpless as she is, he feels safer. He feels sturdy, secure, and that gives her the strength to keep going, riding him through his pants and hiding her heavy blush, because this isn’t where she wants to die.

At her explanation, Thorin suddenly grabs her and rolls her over. Her back hits the ground again, and she gasps, arching up, just to have him climbing over her. It’s the same way Dwalin’s taking Ori, and it occurs to her that perhaps he’s trying to protect her, shielding her naked body from the hungry trolls. Either way, Bilbo will take it, and she’s relieved to have Thorin participate, to not be the only one in this deception. With her legs already spread wide around him, Thorin grinds her into the floor of the clearing with languid, powerful rolls of his hips that leave her writhing beneath him, wanting more.

She wants desperately to kiss him, to run her fingers through his hair and grab at the thick fur of his collar and pull him down, but she doesn’t dare. All she can do is lie there and whine as he pretends to fuck her, until one of the trolls overhead shouts, “How long is this gonna take?”

Bilbo looks over at Ori, who’s holding onto Dwalin with all fours and humping him furiously while
he groans and rolls into her right back. It isn’t as dark as it was before, and there is some light coming through the trees, but it’s not enough. The hills all around them protect them too much, and Bilbo doesn’t know how much longer the charade can go on. Then Thorin yells so loud she jumps against him, “We’re almost there! A few more minutes and I’ll fill her up until she’s bursting with my children.” His roar is almost feral, completely convincing, and it shuts the trolls up, while Bilbo moans and buries her blushing face back into his neck. She likes the idea of being filled with Thorin Oakenshield’s seed far too much. She’d love to have her belly swell with his children, although it might just be because she’s so turned on from him that it clouds her judgment, and she doesn’t even really think she could carry Dwarven children, but she could always talk to Gandalf, and the thought of it is still so thrilling...

Ori cries out suddenly, and that draws all the trolls’ attention. Bilbo tries to look again, only to see Ori shrieking and clinging desperately to Dwalin, her face completely swamped in pleasure despite all the chaos around them. Bilbo knows that if Thorin’s crotch keeps rocking into her, even fully clothed and with all the witnesses, she’ll follow.

But out of the blue, a voice booms through the clearing, “Dawn take you all, and stone be to you!” It’s so thunderous that it takes Bilbo a moment to recognize Gandalf, and in that one moment, a blaze of light streams through the clearing. It’s as if Gandalf’s rushed in the day all at once: the light sweeps over the trolls before they can so much as scream.

Just like that, the three trolls stop moving. They stop breathing. They lose all life together, frozen in mid-reach towards Dwalin and Ori, who’ve stilled, lying, panting on top of one another.

Thorin stops too, which makes Bilbo whimper pathetically. He hastily tells her, “Sorry,” clearly misinterpreting. As his weight leaves her, he shouts at the other dwarves, “Avert your eyes!” Then he’s getting up to fetch Bilbo’s clothes, though the skirt is wrecked and she can only drop it across her lap. He tells her, with a faint blush that looks wholly out of place on his regal features, “I can’t find your underwear,” which she doesn’t answer because she’s not sure she could. She shoots a look at Nori, but he’s still bound in a sack and can’t be of any use.

Beside her, Ori’s sitting on the ground, trembling and panting, while Dwalin brings her back a pile of clothes. As she fiddles them on, she asks, “Can you find my scarf and cup?”

Dwalin asks, looking genuinely confused, “What’d you bring a cup for?” Bilbo almost volunteers to find it herself, but then she remembers that she doesn’t have a working skirt, and she’s tied to Ori, anyway. Thorin finds the cup and passes it to Ori before she can answer, and she inspects it before shoving it back into her pocket.

“It’s a bit dirty now,” she sighs to Bilbo, while Dwalin goes off to look for her scarf and Thorin goes to untie the other dwarves. Bilbo’s grateful when no one asks Ori or her to help.

Bilbo tells her consolingly, “I’m sure we can find a stream to clean up soon or somewhere to buy a new one.” Ori smiles but doesn’t look entirely convinced. But all in all, given that they almost got eaten alive, Bilbo considers one marred cup not at all a bad casualty list.

It takes a bit of work for the other dwarves to free themselves, and none of them seem to want to approach Bilbo or Ori just yet, probably out of sheer embarrassment at having witnessed what they did. While they wait, Bilbo suggests, prepared to shut up at any moment, “You know, Gandalf can do wonderful changes to the body...”

But Ori just shakes her head and says, “No, that’s alright. I’m fluid.”

“Oh,” Bilbo says, not fully understanding what that means but figuring she’ll have plenty of time to
learn on the journey. But it does cause her to ask, “Was that alright? What I did back there—
announcing you as a woman?”

Ori waves a hand before rubbing at her nose, proving, once again, that she’s a dwarf and not a
hobbit lass. With all her thick clothes back on, it’s impossible to tell the curves of her naked body.
Her face is still softer than the other dwarves, but the scruff on her chin and light mustache make her
different than the women Bilbo’s used to. Ori finally decides aloud, “I think I’ll stick with being a
‘she’ for a little bit. In commemoration of my brave cup.” Which makes Bilbo laugh and Ori smile.
It’s such a luxury to laugh again, and she can feel it drawing some stares. None of this was really a
laughing matter, but in a way, she is bizarrely proud of herself. She got out alive, and if she can
survive that, she can survive anything.

Thorin comes to untie her ankle just as Gandalf reappears, announcing loudly, “Stop dawdling, you
fools—don’t you realize the trolls must have a cave or hole around here to put all their things?”

This makes Nori and Glóin in particular snap to life and hurry the others along, and Ori ties her scarf
around Bilbo’s waist to work like a miniature skirt in the meantime.

At first, Bilbo thinks she’s made a terrible mistake. She thinks that Thorin’s avoiding her, and with
good reason, because it was all her fault, but then Balin slows to walk beside her, and he assures her
quietly, “He’s proud of you. We all are.”

“Proud?” Bilbo mumbles, feeling small and useless. “I’m the one that got us into the mess in the first
place!”

“And the only one who thought to stall for time,” Balin chuckles. Indeed, when Gandalf looks
around at her, there’s a fond sparkle in his eye. Thorin is still hard to catch, but then, he got the brunt
of it besides Bilbo, and Ori and Dwalin don’t seem to mind. Ori blushed a few times when Dwalin
looks at her, and Dwalin occasionally throws her extra glances, but everyone seems so relieved to be
alive that it’s difficult to pick out any one dynamic.

Before too long, they come to a mouth of a cave that must be it, because the troll stench wafting out
is unmistakable. Bilbo isn’t excited to go inside, but some of the other dwarves rush in, clamouring
about treasure. She can see from the entrance that there are bones everywhere, but soon enough the
dwarves are pulling out weapons and digging up piles of coins. Money might’ve interested Bilbo
once, but out in the middle of nowhere, it don’t look of much use, and all she can think of when she
sees the chests is how heavy they must be. Nori and Glóin bury some, under the idea that if they ever
come back this way, they might like a bit of gold. For the most part, Bilbo just sits on a rock and
watches them work, wondering vaguely if there’s anything nice in the cave that wouldn’t be too hard
to carry, like a tiara or a new teapot.

By the end of the search, Gandalf comes out carrying a new sword. Thorin has a matching one at his
side, and they pass out various weapons to the others. Gandalf gives Bilbo a small knife in a leather
sheath that may as well be a sword to her, which she considers not taking, but then thinks, after
everything they’ve been through, a little protection might be handy. Even if she doesn’t know how to
really use a sword, she can still bluntly stab things in a pinch.

The thought alone makes her queasy, but she takes it anyway. The troll smell isn’t helping, and
finally, Fíli shouts, “Let’s get out of this horrid stink!” And no one disagrees.

They all set off back towards their ponies, while Gandalf tells them where he went. He was looking
ahead, apparently, when he found a group of elves that claimed to be fleeing from trolls, which gave
him the idea to go looking behind.
Bilbo, having always found the idea of elves fascinating but never actually met one, of course asks what they were like. Gandalf describes them as having skin like the earth and eyes like the sun, these ones with long, curled black hair more wild than any dwarf’s. This, of course, makes Thorin snort and insist that elves aren’t nearly so beautiful as people claim, although Bilbo’s awestruck from Gandalf’s story alone. A part of her is glad to have Thorin bickering again, if only to mark him back to normal.

Gandalf, agreeing with Bilbo, says, “I hope you don’t plan on insulting Elrond’s friends in Rivendell.”

Which, of course, makes Bilbo asks, “Where’s Rivendell?”

To which Gandalf replies, “Where we’re going.”
A Short Rest

Chapter Notes

A/N: This one’s a bit longer, but the next few chapters are going to be shorter I think, so it should balance. Mild warnings for food smut in the dinner scene and a foot fetish in the spa scene. My beloved tumblr followers are to blame for Bilbo’s period. ♥

There are no songs or stories the next day or for a few after that. Though they all survived the trolls and came away a little richer for it, the idea of danger stays with them. They camp in tighter packs and sometimes send two dwarves out to watch at a time. More so than the others, Bilbo rides up front with Dwalin. She feels safe with all the dwarves, but in the grand scheme of mysterious lands, she feels the safest with the biggest, sturdiest of them. Bofur and Nori don’t play with her as much anymore anyway, because everyone’s busy trying to keep their eyes on the road, though they make up for it at night when they know there’re watchers on duty.

Fíli and Kíli become the most fun, though Thorin also watches over them more closely than the others, and he shuts them down often. Bilbo understands why he’s overcautious, but it still makes for gloomy traveling.

Even though most of the dwarves don’t seem keen on the idea, Bilbo keeps hoping Rivendell will pop up along the road. Instead, they make it up one particularly harsh hill, having to walk the ponies over the river, and when they reach the top, the mountains that used to haunt the distance are only a couple days away. The sunlight washes over the brown sides, but the tips are all white with snow.

At first, Bilbo feels a spark of hope, and she asks with a bit of awe, “Is that the mountain?”

Bifur starts laughing to one side of her and Dwalin, and Balin, on the other side, chuckles fondly. “No,” he tells her. “That is only the beginning of the Misty Mountains, and we have got to get through, or over, or under those somehow, before we can come into Wilderland beyond. And it is a deal of a way even from the other side of them to the Lonely Mountain in the East where Smaug lies on our treasure.”

Bilbo mumbles a quiet, “Oh.” That puts the wind right of her sails, and suddenly she feels very tired. It feels like they’ve been on the road for ages, and apparently, they’re going to be on it for many ages more.

Behind her, Dwalin kisses the back of her skull. It makes her whole head duck forward with the force, but it makes her smile too. He doesn’t show her affection much in the light of day where anyone could see, and it’s comforting.

It holds her spirits up, and they go trotting down the hill.

The next day, at least, is better. The dwarves like having the mountains closer, and Bilbo likes having the promise of elves closer. She also likes riding with a new dwarf; Ori comes up to her and Dwalin in the morning and asks if Bilbo would like to ride with her. Bilbo readily agrees, and Dwalin looks at them strangely. When Ori gives him a smile, he looks pointedly away, and Bilbo gets the distinct impression that if he were any other dwarf, he’d be blushing.
Riding with Ori is a bit different. Because Ori isn’t big enough to reach around her for the reins, and Bilbo has no interest in holding them herself, she sits behind Ori. It puts her on a different place in the saddle than she’s used to, but the awkwardness of riding itself has worn off. Bilbo wraps her arms tightly around Ori’s waist and leans her head against Ori’s shoulder, though Ori’s taller than her and she can’t quite get her chin over it. Ori’s very warm, and the fabric of her cloak is soft. For the most part, it’s a very pleasant ride, particularly because they have more to talk about than the other dwarves. Ori’s the least inclined to fighting, and her primary interests lie in being a scribe. Once, Bilbo asks if she’s going to switch back again. Ori says probably, though she doesn’t know when, although she might have to in Rivendell; apparently, elves aren’t so understanding about beards.

Not for the first time, Bilbo thinks about growing a bit of scruff. It wouldn’t be too hard, she thinks, if she stopped plucking the stray hairs she occasionally finds and aggressively shaved her chin; at least, that usually makes the hair on her legs grow thicker. It might make her more attractive to dwarves, although it wouldn’t be very hobbitish.

When she asks Ori, Ori says she likes Bilbo just fine as she is, so Bilbo sighs and supposes so. Beards aren’t really her natural aesthetic, anyway, she just happens to be falling more into them since she likes all these dwarves so much, and they would probably turn her on to anything.

Around midday, Bilbo starts to wonder if Ori feels the same way Bilbo does about their companions. Bilbo’s never seen her sneak off with them, but she hasn’t seemed very scarred by the troll incident. And she did manage to reach an orgasm despite all the witnesses and awfulness of the situation. Even before Bilbo, and Bilbo got Thorin...

But Ori got Dwalin, and Bilbo knows how very good it feels to be crushed under him. Perhaps it was a unique incident, or perhaps Ori really does want Dwalin, in which case Bilbo feels sort of badly for snatching him up, just like she’s snatched up so many of them. And now that she’s riding behind Ori, she can’t help but think of those other dwarves, and how they act when they ride behind her. It would be so easy for Bilbo to lift her arms from Ori’s stomach to Ori’s breasts. She could clutch onto them and knead them through the fabric, and maybe Ori might like that; Bilbo always likes to have her breasts played with when she’s riding. Maybe Bilbo could slip her fingers under Ori’s tunic too. She’s never felt another woman before, but she can only imagine it would be thrilling to play with Ori’s body, and to give Ori the pleasure other dwarves give her. Ori’s wearing trousers, but Bilbo could still slip inside them if she really wanted, and she could curl her fingers around Ori’s hot pussy the way Bofur does, or pinch her thighs the way Nori does, or thumb through the fur just above the slit like Fíli and Kíli like to do. Sometimes Nori even fills both of her holes at once, letting her ride his thick fingers from either end, and Bofur always talks to her, tells her naughty things that make her squirm and pant. Bilbo couldn’t pull any of that off the way they do, but she could try.

Except that she isn’t quite there yet. She isn’t brave enough, and she doesn’t know how to find out if Ori would even want it. All the other dwarves have been so good with her about monitoring her likes, but she doesn’t know how to read those signs, and for all she knows, Ori doesn’t want her at all.

When she glances out along the pack, Dori’s the closest, but Nori isn’t far off. Bilbo briefly considers calling Nori over and asking him to fetch Bofur. She couldn’t really do it, of course, it would be far too conspicuous, but she still entertains the notion of Bofur and Nori riding on either side of her and Ori to walk her through it. They could tell her exactly what to do, and then she could touch Ori under their expert supervision, and she’d not only get to feel Ori’s pretty body, but have Bofur’s sensual voice in her head and Nori’s delightful wickedness.

But then, she’s not entirely sure that Nori would want to help her feel up his sister. He doesn’t seem as protective as Dori is, but he’s still cautious for Ori to an extent. And beside, if they did try it, Dori
would notice in a heartbeat; he keeps a watchful eye over Ori worse than a hawk.

So Bilbo slumps against Ori back, disappointedly deciding that as much as she might like to, she probably won’t get Ori and her off on his ride.

Right about then, the ponies in front of them stop, and Ori jerks on the reins to fall into line. It startles Bilbo, and she has to peer around Ori’s body to see what’s going on. As soon as she does, she gasps, and she wants to nudge Ori to ride closer, right up to the head where Gandalf is bent over his horse to talk to what can only be an elf.

It must be an elf. She couldn’t be anything else. She looks very tall, even taller than Gandalf is, slender and with long, black hair knotted in tight little ringlets, all the way down to her rear. Her skin is a rich brown, impossibly smooth, her face delicate and elegant, perfectly sculpted. After traveling with dwarves so long, the contrast is all the sharper. Her clothes are form fitting, green and silver and intricate. Though most of the words she exchanges with Gandalf are muffled in the breeze and distance, what Bilbo catches of her voice is clear and melodious. Bilbo is still in awe of her when two other elves come out of the forest behind her, looking much the same. Bilbo thinks one of them is a man, though his clothes and hair are the same as the women’s. They all have pointed ears like hobbits, except longer and thinner and overall more magical.

Yet the dwarves don’t seem to share Bilbo’s interest. Thorin grumbles loudly at them, to which Gandalf hushes him. Ori subtly draws her pony closer, weaving around Balin, just in time to hear the elf in the front chuckle, “You’re free to follow your own path, Master Dwarf, if you wish to continue going the wrong way entirely.”

While Thorin and Gandalf argue over which way to go, the other woman elf looks over the company. At Bilbo, she stops to smile, and Bilbo feels feeble and inadequate but tries to smile back.

Finally, the argument is settled. The elves turn to face the road ahead, and they walk next to Gandalf, presumably guiding the procession.

But the most marvelous thing of it is that soon they start to sing, and Bilbo closes her eyes to bask in the beauty and dream.

The lands surrounding Rivendell are beautiful. The trees grow taller and brighter, the sound of rushing water is everywhere, and the air is sweet. Their elf procession leaves them at a towering stone bridge with impressive columns at either side and a staggering view of the Elven home beyond. It looks half carved out of the rock face, half carved out of trees, tucked in amidst waterfalls and the glow of the high sun. It’s the sort of view that Bilbo wants to remember forever, because she isn’t sure there can be anything more gorgeous anywhere in the world.

But the dwarves are anxious, some tense and some hungry, so they march on. They go on foot across the bridge, just in case, because it’s so narrow and doesn’t have any walls. The ponies go easily enough, seeming subdued, and Bilbo’s sure they’re under the same enchantment she is.

At the end of the walkway is a circular platform that the dwarves spread out along, while elves come down the sides of the steps leading up to the buildings, and they take the ponies with only a few exchanges. Ori looks nearly as reverent as Bilbo feels when a particularly tall elf with pale skin, sleek black hair and long, thin eyes takes the reins from her. As the ponies are marched away down a sloped walkway, a man strolls down the steps, his purple robes bracketed by a red cloak. He keeps his arms folded behind his back, under his brown hair, and his peach face has a youthful but nervous countenance to it. Somehow, Bilbo knows this isn’t Elrond.
When he’s halfway down the steps, he holds a hand against his chest and brings it out, greeting Gandalf in the language of the elves. It sounds like more music to Bilbo’s ears. Gandalf greets in return, “Lindir,” and then, after a polite pause, “I must speak with Lord Elrond.”

“My Lord Elrond is not here,” Lindir replies, now in a language Bilbo can understand. Some of the magic is lost in the translation, but he still has a soothing, pleasant voice. The sunlight gives him a stunning yellow-orange glow that picks up the silver metal headband weaved across his forehead.

Gandalf asks, “Where is he?” Lindir pauses a moment, but horns fill the air before he opens his lips. The clopping sound of horses comes up from behind, and Bilbo turns on the platform, while the dwarves shuffle around her to peer back the way they came. She has the good fortune of being at the back, able to see the distant elf procession before the dwarves all tighten together and Bofur grabs her arm, pushing her back into the throng. She’s pulled protectively into their midst, though she’s sure there isn’t any need for it, but the dwarves grab at their weapons all the same, watching the elves with a wary readiness.

The elves are on them in a heartbeat, their great horses twice the size of the dwarves’ little ponies. The man in front comes to circle them as soon as he hits the ring of dwarves, and Bilbo catches flashes of his armour between the bodies. Dwalin tries to tuck Ori back against Bilbo, while Ori’s staring in awe as much as she is. All the elves come to circle them, banners held on long spears and armour silhouetting lean bodies. When the clamour of the hooves finally slows and the horses still, the elf who lead them approaches Gandalf. His armour is a richer, redder hue than the rest, and he bears a similar crown as Lindir. He halts before Gandalf and speaks more Elven words. Though Bilbo can’t understand them, she’s sure they’re friendly; the tone is fond and the elf’s face is kind.

As soon as he dismounts his horse, another elf is there to attend to it. This, Bilbo’s sure, is Elrond. He approaches Gandalf with swift, graceful steps, gripping a wrapped sword. He embraces Gandalf in a brief, shallow hug, then steps around him to pass the sword to Lindir. Lindir takes it and stands dutifully behind his lord, the respect on his face making it clear who this elf is.

Perhaps at Gandalf’s clear friendship with them, the dwarves slowly relax around Bilbo. Weapons are lowered, and the circle loosens. Thorin, at the front, takes a step towards the wizard and elves, and though Bilbo can’t see his face, she knows him well enough by now to guess at it. Before he can say a word, Elrond faces him to say, “Welcome Thorin, son of Thráin.” Bilbo lets out a long breath, thinking this will smooth things along.

Thorin merely replies, “I do not believe we have met.” His tone is low, but not overtly threatening. Elrond says simply, “You have your grandfather’s bearing.” Then in the pause Thorin leaves, “I knew Thror, when he lived under the mountain.” It gives Bilbo another spark of awe. She knows, of course, that elves are nearly immortal, but this man doesn’t look nearly old enough to know Thorin’s grandfather. He looks, perhaps, a little older than Thorin, but he still doesn’t have a single grey hair.

Thorin, to Bilbo’s disappointment, answers, “Indeed. He made no mention of you.” Elrond’s eyes narrow almost imperceptibly. The dwarves have been difficult from the start with elves, and now the rest of them are silent under Thorin’s leadership, though Bilbo would very much like to apologize for them, whatever her loyalties. Instead, she waits with the rest of them.

Elrond’s next words are, again, not ones Bilbo can understand. She assumes that Thorin can’t either, as she can feel the dwarves around her growing testy. The words sound, to her, like ceremony, like a ritual of sorts, but they could be anything, and Elrond’s face is passive. By the time he finishes, Glóin pushes past Bilbo.
He growls as much to Gandalf as to Elrond, “What is he saying? Does he offer us insult?” The other dwarves jump in around him, muttering similar dissent.

Gandalf only sighs in exasperation, “No, Master Glóin, he offers you food.”

Instantly, the dwarves pull back. Thorin turns to whisper to Dwalin, Nori and Glóin consulting, while Bofur’s face stretches into a grin. Bilbo’s left waiting alone, already having decided that she very much wants to go forward. Elrond half turns towards the steps, clearly anticipating that they’ll follow, and Lindir spares him a lingering gaze before sweeping on ahead, carrying the sword.

After a moment, the dwarves decide, “In that case, lead on.” And finally, they follow Elrond and Gandalf into the depths of Rivendell.

Every part of Rivendell is beautiful. Bilbo finds herself staring everywhere they go, craning her neck back to look at the tall arches overhead and the elaborate carvings in the columns and ceilings, equally as artful as the tiled floors. Many of the corridors are open on one or more sides, spilling into the gardens. Each of the dwarves is given their own rooms, but many of them choose to linger together outside and set up their own makeshift camp, unloading their heavy packs anywhere they please. Bilbo’s quite content with her own quarters, though she’s not entirely sure she’ll stay in them at night. It would be nice, on the one hand, to have true privacy again, but on the other, she thinks having a bed to herself might be terribly lonely, now that she’s used to companions. The only trouble will be choosing whose room to slip into.

First, they’re given dinner. The sun is setting by now, and they eat outside on another circular platform with one wall to the inner workings of Elrond’s home. Their host sits in a tall chair at a little round table with Gandalf at his side and Lindir standing regally beside him. The dwarves are split between two tables, lowered to the ground, and they’re given small, flat stools to sit on. Bilbo sits at the far end between Thorin and Bombur, while Balin tries to calm Thorin to the elves, and across from them, Ori complains to Dori of the greener food choices.

After so long surviving on nibbles along the road, Bilbo finds the meal wonderful. It looks magnificent, but it tastes even better, and the elves are set up with flutes and harps to serenade them with peaceful tunes. Most of the dwarves don’t seem too happy about the music choice—at one point, Bilbo even sees Óin stuffing a scrap of cloth into his trumpet to stifle the noise. But Bilbo at least learns that she isn’t completely alone in her appreciation of the elves. Though Kíli is at the other table, whenever she looks at him, he’s ogling the surrounding elves. At one point, he and Dwalin talk, and it results in Dwalin laughing loudly and Kíli blushing and looking away, though Bilbo can’t catch the details of the conversation with so many dwarves between them.

She keeps wanting to talk to Thorin, but when he does finish his discussion with Balin, his expression looks too sour to be interrupted. He only picks at his plate while he broods, and Bilbo gives him a sympathetic look and fights the urge to lay her hand on his arm, or better yet, knee.

Bombur, sitting at the head of the table, nudges her lightly in the side, and she looks over at him. Bombur, at least, hasn’t complained, and seems to be enjoying the free meal aspect, if nothing else. He smiles at her through his thick orange mustache and asks, “Would you pass me one of those scones?”

Obliging, Bilbo reaches past Thorin to pluck a large yellow scone off a hefty tray of them, wondering if she should instead drag the tray over. But then, that wouldn’t be fair to Balin and Glóin, who are sitting at the other end and seem to be enjoying them. She’s got it halfway back to Bombur when she thinks to ask, “Would you like jam on it?” His smile broadens, so she stops to dip the scone through the basin of thick, crushed berries that lies between. Then she holds the biscuit up
to him, coated on one end.

Over at the other table, a commotion’s happening, as it often does with dwarves. Bilbo looks over just in time to see Bofur hopping onto the little stand between their two tables. The music stops abruptly, everyone looking over. Bilbo has just enough time for her attention to wander to Gandalf, who looks exasperated, Elrond, who looks carefully neutral, and Lindir, who looks scandalized, before Bofur sets into singing. As usual, it’s a loud, happy raucous, and under his guidance, the other dwarves jump in to join him. Beside Bilbo, Thorin sighs. If he disapproves, he doesn’t say anything. But his attention, like all the other dwarves’, is now fixed fully on Bofur, the song, and the food starting to be tossed between them like a physical testament to the merriment.

Because Bilbo’s watching them too, she forgets about Bombur, until his lips are brushing over her fingers. Her head swivels around to see his mouth enclosed over the scone, and he bites off most of the end, grinning at her as he chews. In amongst the chaos, no one else notices the way Bilbo lingers on him, watching him swallow down the mouthful and eyeing the rest in her fingers. There’s something strangely powerful about his mouth, the way his thick tongue swipes over his teeth and his perfectly round stomach swells when he breathes. Bilbo finds herself holding out the rest of the crumbs clinging to her fingers, only to have Bombur dip in and lick them all away. The warmth and the wetness takes her head to strange places. She’s never found anything sexual about eating before, but Bombur makes it an art, and in the stout, protective Dwarven culture she’s become immersed, she can see the appeal of his full, heavy body. She’s eyeing his stomach with a strange surge of interest when she catches herself—she shouldn’t find him arousing.

Unfortunately, like most of them, he reads her too well. When Bilbo’s fingers fall away from his mouth, he catches them in his hand, so much bigger than hers. His flesh is impossibly warm. Over the din of the music, Bombur murmurs, “Bilbo, what’s wrong?”

Nothing, of course is wrong. Bombur has every right to a life outside of her and this quest. But she knows she has to tell him something, so she guiltily mumbles, “...You’re married, aren’t you?” She knows by now that he and Glóin are: the only two off limits. To her surprise, Bombur only chuckles. He turns her hand over in his and bends to kiss her palm. Then he leans in, even though there isn’t any need with the raucous all around them. It gives their conversation an air of privacy. “Let me tell you something about dwarves, my dear hobbit,” which makes Bilbo perk up and listen all the harder, “We’re mostly polyamorous. We’d be very poor off if we weren’t; Dwarven fertility rates are much lower than we’d like. Goodness, my wife already had two other husbands picked out when I left!” Then, as Bilbo’s eyes widen, he adds in an even quieter whisper, “To tell you the truth, I think she had her eye on Bifur, but xe’s a little hard to pin down.” Bombur winks, and Bilbo smiles weakly, trying not to show on her face just how much she’s imagining being a Dwarven woman. She would’ve never been allowed in Hobbiton to take three husbands, but Bombur didn’t even mention a limit at three, and now she can’t help but wonder... what about thirteen?

It’d be ridiculous, of course. She can’t assume that every dwarf in the company would want her, and she couldn’t manage so many. They’d have to have others besides her, too, to balance it out, but she shouldn’t be thinking about it at all; it’s only making her blush and plunge into daydreams wholly inappropriate for a public dinner. She tries to distract herself by checking on Bofur, who’s still singing away, and Elrond, who’s now tightlipped. Every time a piece of food flies across him, his eyes follow it, as if in disbelief. When a potato smashes into the statue beside Lindir, Lindir looks as though he’s going to faint.

Something soft pops over her fingers, and Bilbo just barely manages to stifle a gasp when Bombur sucks on them. She looks back to find him grinning wickedly around her hand, and Bilbo dazedly pulls her finger loose. There’s a wet squelching sound that follows, and before she knows what’s
happening, she’s plucking a biscuit off the nearest plate. She holds this up, feeding it to Bofur, who
eats it tenderly out of her fingers with his tongue leaving heavy trails behind. Watching it swipe
across her palm makes her think of other things she’d like to have him lick, or maybe places he could
lick sauce or drinks off of. Maybe when they’re alone, if they could sneak off with a pot of jam, she
could dip her breasts in them and have him clean them off as surely as he does his other food. The
way he looks at her while he takes more and more sweets in, she thinks he’d enjoy that. Since so few
of them are married, Bilbo can’t help but wonder just how skilled Bombur is to have attracted his
mate. Maybe she likes to feed him too. Bilbo’s always enjoyed cooking and making tea, and it would
be nice to have such an appreciate recipient who would lap up every last crump and thank her with
such hungry smiles...

As Bilbo dips another biscuit through the jam, she’s has to put her free hand over her mouth to stifle
any stray noises. She deliberately lets her fingertips glide into the sauce, so when she lifts it to
Bombur, he has an excuse to stall over her skin. Then she starts to think that maybe she could lick
jam off of him. No one’s noticing her, and she’s so small; it wouldn’t be difficult to slip under the
table, open his pants and drizzle a line of jam right down his cock. She could swallow it as he
swallows food, and she could kneel beneath the swell of his stomach and lick him all over, and later
she could rub his big belly and have him roll on top of her, crush her down with all his weight into a
plush mattress...

Bombur reaches his hand subtly behind her, caressing the curve of her ass. Bilbo bites her lip to stifle
a gasp. She doesn’t know how perceptive the elves will be, and she doesn’t want to get kicked out,
but so far Bofur has given them such a grand distraction. With his joyous voice in her ears, she feeds
Bombur one morsel at a time, while he cups and squeezes her ass, kneading her round cheeks with
an expert skill. By the time his hand drifts around to her thigh, pushing under the hem of her skirt,
she’s squirming delightfully. Finally, he pushes his large, meaty fingers right against her panties, and
Bombur’s hips canter into him. He rubs little circles around the tip of her clt and squeezes the rest of
her pussy. It becomes increasingly hard for Bilbo to keep feeding him, humping him as she is below
the table, but the calm, pleasant look on his face is intoxicating and keeps her grounded. She gets the
distinct impression that he does this all the time. He plays her too well. Maybe this is how it works in
his home; his wife brings him a meal and kisses his stomach and he fingers her for it, then maybe
throws her across the table, and fills her holes full of his thick tongue. Bilbo would love a husband
like that. She knows just the apron she’d wear, too: she has the perfect one, low cropped so it would
strain across her breasts but not manage to cover her nipples, because of course she wouldn’t wear
anything else. She’d cook with her bare pussy against the counter and only the thin, white bow of the
tied apron around her back, its ends trailing down the crack of her ass, while her big, hungry
husband sat behind her, nearly growling with want. And maybe for desert, she’d serve him cream
smeared across her breasts, and he’s suck it all off while she rode his fat cock, engorged from having
her feed him the whole meal.

Bilbo comes shamefully quickly. It happens all in the span of one, maybe two songs—she can’t tell
anymore. All she knows is that her body’s on fire and it takes everything she has not to scream into
her hand. She’s collapsing over the table, sweating in her clothes and panting hard, just a few
seconds before Bofur bows and the dwarves cheer. Bombur snakes his hand away and rubs her back
soothingly before he returns both hands to eating, mindful of the fact that one’s moist with the juices
that soaked through her panties. When she looks at him in awe, he winks and whispers, “My wife
used to feed me too.” She was right.

She’s only disappointed that he’s one of the dwarves that’s chosen to bunk in their makeshift camp
rather than a comfy room, so she probably won’t get to fall asleep under his grand stomach.

From her other side, Thorin suddenly asks, “Are you alright?” And Bilbo looks around at him in
shock, aware her face is red and she’s quivering.
She somehow manages to smile weakly and murmur, “Fine.” He still looks at her strangely. She can’t tell if he knows.

In some ways, she almost wishes he did.

After dinner, the dwarves filter away as quickly as they can, while Bilbo lingers behind and debates asking to borrow some of the sauces. She intends to leave with Bombur, but Glóin and Nori scoop him up too fast for her, and she doesn’t want to be a bother. Instead, she’s caught near the back with Ori, who stops one of the elves on the way out to ask for a new cup. The elf eyes her and stops Bilbo, ushering them both down the hall without another word.

Bilbo does, originally, plan to tell the elf that she doesn’t need one, but her words die in her throat as she’s quickly distracted with the sweep of the elf’s long, tightly coiled black hair, so interwoven with flowers that Bilbo feels like she’s trailing a walking garden. It’s memorizing to look at, especially since the flowers are all different than what she’s known in the Shire, and many of them seem to glimmer and change colours in the evening light.

The elf takes them out onto another open platform, this one higher up and not far from the rush of a waterfall. It’s a little cool on the platform, but Ori seems fine, bundled up as usual in a thick knit sweater. There are three chairs already lined up in the middle with wide, stone basins beneath, and the elf ushers them forward, chirping, “Sit.”

Bilbo, not wanting to be rude, takes a seat to the right of Ori, who’s smiling hopefully. As the strange, malleable material used in menstrual cups is rare and valuable—at least, it was in the Shire—Bilbo doesn’t want them to have to waste one on her. Her own is quite old, but it still works, and she tells their hostess, “I’m sorry to have troubled you, but... I really don’t have the same need.”

Ori blinks at her, asking before the elf can, “You don’t bleed every month?”

Like so many things Bilbo finds the dwarves openly discussing, this isn’t something Hobbitfolk ever talk about in public. Blushing, she shakes her head and explains, “I don’t that often, no. It’s more like every several months, and light and only for a few days...”

“Lucky,” Ori groans, sinking down in her chair. “I think I’m dying every time!”

Grinning, their Elven hostess puts her hands on her full hips and announces, “That is because you go running around with dwarves. Elves have such unpleasantness well under control.” Ori wrinkles her nose, but doesn’t say anything, for which Bilbo’s grateful. She doesn’t want to get into any fights with the elves while they’re under their hospitality. She smiles politely at the elf, who puffs out her chest with a decisive breath, announcing, “But it does not matter if you are from dwarf or halfling stock. Everyone is welcome in the Last Homely House. We will give you what you want and soothe your aches, and you will have no more worries.”

This sounds wonderfully nice, if unrealistic, to Bilbo. Ori looks at her with a mixture of hesitance and curiosity. Bilbo gets the distinct feeling that if Thorin could see them now, he’d be scolding them.

But they’re alone, and after being on the road with so many men—not that she doesn’t enjoy her men, as she very much does—she thinks it might be nice to have a little time amongst women. She says, “Thank you,” to the elf, and she grins in return, her brown eyes twinkling.

Their hostess claps her hands, and just like that, two more elves appear from behind the columns, one with the same dark brown skin and twisted black hair, the other with a lighter, caramel tone and
waved hair. All of them have leaves and flowers draped across their brows, and their elegantly
draped robes sweep gracefully with each of their steps. They come bearing large pots, and when they
stop to kneel in front of Ori and Bilbo, Bilbo can see the twinkle of water inside them. The elves
dump the water into the stone basins at Ori and Bilbo’s feet, while their hostess announces, “I will
fetch you the supplies for your journey. You relax.” And with that she turns, leaving Ori and Bilbo
to the attentions of the newcomers.

Immediately, Bilbo is reminded of a spa. No spa in the Shire ever had such gorgeous scenery or such
beautiful hosts, but that seems to be the way of all things Elven. The two elves at their feet first work
to remove Ori’s boots, which makes Ori fidget, but she doesn’t stop them. As soon as her feet are
revealed, the elf before her lets out a trilling giggle and says something to her friend in Elvish, who
laughs back. Ori’s cheeks turn a faint pink, and Bilbo places a hand on her arm, whispering, “I’m
sure they’re saying something nice.”

The elves, like some of the dwarves predicted, seem to have little interest in Ori and Bilbo
themselves. Bilbo can’t help but wonder if this is some sort of practice for them—a new business
needing to test its skills on new patrons, or simply Elven curiosity about other species’ bodies, or
some other, strange underlying purpose that Bilbo can’t ascertain. When the elf before her grabs her
feet, Bilbo gets the same odd treatment. The elf’s long fingers wrap around the sole of her foot, so
much softer than her own worn skin. With long, glittering nails, the elf plucks at the fur on top of her
foot, and Bilbo makes a small noise of protest. The elf stops plucking to run her fingers through
the fuzz instead, scratching lightly at her skin. Ori’s foot has no hair on it, though Bilbo can see a few
light brown hairs running down her ankle. It isn’t the thick, curled, full fuzz of a hobbit foot, though.
The elves seem to find Bilbo’s feet fascinating for a few moments, then lower them into the water,
doing the same with Ori’s.

The water’s warm, which is pleasant amidst the cool air, and Bilbo gasps when she she’s first
dunked in. With only her soft finger pads and carefully curved nails, the elf begins to massage
Bilbo’s feet beneath the water. She scrubs lightly down the sides, around the hair, then rubs back up
through the middle, pausing to run teasing, tapping touches around Bilbo’s ankle. The ball of her
foot is kneaded, her thick sole pet. It feels wondrously good. Bilbo’s feet, like most hobbits’, are very
sensitive. At first, she’s ashamed when she makes little keening noises in response to certain touches,
but the elf doesn’t seem to mind, only plays with her more in those areas, caressing all the places that
make Bilbo squirm. Before long, her head is lolling back against the tip of her chair, her body fully
relaxed under the elf’s expert attentions. Beside her, Ori looks just as luxurious, if a little less
pleasured.

It’s growing dark out, but Bilbo wouldn’t mind staying here all night. It’ll get too cold, perhaps, but
the massage might be worth it. When her foot’s lifted out of the water, she actually whimpers, but the
elf only switches to tend to her other foot.

When Bilbo first hears the rustle of footsteps, she assuming it’s the hostess returning, but then she
realizes the steps are much too loud to be an elf. She rolls her head aside to see Dori walking over the
platform, looking startled at the sight before him. Bilbo can’t help but wonder if dwarves have spas.
Surely, they give foot massages. They might not go barefoot like hobbits, but they’d be denying
themselves one of life’s greatest pleasures if they didn’t.

Dori, eyeing the elves first curiously and then suspiciously, comes around them to the empty seat on
Bilbo’s other side. The elves don’t look at him, but they do start talking to each other in Elvish. Bilbo
braces for Dori to fuss at them, but instead he peers over Bilbo to ask, “Ori, are you alright?”

“I’m fine,” Ori answers. She looks almost a little exasperated, though Bilbo’s always thought Dori’s
protectiveness rather sweet. He leans back again, but his expression remains skeptical. His gaze
drops from Ori to Bilbo’s feet, lingering there.

Then their hostess reappears, though she isn’t carrying anything. She strolls towards Ori and declares, “We have rounded up several options; we can have them brought here if you like.”

“No, that’s alright” Ori sighs, with a quick glance at Dori. She smiles as she tells their hostess, “I’ll come, if that’s alright. I think I’ve had my feet tickled enough.”

“I’ll come too,” Dori adds, hopping off his chair.

Shooting him a wary look, the hostess says, “No, this is a woman’s talk.”

Eyebrows knitting together, Dori complains, “But she’s only been a woman for a few days this time! Why can’t I go?”

The hostess waves her hand like she couldn’t care less, insisting, “You will stay here.” Ori chuckles, and Dori shoots her a hurt look, which makes her shrug apologetically. But she does follow the hostess off, leaving Bilbo alone with a testy dwarf and two elves now each taking one of her feet. Especially with this new development, she has no intention of going anywhere.

Unfortunately, Dori has to go and grumble, “Elves.” The derisive tone is obvious. Even though the Elven women kneeling at Bilbo’s feet have only spoke in Elvish thus far, it’s obvious that they catch his meaning, because they both abruptly stop Bilbo’s massage. Instead, they pull back to stand, sniff at Dori as though repulsed, and march right off.

Which leaves Bilbo wilting back in her chair, thoroughly put out. Dori must see this, because after a moment of silence, he says, “I’m sorry, Bilbo.”

Bilbo mumbles, “It’s okay.” She looks over at him, holding herself back from expressing how lovely it felt, only to realize that he’s still looking down at her feet. She can’t quite place the look on his face, but he’s so engrossed in the sight that he doesn’t seem to notice her own stare. It gives her a moment to appreciate the artful way his hair is braided, complex and neat. He’s probably one of the tidiest dwarves, one of the most cultured. The only other one that enjoys making tea with her. And yet, he’s the strongest dwarf, too.

Finally, Dori suggests, “I... I could finish for you.”

Bilbo murmurs, “You don’t have to do that.”

He shakes his head and says, “It’s alright.” Then he looks at her, very determined, and Bilbo, biting her lip, nods her head.

As soon as she’s given him permission, Dori’s slipped to his knees. He crawls before her, then takes her feet, one in each hand, his fingers spreading out as his palms run flat along the bottoms, the dark fabric over his wrists tickling her toes. It’s almost like he’s weighing her feet, and at first, she’s almost embarrassed; she knows they aren’t like Dwarven feet and probably, therefore, don’t fit into the beauty standard. But Dori doesn’t look at all displeased with her body. He dips them both into the water, now lukewarm, and Bilbo shivers at the gentle lap of the water around her legs. Dori takes a few seconds just to look down at them.

Then he dives his hands in and starts massaging her, both at a time through the water. Bilbo gasps right away—even though Dori doesn’t know quite where to touch, even though he isn’t slow and languid like the elves, he’s just as skilled. His touches are quick, almost fervent, firm and hard. He works her flesh expertly, and he learns quickly which places make her gasp and tremble. Before long, he’s brought her to a peak of pleasure. She didn’t even think she could feel this way from a
massage, but the way Dori looks at her, so adoringly, and the way he plays her body, makes the
innocent activity purely sensual.

When Bilbo’s breathing hard and fixed on him beneath her heavy lashes, Dori picks one foot out of
the water and lifts it up to his mouth. He presses a strong kiss to the very middle, right in the center of
her fur, and he drags his mouth down, until his tongue is poking out and he’s drawing it down her
big toe. When he pops it into his mouth, Bilbo’s breath catches. Then he suckles on her, and she
arches off her chair with a moan.

Dori lavishes each of her toes in an array of kisses, licking between and sucking on them, and Bilbo
sinks deeper and deeper into her chair. Finally, when he switches to her other foot, Bilbo pushes the
kissed-clean one forward, reaching down across the basin. Dori seems to understand, and he lifts
onto his knees, meeting her halfway. Her foot presses into his crotch. She can feel the hard bulge of
his cock, straining to reach her, and she returns the favour of massaging it with her foot while he
kisses and licks the other one. Bilbo, panting hard, wonders if she can come from this alone. Given
Dori’s skills, she probably could.

But then he muffles a little cry and shoves against her foot, and she can see on his face that he’s
coming. She wants to slip forward and into his lap, wants to get more, but she doesn’t have the
chance. More footsteps are headed towards them, and she looks aside to see Ori, the hostess, and the
other two elves reappearing.

Dori drops Bilbo’s foot into the water so abruptly that it splashes all the way up to her knee. She
looks at him, startled, and his face is completely red. He shoots her a horribly guilty look, the surges
to his feet. Ori’s so busy talking to the hostess that she doesn’t even notice Dori until she’s right in
front of him, and then he splutters faster, “Are you okay?”

Startled, Ori looks him up and down and says, “Yes.”

Dori nods stiffly. He turns to look at Bilbo and looks like he might apologize, but then he only
brushes swiftly past Ori, practically running off. Bilbo, though once again thoroughly disappointed,
understands. If she’d been caught sucking on someone’s toes and coming from it by a relative, she’d
probably bolt too.

In his wake, the two elves behind Ori start giggling, and the hostess guides Ori bodily back into the
chair. Then she kneels down between her companions and produces an array of little rings from a
velvety purse, some silver and some gold, inlaid with sweeping carvings and glittering gems and
painted flowers. As aroused as Bilbo is, she still finds herself swept up in the glittering jewelry, and
she bends over her chair to look.

To Bilbo’s delight, the elves place the fancy rings on her and Ori’s toes. Ori looks surprised by this,
but Bilbo’s too excited for that. She already doesn’t want to leave Rivendell, but when she does, it’ll
be nice to go with souvenirs. Somehow, every ring the elves put on her is the perfect size for
whatever toe they ordain. In the end, she has eight glittering rings, adorning three toes on each foot.
When the elf withdraws, Bilbo tells her sincerely, “Thank you.”

Giggling again, the elf rises to pat Bilbo’s hair. If it’s perhaps condescending, she doesn’t care: the
gifts are well worth it. For all she knows, she’s only been given rings because elves find halflings
cute, in which case she’s happy to oblige for massages and presents.

All together, the elves leave, talking spiritedly amongst themselves and leaving Ori to slump back
and stare oddly at her toes. Bilbo fidgets, half enthralled with her own gifts and half wondering how
to excuse herself without giving herself away. But then Ori looks aside at her, sweeps over her and
seems to know. Ori says softly, “I’m sorry about Dori. He wouldn’t normally leave you high and dry
Bilbo, blushing a dark red, mumbles, “Oh.” Ori smiles kindly.

“I think he has a bit of a foot fetish, personally. He’s talked about your feet more than once. I mean, it’s a bit strange for all of us, your aversion to shoes, but he goes on about it.” Hesitating, Ori adds, “Are you alright?”

Bilbo doesn’t know if she means with Dori’s preferences or in her current state. She finds Dori’s attentions flattering, definitely interesting—something she can use to her advantage in the future. But what she says aloud is, “I don’t blame him, but... now I’m sort of hot and bothered.” Ori smiles wider.

Then she leans across the armrests between them to peck Bilbo lightly on the mouth. Her lips are soft, a little moist, a little sweet from the sugars of their meal. When Ori pulls away, Bilbo follows, pressing back. It isn’t just that she’s worked up right now, it’s that everything about Ori is alluring, from the cute cut of her hair to the thrust of her perky breasts to the curve of her hips. And then there’s her accent and her enthusiastic but calm nature, and especially the way she feels in Bilbo’s hands when they’re riding. Kissing her just feels right, and Bilbo keeps leaning across the space to kiss Ori as much as she can.

When she pulls away, Ori looks at her with a hazy, burning gaze. Bilbo almost says that they’re in public and they should control themselves, but for now, they’re alone, and Ori’s too distracting. Ori slips off her chair, takes the short step to turn to Bilbo, and then is crawling right into Bilbo’s lap. Her knees wedge into the chair alongside Bilbo’s thighs, her agile body nestling against Bilbo’s front. Her protruding stomach rubs against Bilbo’s, her arms wrapping around Bilbo’s neck, and she returns to kissing Bilbo with everything she has, while their hips work fervently together. Bilbo humps Ori urgently, and Ori, at first, just runs through her hair and kisses her over and over, but then runs a hand down her body to slip beneath her skirt. For the second time this evening, Bilbo gets a warm hand pressing through her panties against her pussy. Ori’s fingers are much smaller than Bombur’s, less skilled but still insistent, and Bilbo happily humps her hand. After Dori’s expert attentions and the thrill of being massaged, Bilbo’s heady and melts easily.

She comes, again too soon, just from rolling into Ori’s prone body and sucking Ori’s tongue. She keeps humping for a few thrusts afterwards, even as her mind comes undone and her body slumps back in the chair, her breath lost between kisses.

Only after they’ve both slowed to a stop does Bilbo realize her failure. Blushing hotly, she murmurs, “Sorry.” It’s not too late, of course, to return the favour of getting Ori off, but Ori grins and shakes her head.

“I want to go to Dwalin like this,” she pants, then, with a hopefully look, “Do you think he’ll take me?”

Bilbo, stunned, nods. She doesn’t see how he could possibly not. She’s almost tempted to ask if she can follow, but then, she’s already come twice tonight, and she wouldn’t want to intrude.

She does feel compelled to mumble, “Sorry, I... I’ve been... with Dwalin...”

“That’s alright,” Ori says back, seeming to understand. “He’s really hot. I understand.” Again, Bilbo thinks of what Bombur said, about dwarves not being confined to one lover. It helps ease some of Bilbo’s guilt, but that only goes away completely when Ori adds, grinning, “Maybe sometime we could share him? I’d like him a few times myself, first, if... if he’ll have me...”
“I’m sure he’ll have you,” Bilbo promises, meaning it.

Ori kisses Bilbo’s forehead. Bilbo can’t help giggle lightly at the touch, even though her head is already swimming back to naughty things. Dwalin’s definitely big enough to handle her and Ori at the same time, maybe both beneath him at once, and it makes her dizzy to picture. But for now, she just leans up to peck Ori again on the lips, which makes Ori laugh before she slips off the chair.

She pulls her boots back on as she goes, covering up the lovely rings they’ve been given. It leaves Bilbo to relax back in her chair, debating between her room, Bombur, Dori, and all the other dwarves that can make her feel just as good.

The first several nights are peaceful. More than that. It’s probably the best time of her life, warring only with the excitement of first meeting her companions and a few choice adventures along the way. Now, she has all the comforts of a home again, plus three new dwarves whose rooms she can sneak into. She spends one night full of wrestling, naked, with Fíli and Kíli, only to fall asleep in a sideways sprawl across their large bed in a private room and wake up to the brothers eating her out from either end. She spends another night in Bofur, Nori, and Bombur’s camp, first letting Nori fuck her breasts, then lying under Bombur as he humps her into the floor, then resting in Bófur’s lap while he toys with her body. She spends another night letting Dori worship her feet, and another each with Fíli and Kíli separately. One night is spent on a game of dirty truth or dare with Bofur and Nori, which ends up with her sandwiched between the two of them, and another with Bombur licking jam off her breasts and stomach. Finally, she spends one with Ori, then next to Ori at Dwalin’s feet, the two of them worshiping his cock together until he comes all over their faces and breasts, and then she and Ori get to lick each other off.

During the day, there’s still time for fun, as the dwarves don’t leave their quarters much. But Bilbo likes to wander the halls when she can, soaking in all the splendor around her. She often sees Gandalf walking with Elrond, speaking in hushed tones of what she assumes to be very important, secretive things. Almost as much, she sees Elrond and Lindir strolling together, sometimes side-by-side and other times with Lindir floating just behind, nodding along to his master’s words. Once, she passes them in a garden, Elrond perched in a great stone chair carved next to a fountain, while Lindir sits at his feet to play a quiet harp. Though the melody is entrancing, Bilbo doesn’t dare move any closer and interrupt the lord’s rest.

At mealtimes, Bofur has been told by Gandalf to behave, but their chatter still grows too loud often enough. Lindir, always standing next to Elrond, looks like he can’t wait to be rid of these dwarves, but Elrond’s patience, though tried, wins out. On the rare occasion when Bilbo bumps into Elrond on her own, she thanks him for his hospitality, and he always warms to her with a gentle look and friendly words. As loyal to her dwarves as she’s become, there are moments when she thinks of staying here, and she’s almost sure that Elrond would let her.

The best moment, perhaps, is when the dwarves decide to go swimming, naked, in one of the larger fountains. Bilbo isn’t quite ready to join them all, not when there are still a few who don’t know of her predilections and she’s trying to retain some dignity around the elves. Ori goes in anyway, and the lot of them splash around and lift each other on their shoulders, while Bilbo sits on a nearby bench and whimsically watches.

She can’t help but duck out of sight when she hears Elrond and Lindir strolling by, Lindir complaining, more so in a nervous whine than any real malice, over the strain the dwarves give Rivendell. When Bilbo peers through the bushes, she can see Elrond’s frown, but he gives no decisive answer. Lindir, upon seeing the mass of naked dwarves defiling their statue, looks utterly horrified. As the two of them continue on down the path, Bilbo sees Elrond reach a comforting arm
around Lindir’s lower back. Bilbo gets the distinct impression he’ll need more than that. She knows firsthand how jarring Dwarven customs can be to a more ‘proper’ person. Though she adapted well enough, she was, apparently, bristling for an adventure, and she didn’t already have a handsome Elven lord to cling to instead.

Sometimes, Bilbo wonders about the large things going on. She knows that Gandalf has important business here, but she isn’t invited to these meetings and doesn’t want to pry. For the most part, she’s content to live in the proverbial dark, where things are simple and pleasurable.

By the time she sees Gandalf alone on a walkway below her, they’ve been in Rivendell for several days. She would like a chance to talk to him, mostly to know when they’re leaving so she can divide up her remaining nights with comfy beds appropriately. She practically runs to the edge of her corridor, looking down through the columns along the way to keep track of where Gandalf’s going, and she barrels right into someone else.

Stumbling back, Bilbo just barely manages to catch herself from falling over. She has to crane her head up to look in their face, just like she does with everyone, but at least it’s a dwarf and not a giant elf.

Thorin frowns down at her. He looks just as he did on the road, still in all his thick coats and armour and the fur around his shoulders. His black hair is still a mat of handsome waves, his beard still gruff and uneven. Ruggedness looks good on him.

Bilbo means to apologize, but instead she ends up tilting her head to the side and asking quietly, “What’s wrong?” It’s not her place to ask, but she can’t stop herself. Rivendell is the most amazing place she’s ever been, and it doesn’t seem fair that Thorin, who deserves a moment of peace more than anyone, should still be sad.

At first, she thinks he’s going to brush past her without a word. But he only shakes his head and sighs, like the tension’s been building in him and he needs to get it out. Tightly, he grunts, “I don’t... like elves.” Which she knew. She knows why. She’s heard the more detailed stories from Balin, of Thorin hoping for aid and the elves turning their backs on Thorin, his father and his home. But of course, it can’t have been Elrond’s elves; they’re too far away, and Elrond seems to Bilbo eminently just.

Bilbo mumbles, “I’m sorry.” It seems like the right thing to say, and it does make Thorin look at her with consideration. She wants to say she understands, but she can’t, not really. Her home is still waiting for her, right where she left it, and she’s never faced grand battles or such sorrowful loss. She offers with a small, hopeful smile, “I’m sure we won’t be here much longer.”

Thorin gives her a rare, small smile. Hopeful, she prompts, “If there’s anything I could do...? Perhaps bring you some tea, or give you a massage?”

Thorin only shakes his head. Bilbo has to try and hide her disappointment as he sighs, “No thank you, Master Baggins.” And then he’s walking around her and off down the hall, his heavy steps ringing inside her.

The next morning, Bilbo wakes up in Bofur’s arms. Sometimes it’s hard to keep track of who she spent the last night with, but she recognizes different aspects of them. This time, it’s a brown braid trailing over her shoulder and his hat on her nightstand. The morning light seeps in through the wide arc of her balcony, and at first she just wants to close her eyes and stay right where she is. Bofur isn’t snoring, though he can go back and forth with it, and instead his hot breaths are just ghosting soothingly over the crook of her neck and shoulder. His front is warm against her back, his arms
looped around her middle. All in all, it’s very pleasant.

Until her stomach twinges in protest, anyway. Bilbo first tries to ignore it, but then it tightens again, and her mouth is dry anyway, and she could use a moment in the washroom.

Under the spell of Rivendell, most are heavy sleepers. It’s too comfortable to be torn away from, so Bilbo isn’t surprised that when she wriggles out of Bofur’s arms, he doesn’t stir. Sitting up, naked, in bed, Bilbo bends to peck his forehead beneath his dark fringe, and the edges of his mustache twitch up in his sleep.

Slipping to the floor, Bilbo pads softly over to the attached washroom. There’s a ceramic cup and full jug of water waiting for her, and she takes a thirsty swig. She thinks now might be a good time for a shower, but then, if she waits for Bofur to wake up, she can bring him along and have him perform her exam. Idly daydreaming this, she takes a seat on the toilet.

And a few moments later, she understands her stomach pains and has to leave to fetch her cup. She’s blushing as she shuffles back through her bedroom, willing her uterus to keep everything in a couple seconds longer. She’s checked her thighs for stains, but she’s now under the uncomfortable knowledge that she should probably check Bofur and the sheets, preferably before he wakes up.

And then, she thinks, she’ll have to go ask the nearest elf for a towel for tonight. And maybe for one of those nice Elven products Ori got; now that it’s actually on her, it does seem wise to stock up on the best she can get. Whatever she might’ve thought in passing, she knows she’s leaving with the dwarves, and she doesn’t know when she’ll be with such kind elves again.

Even though she’s sure Bofur wouldn’t shame her for it, Bilbo dresses without waking him. As the cramps slowly seep in, she can’t help but wonder if it was a bad idea to come on this trip after all. She knows that what she experiences is a lot easier than what other women get, but it’s still going to be a pain, and now she has a bunch of men to hide it from. At least, she would’ve had to hide it in the Shire. Maybe she won’t have to, here, although that’s a thoroughly embarrassing notion in itself.

The one saving grace is that arousal has always helped ease her cramps. Even if the others won’t touch her when she’s bleeding, she can still have Bofur’s dirty talk, Dori using her feet, others dry humping her, and Nori’s creative and could probably think of something—actually, Nori might sleep with her anyway.

By the time she leaves her room, it’s still very early in the morning. There are very few elves around, and those she passes walk swiftly, with purpose. Bilbo can’t bring herself to stop just any of them; she’s hoping to find the hostess from the other day.

Of course, it isn’t so easy. As long as she’s been here, she still isn’t acquainted with all the twists and turns. It’s a huge place for something dubbed a ‘house,’ and she usually just walks between living quarters and the platform where they eat. So it isn’t too long before she’s lost, randomly wandering the halls at a clipped pace. She wants to find someone and get back to bed before the real pain starts, but not quite badly enough to stop strangers. Unfortunately, she doesn’t even know her hostess’ name to ask for her.

The deeper Bilbo gets into the depths of Elrond’s homes, the less she sees of strangers at all. Soon, she’s walking in utter silence, perturbed and alone. She’s no longer in the open places that forgo walls in favour of statues and gardens, but in the depths of the structure itself. Somehow, the sunlight still finds a way to follow her everywhere. It washes the tile floor and wooden ceilings in a warm glow, as magical as ever.

Then she turns down a corridor, and for the first time in a little while, hears noises.
They’re hushed, quiet and trying to be muffled and not carrying far, but now Bilbo’s been around enough to recognize them. She knows that shortness of breath, the catch here and there, and the little vacillations between gasps and moans. She knows what’s going on, and she knows she should leave.

But she’s fallen too far down for that. Her hormones are already dancing wildly, and something tugs her forward—she takes step after silent step, drifting down the long hall to the open doors at the end.

She pauses just before them, peering in and past the carved, arched wood. The doors aren’t exactly thrown wide, but they’re far too ajar to be a forgotten mishap; the occupants on the other side can’t feel too encumbered by privacy. Bilbo doesn’t know what she expected, but when she sees who the noises are coming from, she gasps.

At the head of a large, oval, plush bed with a tall mattress and flowing gold sheets, Lord Elrond lounges serenely back against the ornate headboard. His robes are parted only around his crotch, the rest of him fully clothed, his crown glittering in the light of the wide windows that adorn the other side of the room. Lindir is poised in his lap.

In contrast, Lindir isn’t wearing a stitch of clothing, and Bilbo’s eyes go wild devouring the lithe elf, his pale body silhouetted like a star. His long hair cascades over his shoulders, pulled back with tiny, twin braids and a simpler version of Elrond’s crown: the only thing that shields any part of his body. His hands rest delicately on Elrond’s shoulders, his thighs parted around Elrond’s lap. Though Elrond’s hands are lightly stroking Lindir’s side, it’s clear that Lindir is doing most of the work. His body moves in graceful rolls that arch his chest forward and grind his hips along his lover’s lap, his eyes never leaving Elrond’s. It’s clear, even from this distance, that Lindir adores his master. Elrond is very kind in return. He lifts a hand to cup Lindir’s chin, and his thumb brushes lovingly across Lindir’s slightly parted lips. When Elrond tilts forward to press a chaste kiss to Lindir’s mouth, Lindir shivers and looks as though he’s going to break.

Elrond murmurs, “How beautiful you are.” It echoes across the wide chambers, ricocheting into a murmur through Bilbo’s ears. Lindir’s breath hitches, and his body tenses, head hanging. Bilbo knows he’s coming, and Elrond chuckles fondly and pets his back through it.

As Lindir curls around his lord, Elrond continues to milk Lindir’s body. Now he’s the one driving the thrusts, but they’re still gentle. Lindir’s face is blissful as he rests it against Elrond’s shoulder. For a while, Bilbo watches in rapt fascinating as her host makes love at a lavish, unhurried pace.

Eventually, Lindir straightens out again, his hair sliding off Elrond’s body, and Elrond helps sweep it behind Lindir’s back again, the skin there only lightly beaded with a few stray drops of sweat. Bilbo has no idea how long they’ve been at it, but elves are long-lived, and for all she knows, they’ve been going for hours.

Lindir kisses Elrond’s cheek as he returns to his own movements. After a moment, Elrond glances down between them and sighs, “You have grown interested again. Perhaps I am getting too old for my young lover.”

Lindir breathes, “Never.” There’s such conviction in it. Lindir shares a lasting, only slightly parted kiss, during which Bilbo only gets one flash of tongue, before he pulls back to insist, “I am always interested in my lord.”

Elrond smiles and tucks a lock of hair back behind his ear.

And then, to Bilbo’s utter shock, Elrond glances calmly towards the door. His hips still, his hands guiding Lindir to stop. Lindir is trembling, and Bilbo can’t help but wonder if Elrond’s come inside him, though she can’t see any reaction on Elrond’s face. Though, at the moment, she’s too busy blushing and hoping the floor will swallow her up to look very hard. Elrond’s eyes sweep over her,
seeming to pierce right through her body and glean all of her lust and darker wants.

But Elrond, rather than kick her and all the dwarves out like she might have feared, only outstretches one hand, bidding her, “Come here, if you wish, Master Bilbo.”

Mortified, Bilbo does so. Her body moves forward quite on its own, obeying the summons, while her mouth stammers to apologize, “I am so sorry, I, ah, I didn’t mean...”

When she’s at the side of the bed, Elrond lifts a hand to silence her. He tells her quite calmly, “It is my own fault for forgetting we have company.” Then, after a short pause in which Lindir lowers his eyes, Elrond turns to him and adds, “I suppose I was... distracted.” The corner of Lindir’s lips twitch, as though he wants to smile but doesn’t wish to be improper. As Bilbo watches Lindir’s face, Elrond runs the back of his hand slowly along Lindir’s cheek, and he asks Bilbo, “Do you think him attractive?” Lindir’s cheeks seem to turn slightly rosier, but it’s so faint that it could be a trick of the light.

Bilbo nods and answers, “You’re both very handsome.” Lindir is, perhaps, more pretty than handsome, but it’s the best word for Elrond himself, who, for all his long, lithe lines, look as strong as any dwarf.

Finally, Elrond drops his hand away from Lindir’s face. He returns his gaze to Bilbo and drawls, “Forgive me if I overstep, but I believe this journey has been something of an awakening for you.” Here, Bilbo nods, though it feels strange for an Elven lord to notice such an insignificant thing as one hobbit coming out of her sexual shell. “Perhaps elves are not so overt as dwarves, but I assure you that we are just as free, in our own way, and I think yours is a good growth to support.”

Not knowing what to say, Bilbo mumbles, “Thank you.” Even though her shame at watching is slipping away, her cheeks stay hot from discussing the situation. She does her utmost to look at Elrond’s face, and not the rise of Lindir’s chest and his dusty rose nipples, or the plush curve of his ass.

Then Elrond asks, “Would you like to take him?” Bilbo’s eyes go wide, shocked again, and her head swivels to look at Lindir’s face, but his expression hasn’t changed at all. Elrond continues smoothly, as if to soothe her fears, “He would not mind. He is in the habit of pleasing my guests, particularly the other Elven lords and ladies that come to visit, although I suspect that he may be playing favourites with me.” This time, Lindir can’t stop his smile. Bilbo can tell that he loves his lord very much, although the thought of him playing consort to visiting royalty is certainly fun. The only thing is that Bilbo’s far from royalty, though Elrond adds, “In fact, we were just discussing earlier that, in all these long years, neither of us has ever had the pleasure of trying a halfling. Besides, I don’t like to leave him wanting.”

Here, Lindir lifts Elrond’s hand in his own, and he presses a firm kiss to the knuckles before he promises, “You never do.” Elrond simply draws Lindir forward again, kissing his forehead.

Bilbo feels vaguely like she’s stepped into someone else’s fantasy. It’s powerful and alluring, but it also seems so intimate. Yet even as she thinks this, her eyes stray down Lindir’s body, coming to rest between his creamy thighs. His cock juts out between them, pink and engorged with a strangely shaped mushroom head. It’s very long, though much thinner than she’s used to from the dwarves. It still looks too big to fit comfortably inside her, even though her clouded brain is cloying for it, and then she remembers that she’s bleeding.

While her mind still works, Elrond glances over her shoulder. He nods at the door and makes some gesture with his hands, but she can’t be bothered to turn and look properly; she’s busy being caught up in this. Before she’s decided, Elrond taps Lindir’s waist. Lindir’s thighs suddenly tense, and he
Bilbo's so busy staring that she doesn't notice the other elf at her side until the woman—the same hostess from the other day with Ori, she thinks—bends down to smile and hand her two items. The first, Bilbo hurriedly shoves into one of the hidden pockets in her skirt. How they knew she wanted a cup before she asked, she has no idea, but now isn't the moment to question it. The second item gives her pause. It's long and shaped like a cock—an Elven one, at that—made out of the same strange, malleable material that her cup is. It's attached at the end to a belt, and for a minute, Bilbo just holds the foreign thing in her hands, staring at it.

The hostess has already left, but Elrond says in her wake, "The belt goes around your waist, if you feel so inclined. Whichever dwarf spread the rumour that elves are disinclined to toys was sadly misinformed."

Bilbo's sure that she has heard that rumour, though not in this context. Next time she hears it, she'll have to correct the speaker.

For now, she holds the toy tentatively in her hands, glancing between it and Lindir's body, held prone and waiting for her. Every second that she delays gives Elrond that much more of an unimpeded view, but then, she's sure this can't be new to him. He looks at Lindir as though he's just as pleased as if it were the first time, but she can't help but wonder how many years they've spent together.

Finally, she summons the courage to climb up onto the bed, which is surprisingly difficult with how very tall it is. She doesn’t quite put on the toy, but rather moves behind Lindir, which places her between Elrond's spread legs. She tries to shuffle inconspicuously back between them, and Elrond, taking the hint, wraps one long arm around her. He pulls her up against his body and takes the toy from her, drawing it around her hips without removing any of her clothes. It only highlights the contrast and makes Lindir more into a courtesan than ever, though he doesn't seem at all trouble by it.

Once Elrond has fastened the belt snugly against Bilbo's waist, he reaches around her to grab Lindir's rear. He drags Lindir back, so that Lindir's legs are forced to intertwine with his, looking over. Bilbo lifts to her knees, and Elrond lowers Lindir's back. He positions Lindir just right, then purrs over Bilbo's ear, "Does that look about right to you, Bilbo?"

She says, "Yes, thank you," without being able to look. She’s busy peering over the pale expanse of Lindir’s flesh, all exposed and vulnerable to her touch. She has the fake cock in her hands and can’t help but wish that it were real, if only for this moment. She’s never had any desire to be a man, and she’s rather fond of her body, even with all its imperfections, but for the simple purpose of fucking Lindir into his lord’s bed, she’d like to be able to feel his insides.

She could, of course, use her fingers, but by the time she’s thought of it, she’s already pressing the tip of her toy against his furrowed entrance. He’s still stretched wide from taking Elrond, and though he’s tightened up some since, the toy is thankfully smaller than Elrond was. Elrond’s seed should still
ease her way, and at first, Bilbo hesitates there, watching the smooth, black tip press at his pink muscles.

Then Elrond bids, “Lindir,” in an almost music tone. Lindir snaps to life immediately, pressing himself back against Bilbo’s protrusion. She gasps at the sight of his ass swallowing up the toy, then again when it forces the belt back against her stomach. Lindir keeps going, sliding down it, and all Bilbo can do is stare at the way he impales himself, so very fluid and easy. He comes all the way against her, his round cheeks squishing back against her thighs through her skirt, and then he arches up on his hands, glancing back over his shoulder. Bilbo’s hands twitch to hold him, and she finally gives in. Lurching forward, she grabs his warm ass in her hands, squeezing hard, the way the dwarves might do to her. Lindir gasps. Even though he’s much taller, she thinks him much more delicate, and she tells herself that she’ll have to be careful with him, far more so than she would be with her rowdy dwarves, especially with Elrond watching.

Holding onto him, Bilbo rolls her hips, watching the way it ripples through them and makes his thin shoulders shudder. Another thrust, and he grunts, and then Bilbo pulls back properly, pushing off of him to draw the toy half out, only to slam it back inside. Lindir groans and settles, ducks his head, while Bilbo runs her hands greedily up and down his ass and sets into a firm, even pace. Even though she can’t feel herself inside him, she can still feel the slap of his flesh against her front, and the tenderness of his skin in her hands. She can enjoy all of his little noises and see it all, and she gets the rush of power at being the one to give it to him, of making his tight hole stretch wider to take her girth. Watching his entrance quiver around her is probably the best part of it, tied only with the thrust of his hips against her crotch. A few times, his hanging cock swings back to slap at her skirt, and Bilbo toys with the idea of reaching under to squeeze it and milk him out.

Then Elrond’s hands land on her hips, and she stills. He murmurs, “Keep going.” She obeys instantly, though his hands guide her to another angle, one that makes Lindir moan deeply and fall into the bed, his ass thrust into the air. Bilbo does her best to keep hitting that angle, but she’s feeling dizzy herself and not the best coordinated. For the most part, she just slams into him again and again, even after Elrond climbs out from behind her.

He stretches along the bed instead, lying alongside Lindir. It gives Bilbo two gorgeous things to look at, though Elrond seems not to notice her anymore. He reaches a hand to stroke through Lindir’s hair, playing with it as Lindir’s wracked with Bilbo’s thrusts, and he purrs things to Lindir in Elvish that make Lindir blush with his whole body. Bilbo thinks she should feel like she’s intruding, but instead the sight only turns her on more. She’s always thought elves such romantic creatures, and watching them now fills her body with such a sensuous mood. When Elrond lifts the back of Lindir’s hand to kiss, it’s more than Bilbo can take.

She tries not to scream too loudly and ruin their moment, but she ruins it anyway, shoving so hard into Lindir that he’s knocked flat into the bed. Elrond smiles like he’s going to laugh, and Lindir squirms and mewls beneath her, while Bilbo crosses her thighs and squeezes against the press of her cup. She’s going to have a mess when she gets back, but it was worth it.

She does feel bad for not having finished Lindir, but she still draws out. When the toy slips out of him, he’s stretched bigger than ever, and she can only hope that Elrond finds the energy to fill him up again.

When she glances sideways at the door, wondering if she should leave them to their moment, the hostess slips through the doors and trails right over to them. She climbs onto the bed behind Bilbo, waiting.

Bilbo, blushing furiously, looks at Elrond, who smiles and tells her, “If you feel so inclined again in
my home, you are always welcome to ask Lindir for his services, though, of course, he may not always feel inclined himself.” Bilbo nods in understanding, even though she can’t believe that offer. She would very much like to avail herself of elves again, though maybe when she’s less messy and can actually think straight.

Feeling vaguely like she’s been dismissed and a lot like she wants to get back to her rooms to wrap herself up in horrible, extremely dirty daydreams of just what the elves get up to in her absence, Bilbo unties the belt from her waist.

As soon as she’s slipped off the bed, the elf behind her fastens it on and settles in between Lindir’s legs, dragging him back up to his knees. Her smooth dark skin is beautifully juxtaposed off his milky flesh, and she slips the toy back into him with a clearly practiced ease.

Bilbo winds up lingering to watch until her cramps force her away, though at least it gives her plenty of daydream material.

The one silver lining to all of this is that she has a giant, plush bed to lie in, and some new equipment that the elves assure her is guaranteed to last and not to leak. She gets a pillow to put under her anyway, just in case, because she’s a guest here, and she couldn’t bear getting blood on someone else’s perfect white sheets.

At least those sheets are comfortable. Bilbo bundles up in them and pretends she’s a caterpillar in a cocoon, mostly fluctuating between trying to sleep and thinking inappropriate thoughts to try and keep the pain away.

It’s well past dinner when she gets a knock on her door. She knows it has to be dwarves on the other side, because they end up bustling in before she can invite them inside. Fíli and Kíli shut the door behind themselves and come right over to climb up onto her mattress, only noticing halfway there that she’s made a chrysalis of herself.

Kíli climbs over her to sit on the other side, and Fíli sits where he is, draping an arm over her and leaning in to ask, “You okay, Bilbo?”

She grumbles, “Cramps.”

Fíli makes a sympathetic face, but Kíli suggests, “Why don’t you ask one of the elves to give you a massage?” When both she and Fíli look over at him, he quickly corrects to, “Not that I have. Or would, of course.” Then, quieter, “You know what, let’s just not tell Dwalin or Thorin I even suggested it.”

“Kíli has a thing for elves,” Fíli explains, rolling his eyes.

Kíli’s face turns red, and he insists, “I do not!” Even though to Bilbo, that doesn’t seem so bad. She rather likes elves. She even considers telling Kíli what she’s learned of Lindir, but then thinks better of it, as he seems less than fond of dwarves. Since she doesn’t want to go down that argument with them, it’s easier just to whine loudly and pull their attention back to her.

It makes Fíli rub her back through the blankets. “Poor little Bilbo.”

Kíli’s voice brightens considerably when he suggests, “Why don’t we give you a massage?”

“We could do that,” Fíli joins, grinning down at her. “We won’t even try anything. Promise.”

Bilbo opens her mouth, ready to agree to that, except that she’s probably going to suggest they try
anything they like—a good, erotic distraction always helps—when Kíli says instead, “But first, Thorin’s looking for you.”

This makes Bilbo sit up in bed, throwing both their arms off her. “When you get back, then,” Fíli offers. “We’ll be right here.”

She murmurs, “Thank you,” and sits up to kiss his forehead. Kíli’s barely protested when she’s spun around to peck his cheek; she knows she has to be even with them if she doesn’t want a fight. She’s already dressed, but she still checks herself in the mirror before she leaves. Her hair is a mess, but at last it’s short and curly, so that hides some of it. Fíli and Kíli stay on her bed and give her a pair of thumbs up when she turns around.

The corridors of Rivendell are dreadfully cold after her nice, warm bed, but she knows she has business to attend. It’s been nice, just resting and having fun, but of course, the whole quest can’t be that. She finds Thorin, Balin, and Gandalf outside the guest quarters, and they sweep her up with them. With their longer legs, she has to hurry to keep up, and in her present condition, it’s not a pleasant walk. But it is what it is, and she goes without complaint.

The place where they wind up is deeper in, hidden but still cavernous enough to echo their steps. It’s dark in this place, the torches only few and far away, and most of the light is tinged blue with the moon. As they come out of the corridor, Bilbo sees Elrond waiting for them, standing, alone, at the lower steps of another raised platform. Bilbo doesn’t know why she’s here and doesn’t dare ask, but given the cover of night and the few present, she imagines that it’s important, and she feels honoured for it.

First, Gandalf and Thorin hand him their swords. Though Bilbo has her dagger from the same place, she doesn’t have it on her, so she only stands where she is and fidgets, Balin similarly still. Elrond unsheathes Thorin’s and turns it over in the pale light, letting the metal glint and highlight its own runes. Then he announces, “Indeed, these are not troll-make. They are of my kin, the High Elves of the West, made in Gondolin for the Goblin-wars. This, Thorin Oakenshield, is Orcrist, the Goblin-cleaver; it was a famous blade. Yours, Gandalf, the runes mark Glamdring, Foe-hammer that the king of Gondolin once wore. Very good blades indeed.” When he hands them back, Thorin spares his sword a passing glance. For all the hesitation he has with elves, there’s still a sense of respect in the way he examines it. As Gandalf lowers his own sword, Elrond says, “But this is not what you wished me to read.”

Balin and Thorin spare each other a look. Bilbo doesn’t understand, but then Thorin pulls out his map from the inside of his coat, unfolding it to look as grand as it first did in Bilbo’s hobbit hole. Elrond doesn’t look nearly so impressed, but then, Bilbo imagines, he must have his own maps.

He says, “Erebor.” There’s a note of judgment in it. Bilbo has no idea how much of the quest they’ve told him up until now, but she can only assume his disapproval comes from thinking it a mad attempt, which it is. Sighing, he rakes his eyes down the parchment and says, in a bit more surprise, “There are moon runes here.” Gandalf sits at Bilbo’s side, as though he knew it all along.

Bilbo, naturally, has no idea what moon runes are. But she gets the distinct impression she’ll learn soon enough. Elrond sweeps off down the corridor, and they all follow, Bilbo sighing and actually debating slipping back to her room for a belly rub. Of course, she doubts Thorin will take her period as a good reason to miss important details of their quest, so she soldiers on. Balin, at least, looks at her with some concern, but she manages a weak smile and shakes her head, indicating that she doesn’t want to explain.

The next place Elrond takes them to is even more magical. He ushers them down a stone corridor, carved right out of the rock, and they find themselves on a small section of the mountain with a
heavy overhang and the waterfall cascading down all around them. There’s a raised dais that looks like it’s made of pure crystal, and this Elrond takes the map to, explaining on the way, “Moon-letters can only be seen under a moon of the same shape and season as the day they were first written.” This, to Bilbo, seems a terribly complicated trick, and what’s more, excellent luck for them that they’re now able to read them. Or at least, she assumes they will be.

“Stand by the grey stone when the thrush knocks,” Elrond reads aloud, “and the setting sun with the last light of Durin’s Day will shine upon the keyhole.”

He places the map down afterwards, as though that’s all it says.

It still sounds like nonsense to Bilbo, even in the powerful setting, and she asks, “Durin’s Day?”

“The first day of the dwarves’ New Year,” Thorin answers, though his eyes are on he map, still glowing with the moon. “The first day of the last moon of autumn.” With a tired say, he shakes his head, then nearly growls, “We’re running out of time. Summer is passing.”

“We have time,” Balin insists, stepping forward. Bilbo wants to say the same, but in truth, she has no idea how far away they are.

She can only see that Thorin’s hit another roadblock, and she isn’t surprised when he snatches back the map and says, “We leave tomorrow.”

Elrond nods. He sweeps away before the rest of them do, leaving them to their plans. Gandalf lets out a heavy sigh, but he doesn’t argue. Balin is silent.

Bilbo, for the most part, is sad, but she knew her time had to come to an end eventually. She mumbles a quiet, “Okay,” and to her surprise, Thorin steps forward to lay a hand on her shoulder. It’s a comfort he didn’t have to give, but she appreciates it.

Gandalf follows Elrond, but Balin and Thorin escort Bilbo all the way back to her room, where she slips inside to find Fili and Kili right where she left them, looking thoroughly ready to please.
At first, spirits are high enough. Whether or not the dwarves admit it, Bilbo’s sure she can’t be the
only one to miss the comfort of the elves, but at least now their scratches and cuts have healed and
their supplies are restored. For the first few nights, they eat well, but then, as always, caution sets in,
and rations grow smaller. Bilbo had no expectations for the mountains, but she’s still surprised by
what they find. There are numerous paths, most dead ends, many with traps, and they only make it
through by the grace of Elrond’s advice and Gandalf’s memory. Without him, Bilbo’s sure they
would never make it at all.

Even with the ponies to do most of the work, going all uphill is slow business. Too often, Bilbo will
wind up in the back with Fíli and Kíli, guiding the ponies along behind while everyone is forced to
walk, because otherwise the poor beasts would faint of exhaustion. Bilbo knows the feeling, but
there’s nothing for it. They must get over the mountains somehow, so day after day they trudge
along. The only relief is the few hours they spend at night, Bilbo slipping into different dwarves’
sleeping bags. The trouble with this is that sometimes they fight over her, though always in hushed
tones and respectful words, and they quiet whenever she makes her decision. The difficulty is that
she feels badly for those she doesn’t lie with, but she always assures them they’ll get their turn.

More than anyone, she finds herself staying more and more with Bombur, simply because he’s fat
and deliciously warm, and the mountains get cold. She wriggles half under him when she can,
thrusting contentedly against his belly, and that staves off the wind. He has a pleasant way of holding
her, adept at co-sleeping. She probably gets more sleep than most: the mountains have a haunting
quality. When they talk, their voices echo into the distance, and every so often they receive the
trilling of wolves or evil-sounding birds. Sometimes, Bilbo finds herself clutching the hilt of her
dagger, just in case, though she prefers to clutch tighter to the dwarves she’s riding with more.

The worst days are when it rains. Riding becomes particularly traitorous, and most of Bilbo’s shirts
are white, completely soaking through. Her only consolation is that while the rain makes most of the
dwarves grumpier than usual, these days make Nori and Bofur extra nice to her. As the silence
grows uncannier, clinging tighter the higher they go, they start to bundle into as tiny camps as
possible, and on these nights Bilbo often gets sandwiched between two dwarves at a time. It almost
makes up for the eeriness of everything else.

Many times, she’s asked what she got up to in Rivendell, when they didn’t all have a chance to keep
an eye on her. She explains, in minute detail, to Kíli her experience with the elves: exactly what
Lindir looked like naked, the way he reacted to taking her fake cock, the way he rode Elrond’s, and
the way the third elf took him so easily after. Most of the other dwarves just want to know who
knows about her, and then if she took anyone’s cock inside her.

She hasn’t yet. It feels strange to her sometimes, because she’s done nearly everything else, but other
times it seems like she’s waiting for something. It isn’t so much that she thinks not doing it anything

special, so much as just not having the right moment come up. They’re all very, very big, after all, and most she couldn’t imagine fitting inside herself; surely it couldn’t be done, not comfortably, without a safe place and a proper amount of time and proper preparation. They’re all very understanding, although she knows most want to feel inside her. She keeps hoping that soon they’ll make it to a nice, big clearing, with a patch of soft grass, no monsters whatsoever, and she’ll just be able to strip down, lie in the middle, hold her legs apart and have them slowly work her up to it, but that continues to be just a daydream.

The worst of it is a thunderstorm.

It isn’t a thunderstorm, exactly: more of a thunderbattle. The powerful winds are warring with one another, crashing horribly and filling every nook and cranny of the mountain with a deafening roar. The flashes of lightning are just as terrible, blinding them and making everyone stagger back, the torrential rain threatening to wash them right over the edge. They have to hug tight to the cliff face, but there are no open paths anymore, just narrow, rocky ledges that tremble with each quake of the storm. Bilbo’s never faced anything like it, and when the lightning first starts, she can only fall to her knees and shake. It’s Dwalin that picks her up and drags her along, close to the head with him and Thorin. She tries to follow between them on her quivering legs, her feet cutting on the jagged ground below, but she’s too frightened to feel any pain. The cold rain’s turned her skin numb, and when she clutches at stones, her hands don’t feel attached to her body. They’re separate instruments that drive forward by sheer will, hesitating every time a flash or boom shorts out her brain.

Mostly, Bilbo tries to hug the wall of the cliff. But every once in a while, she betrays herself and looks around. Great, hulking stone giants are clear in the distance, lit up every time the lightning claps. They throw boulders at one another like it’s some game, letting the massive rocks splinter on the peaks and cascade over everything, sheering trails down the mountains. It’s like something out of a story, although hobbits don’t like to tell stories so terrifying. It’s far, far beyond her scope, and the only reason Bilbo manages to walk at all is because Thorin keeps moving in front of her: her guiding light. His dark hair flaps in the wind, catching in the rain and flying all around him, the fur of his coat so wet that it’s gone completely flat. His steps never falter. He moves like a beacon in a dream, giving them all strength.

Suddenly a boulder smashes overhead, shattering to pieces, and Bilbo screams and trips in her fright, but the roar all around them swallows it up. She’s sure she’s going to be buried in rubble and die in a tattered heap on the side of the mountain, but she’s grabbed around her middle and pulled out of the way just as the dust rains over them. A thick body hugs her so tightly to the wall that she can’t breathe. She looks up, gasping, to find Thorin’s head ducking over her shoulder, his arms bracketing her body. He shields her everywhere, taking the rocks down his back. She can hear his laboured breath pounding in her ear and his pained grunts every time he’s hit. Bilbo clutches to him desperately, sorry and grateful and petrified.

The waterfall of stones seems to pour on for ages. Bilbo learns to breathe against him and tries not to whimper too much. Hobbits are gentlefolk, and she can feel tears bubbling at the corner of her eyes, half of her wishing she’d never left the Shire and the other so sure that it’s worth it just to feel Thorin’s arms around her.

When he finally pulls back, his face is so covered in rivulets of water that his expression’s hard to discern. He looks pained. Then his eyes slide from her face down her body, and she realizes that her shirt’s soaked through to cling to her body. She never bothered with a bra this morning—they’re all waterlogged—so her rosy nipples are fully on display, the nubs in the centers pressing against the fabric from the cold and having rubbed into Thorin. For a moment, he stares at them, while her chest heaves with her breathing and trembling, and all she wants to do is throw her arms around him and
hide away from the world.

Instead, he flushes as pink as he can in the biting cold, and jerks his head away. He shouts past Dwalin to the others, “This isn’t working!” Bilbo can barely hear the words, and she has to wonder if the others can at all.

Then Gandalf’s voice, as if by some magic, booms past them, “If you know a better way, take us there!” He sounds just as bitter as Bilbo feels.

“Fíli, Kíli!” Thorin shouts at the top of his lungs, and Bilbo has to wonder if Gandalf passed it along, because soon Fíli and Kíli are showing up around Dwalin, looking like a pair of drowned rats. “You have the sharpest eyes. Go on ahead, and search for shelter!”

They nod, and Fíli yells something back, but whatever it is, Bilbo doesn’t catch it. As they shuffle beyond her, Thorin grabs her bicep and pushes her back against the wall to make room. When they’re gone and he lets go of her arm, it’s with a jerking movement, and he hisses, “I don’t know why we brought you. We had no business taking a hobbit off on this adventure.”

He turns away before she can protest. She might not have been able to, anyway. He made it sound like he blames himself, but it stabs her at her core. She knows she hasn’t done anything of real value, has only eaten their food and taken up space, but it still hurts to hear it. The treasure they want her to burglar is such a long war off, and in the meantime, everything scares her.

As Thorin stalks on ahead, putting a few paces between them, Dwalin leans over Bilbo’s head. He shields her from some of the rain, but it doesn’t help the ache in her chest. This is no world for a hobbit at all.

The cave Fíli and Fíli find is shallow enough, with a low overhang of rock and ominous corners to hide inside. They explore it all before they usher the ponies into the back, letting the poor beasts cower and huddle together like their Dwarven counterparts. Bilbo’s almost tempted to go off and hide with them, but then Glóin suggests they make a fire, and she lingers for that instead.

Gandalf tells them no fires whatsoever. It’ll attract attention, attention they don’t need, even though they’re all drowning and sore, and as much as Bilbo tries to cling to Bombur for warmth, he’s as covered in sopping clothes as the rest of them. Eventually, they set up in the center of the cave, shimmying out of their clothes and sitting around in their under things, pretending as though there’s a campfire after all. Bilbo wants nothing more than to shed everything and curl up in their laps, but the last thing Bilbo wants to do is look so useless in front of Thorin. Instead, she slinks off behind one of the rocks, and they all politely avert their eyes. She tugs off her wet shirt and skirt, sitting in just underwear. It’s only marginally better; she has less clothes than the rest of them and soaked right through to her skin. It’s dreadfully cold, but the still-raging storm drenched their packs as much as them, so there’s nothing to do but sit and shiver.

After a few minutes of scrunching up like a ball with chattering teeth and eyes that can’t seem to resist tearing up, Bofur slips around the side of her rock. In the darkness, it’s difficult to see who it is, but he has a distinctive smile in any light, and though his hat’s gone, his wilted braids are much the same. She imagines the other dwarves wouldn’t even have missed him; it’s almost pitched back, and the conversations on the other side of the rock are grumpy and muffled.

Bofur comes to sit right next to her. His long underwear is coarse and a little damp, but Bilbo turns to cling to it anyway. As soon as she’s buried her face in his shoulder, he grabs her legs to swing them over, pulling her up into his lap. He holds her side tightly against him and blankets her in his huge arms, covering just enough of her skin to let her breathe without it hurting. He pets her flattened hair
with his other hand, murmuring, “I’m sorry, Bilbo.” His words can’t change anything, but they’re more of a comfort than he could know.

She can only assume he heard what Thorin said, or else they’re discussing it again. She wants to say it’s alright, but it isn’t really, and she’s too cold to talk. He cradles her closer and pulls his legs up, shielding her from the world around them. His warm fingers rub at her thighs and her arms, trying to bring life back to them, and he mumbles soothingly into her ear, “Don’t take what Thorin says to heart. He’s just grumpy because, unlike the rest of us, he doesn’t have any release—this journey’s been just one hardship after another.”

It’s been hard on all of them, but Bilbo understands. She doesn’t blame Thorin. He deserves an army at his back, and instead he has a liability. Through shaking teeth, she mutters, “I’d offer release to him.” Bofur chuckles, which makes Bilbo’s frozen lips crack into a smile, even though she wasn’t joking. She would do anything to help Thorin the way Bofur and the others help her, but she’d do it for more than that. Bofur presses a firm kiss to her forehead that makes her lashes flutter against her cheek.

“He is handsome, isn’t he?” When Bilbo nods against Bofur—Thorin’s so handsome—Bofur’s voice lowers into a familiar, husky purr, and he whispers, “I should’ve known you’d want to serve him. And it’d be greater than what it is with the rest of us, isn’t it? He’s a king, after all; he deserves so much more.” Bilbo mews and shakes her head—it would be different, yes, but not better—she loves them all—“Of course you’d want to be our king’s courtesan. Maybe his first wife, or maybe both—his partner and the head of his harem.”

Bilbo sighs happily as Bofur slips into another of those talks, something that transports her far away, out of this miserable reality. His erotic voice assures her, “And wouldn’t you look pretty, too, dressed up in all his gold, barely covered in thin, translucent silk that clings to all your curves, so easy to tear away... and we’d drape you in chains, gold and silver necklaces and bracelets and harnesses to wrap around your chest, emphasis your beautiful bosom... maybe even a nice collar around your neck, engraved with Thorin Oakenshield. Perhaps if we were good, he would still let us play with you, but we’d all know exactly who you belonged to—” Bilbo moans louder than she means to and turns her face to Bofur’s chest to muffle it. Her thighs squirm together in his grasp, warmth stirring inside her. Bofur keeps petting her, stroking her skin, as he paints the perfect picture of their journey’s end.

“What a lovely sight you’d be to come home to, knelt at his feet by the throne, with a nice little crown and so many necklaces of jewels that they’d dip down into your breasts, emphasizing all your curves; you’d be the most prized treasure in all of Erebor, and we’d treat you like the queen you are for it... except, of course, when you wanted to be just another whore of the king’s court, ripe for the taking...”

Bilbo whimpers and clutches at Bofur’s shoulders for dear life. Finally, his probing hands reach their true destination. One arms wraps over her breasts, fingers kneading them from the sides, and the other hand dips between her legs. Bofur’s calloused palm smoothes over her belly, right inside the hem of her moist panties, and she bucks into him as his fingers slide along her flesh. The sting of the cold ebbs away under the heat of his words, and she rocks against him to show that she wants more. She can feel the bulge of his hard cock beneath her, and she squirms against it while he talks, but he seems to get off enough on his own from just teasing her and playing with her body. She’s more than happy to be his toy.

“But of course, being the king’s personal consort is a big responsibility, Bilbo. Thorin Oakenshield isn’t just any dwarf; he deserves the best, and if you’re going to warm his bed, you’d need to know what you’re doing. I’m sure you’d want to be perfect for him. You’d want his cock every morning, eating nothing else until you’d swallowed his seed; your stomach always full of Thorin’s cum before being allowed to suckle your other rations off his fingers. You’d need to be accustomed to wearing
his seed like a badge of honour. It’s a good thing you started so early, so we have plenty of time to train you. By the time we reach Erebor, you’ll be everything any dwarf lord could want. You’ll be accustomed to pleasing our kind, conditioned to it, and you’ll have every last dwarf in our new kingdom lusting after you...”

“But I’ll be Thorin’s,” Bilbo gasps, moaning into his neck as the fantasy overtakes her: Bofur’s special world where she’s both queen and courtesan, able to kneel at Thorin’s feet and lounge in the laps of all her men. The thought of waking Thorin up every morning with her mouth around his cock, begging to be filled before even her morning tea, is almost too much to take. Bofur chuckles gently, his finger circling the tip of her clit and occasionally dipping inside her folds.

“If that’s what you want, Bilbo. I’m sure he’d be happy to have you. He acts gruff now, but that’s only because he hasn’t felt your soft lips around his cock. Once he sees how we dress you in gold and offer you to him, he won’t be able to resist. Besides, you’ll already be the slut of the Durins; we all know how much you love to be squished between his nephews. You’ve been pleasing princes all this time; why shouldn’t you have a king? You deserve to ride his cock right on the throne, in the middle of Erebor, crying out his name and giving him everything you have. You’d make such a pretty pet, Bilbo. You should be wearing his collar and marked with his seal, coated in his seed—you should reek of your master...”

Bilbo lets out a shuddering gasp that sounds more like a cry. She doesn’t want to wait, she wants to be Thorin’s now, and her channel’s tightening for it; she keeps clenching her body, wishing she could be clamped around him. Instead, Bofur’s finger worms its way inside, slicking up her walls and slipping back out, fucking her at small, irregular intervals that just aren’t enough. Her hips are humping his hand with abandon, but he still only takes her how he pleases, still playing with her tits the whole time. Nuzzling his face against hers, Bofur chuckles, “You want him badly, don’t you, Bilbo? You want all of us, but mostly, you want to walk around this rock right now with your fat tits hanging out and your pussy moist and dripping, and you want to crawl to him and beg him to stuff his dick in your mouth.” Bilbo whines and nods. Bofur’s finger starts to quirk, deliberately rubbing at her walls, finding all the spots that make her lose control. The more he talks, the harder his finger stabs into her, until he’s fucking her fast and relentless, while she makes needy noises and tries to press back onto him. “But of course, you want more than that, don’t you. You want to fuck your throat raw on his cock, but then you want him to fuck your tits, too, to rub all over your body and thrust between your thighs, and then you want to climb into his lap and spread your legs and impale yourself, bit by bit, on his massive, royal cock. You don’t even care if you can take it. You want to be split apart on Thorin, have him fill you so impossibly full that you’ll always feel empty when you don’t have him, and you want him to fuck you so hard that you scream yourself hoarse and pass out, only to wake up and beg the rest of us to take you after, because you can’t wait to have all of us inside you; you want to bathe in our cum and hold so much of it that we have to plug you up to keep you from leaking, keeping all our loads inside you until your body can’t take it anymore and you start bearing out litters, giving Thorin little princes and princesses and begging us to breed you again...”

Bilbo comes with a blissful burst of heat. It tears through her, washing out everything else: her whole world is Bofur’s words and the future he’s created. For a few rapturous seconds, Bilbo lives in that reality, where she’s fat with Thorin’s children and beloved by all of them.

Slowly, the daydreams spiral into warm, familiar things, like Bilbo making Thorin tea instead of drinking his cum every morning, and sitting on the armrest of his throne instead of kissing his feet. The cold seeps back in, but her orgasm helped, and she’s still too dizzy to truly process the pain. Bofur keeps holding her tight, and he pats her hip and murmurs into her ear, “Sleep with Fíli and Kíli tonight. You need double the love.”
She nods and leans up for a kiss.

It’s a cracking sound that wakes her up.

It’s followed by clopping, like the steady walk of hooves. The thunder and lightening have settled down, though the rain’s still going: a continuous pitter-patter at the mouth of the cave. Everything’s dark, and Bilbo’s sore and tired from the harsh ground. She’s still soaked to the bone. Fili’s sleeping bag is too thin, but the heat of him against her back and Kili’s body against her front helps combat the cold. She still has Kili’s arm over her and Fili’s legs entwined with her own, and that, at least, is a comforting feeling.

But then she hears the cracking sound again, and it stirs her enough to sit up, rubbing at her eyes. The light is so dim that all she can make out is the distant cave’s mouth and a sharp glint in the corer of her eye.

Her things are bundled at the bottom of her sleeping bag: her dagger and clothes. Her dagger is slid half out of its sheath, shining blue. Reaching for it, Bilbo slides the sleek blade out enough to illuminate the front of her face and hands. As she lifts it, the glow shows her the end of a nearby pony’s tail, flicking as it’s swallowed up in a giant crack that’s spread across the back of the cave.

Before anything else, before taking even another breath, Bilbo screams. Her instincts know what’s happening before her mind can put it together. She snatches for her clothes as she shrieks loud enough to bring the ceiling down. She hurriedly shoves her legs into her skirt as Fili and Kili dart up on either side of her. Kili tosses her her shirt, and she shoves it over her head as she shouts, “Gandalf!” Fili’s already scrambling for his sword.

She’s just got her clothes back on when goblins burst out around them. Bilbo screams again, now out of sheer shock and fear. She knows exactly what they are; she’s seen the ugly depictions and heard the terrible stories, and nothing else could looks so very disgusting, with their gravelly skin and their cruel eyes glinting through the dark, jagged teeth gnawing together like pincers. Their twisted hands are gnarled around crude weapons that look designed to prolong pain, and their horrible voices fill the cave with their chanted battle cries. Bilbo barely has time to scramble out of Fili’s sleeping bag before one of them throws his massive club at her. It smashes into the floor where she was, and though Fili lunges in front of her to try and hold them off, there are too many. The goblins are springing up everywhere, and the poor dwarves are still half asleep, not all of them making it to their weapons in time. Bilbo clutches her dagger tightly to her, but she’s never once been taught how to use it.

There’s no time to think, not consciously, but Bilbo’s head is filled with images of her death, skewered on the end of goblin weapons. Yet they seem more interested in prodding the party back towards the black cavern that’s opened in the far wall, and Bilbo is herded with the others. The one time she tries to swing her dagger at a goblin in front of her, it pierces her with a shrill laugh and jabs its own sword towards her. She stumbles backward just in time to avoid getting split open, but the tip of it catches on her shirt and tears right down the middle, her breasts spilling out all over again. Bilbo doesn’t even think to cover herself up, because she needs her arms to hold her dagger protectively in front of her. She wants to look around to see if all her friends have survived the ambush, but she can barely keep track of her immediate bubble.

Then, out of nothing, there’s a blinding flash of light, right in the midst of them, worse than any lightning and with only that one splintering sound. Bilbo’s vision’s filled with light, and as soon as it’s gone, she can’t process the darkness around her, and she sways, dizzy on her feet, tumbling forward. She lands on a goblin body and springs right back up—there are dead goblins everywhere. It must’ve been Gandalf, could only have been him—he must have heard Bilbo’s shout in time.
But then the walls close in around them, and it doesn’t matter. The crack that opened up seals shut behind them, and Bilbo and the dwarves are stuck on the wrong side of it. She looks wildly around, but there’s no way out; they’re cornered between pure stone and a horde of shouting, spitting goblins stabbing sharp weapons at them. One by one, the dwarves are prodded out of their defenses. Thorin and Dwalin, standing roughly in the middle and at the head, are forced to drop their weapons when the goblins pull Kili forward, holding a knife to his throat.

Beside Bilbo, Fili makes a desperate noise, but he drops his sword. Bilbo sees Thorin, growling, let himself be disarmed by a rush of clawing fingers. Bilbo’s dagger is ripped out of her hands, though the goblins jerk back a moment later, letting it clatter to the floor. They hurriedly find the sheath amongst themselves, having stolen all the supplies, and they tuck the blade back inside. No one bothers to search her for more weapons. Her skirt is small, still clinging to her from the dampness of the rain, and her shirt’s completely torn apart. All she can do is slump miserably beside her friends while the goblins clatter triumphantly and start producing chains.

As the dwarves are tied together one by one, Bilbo looks around for Gandalf, but she can’t seem him anywhere. He would be taller than everyone here, easy to spot, but he must be trapped on the other side. Finally, Bilbo is shoved up behind Thorin, Fili behind her, and their wrists are bound tightly together with thick manacles. Bilbo’s are clamped together so tightly that she thinks she’ll lose her circulation, the metal wall between them not more than a centimeter, giving her hands no room at all to move. The chain that’s strung through the line of dwarves and around Fili is circled around Bilbo’s neck, and the Goblins seem to enjoy wrapping her up in particular; she’s smaller and easier to bind; she doesn’t fight and she’s all bare skin and no armour. They loop the cold chain around her several times like a collar, while her head tilts back to give enough room and she struggles to breathe. Thorin, looking back at her, has pure fury on his face, like he’s about to burst out of his bindings and tear them all limb from limb.

But even the great Thorin Oakenshield can’t do anything against so many goblins, and he’s forced to watch as they bring the chain down Bilbo’s chest to bind her wrists against her breasts. They loop it again around her waist, down between her legs and back up again, then finally grow bored with her and bring the chain to Thorin. Him they also bind thickly, and they seem to find special delight in it, snickering more the harder he growls.

When Thorin’s tugged forward, it jerks Bilbo along, pulling at her navel and drawing the chain taut between her legs. It forces the metal up against her folds, rubbing even through the skirt and her panties, but with the situation as it is, it isn’t a pleasant feeling. Behind her, she can feel Fili hurrying to keep up so the chain won’t choke her.

The walk down the mountain is perhaps the most horrible thing that’s ever happened to Bilbo, even more than the trolls. The chain chafes at her bare skin and tears at what’s left of her clothes, and the ground beneath her bare feet is slick and harsh. It’s sickening to know that all her friends are bound behind her, but it’s worse to look at Thorin’s proud back, tempered and tied. He’s captured, but untamed. But the thing that really makes it all unbearable is the way the goblins sing, in their grating, stony voices about all the terrible ways they’re going to torture the party into madness.

On their third song, Bilbo starts to cry. She doesn’t even care if Thorin hears. Her eyes water so badly that she can’t see the road ahead, dimly lit by their fires as it is, and she trips, the chain pulling sharply between her legs and over her chest and around her neck, and Bilbo twists in agony on the ground, choking for air. The goblins rush to straighten her out, and part of her wishes they’d just let her die right there, because after their grubby hands have pulled her back into place, they go right back to singing. Bofur’s happy tales seem so very far away, and all Bilbo wants to do is go home.
It’s a small eternity by the time they’re allowed to stop walking, and by then, seven other dwarves have tripped and Bilbo isn’t the only one with tears in her eyes. Theirs is more of misery than terror, but in the darkness of their plight, it doesn’t seem to matter. They’re all going to die in a pit of despair in the worst ways possible, knowing all their friends have followed.

Under different circumstances, the goblins’ halls might be impressive. They’ve tunneled far past what they stole from dwarves, have strung makeshift walkways and created paths across the vast caverns, networked in a giant maze that no one else could ever hope to escape from. They slither like ants out of every nook and cranny, crawling over the walls and peering at them with beady, hungry eyes, gnashing their teeth and scrunching their claws. Bilbo doesn’t understand why they’ve made it so far in one piece until they’re stopped before the biggest Goblin of all, who towers above them with a great, round belly and smears of blood across his chest.

One of their captors clamours in reverence, “Great Goblin!” And the others jangle their weapons, tugging on the dwarves’ chains to force them all to bow. Fíli goes down fast, Bilbo following; her knees have already been shaking and she doesn’t think she can walk anymore, not one step. Thorin tries to stay on his feet, but when he hears Bilbo gasping, he quickly lowers. He tries to turn and look at her, and she coughs and struggles for air, shuddering so hard that her chains keep rattling. Thorin subtly squirms back, as though trying to hide her from sight. He lifts his head proudly, defiantly, while the Great Goblin peers down at him.

“What are these miserable things?” the Great Goblin booms. He’s louder than the others, and his voice leaves Bilbo’s ears ringing.

One of the dwarves next to her snaps, “Dwarves, and this!” He reaches down and fists his gnarled claws in her hair, jerking back her head, and Bilbo gasps as her throat’s exposed. The Great Goblin peers down at her, stepping forward. Bilbo tries to think of something, anything, that will help them like they did with the trolls, but she wasn’t soaked and freezing and exhausted and so tightly bound then. There’s a cruel hunger in the Great Goblin’s eyes, but Bilbo can’t tell if it’s because of her half naked body or because he wants to eat her whole.

Thorin again tries to press in front of her, insisting loudly, “I am Thorin Oakenshield, the leader of these dwarves! I am the one to speak to!” Instantly, the Great Goblin jerks around, his neck warbling to follow. There’s a small spark of warmth in Bilbo’s chest at the thought of Thorin protecting her, and she tries to hold onto that so she doesn’t have to die in uninterrupted despair.

“Thorin Oakenshield,” the Great Goblin muses. It almost looks as though he recognizes the name, but Bilbo doesn’t know enough of goblin-dwarf history to know. “And what were you doing in our cave, hm? Thieves! Murders, I’ll bet—friends of Elves!”

“No,” Thorin shouts, above the excited chatter of the lesser goblins. “We were only passing through; we never meant the goblins any harm! We simply found a cave to shield us from the storm—”

“And what were you passing through for, hm?”

Bilbo’s impressed when Thorin immediately comes up with a lie, reciting blandly, “We were visiting our relatives. We had no idea, of course, that we were intruding upon your fine land, but we’ll be happy to leave—”

The Great Goblin’s leaning in intensely, skeptical but listening nonetheless, until one of the goblins at the back shouts, “He’s lying! Look at this!” And as the dwarves turn around to look, the goblin dumps Thorin’s pack on the floor, his sword clattering to the ground and slipping out of its sheath. Bilbo instantly remembers Elrond’s words—Orcrist, the goblin-cleaver—and the goblins seem to recognize it as well. They howl madly, stepping back as though afraid to even be near such a thing.
“Murders and elf-friends!” the king of them bellows, jabbing a broken fingernail at them. “Liars! Kill them all, slash them to pieces, string them up by their feet—!”

All at once, the light flares.

It’s all consuming, seeping into every hole: the entire goblin kingdom becomes one wall of white. It’s as though lightning’s slipped inside the mountain, and the screams of the goblins fill Bilbo’s ears, even as she feels the chains stringing her to Thorin and Fíli crack and shatter to the ground. The chain around her neck still trails down between her breasts, wrapped around her middle like a crude harness, her wrists bound by a separate piece. But she’s free of the chains that connect them, and as the whiteness ebbs away from the corners of her eyes, she can see Gandalf moving through the firelight, swiftly laying his staff to their handcuffs to split them apart and passing out swords. When Gandalf gets to her end, she’s busy leaning back to try and pull her dagger from one of the nearby goblins lying on the ground, and Gandalf skips straight to Thorin instead, freeing him. Thorin springs to his feet and bounds over her, snatching up his sword. Gandalf moves towards her, but by then it’s too late; the goblins are starting to rise. The Great Goblin doesn’t move, but they can’t take the chance of staying to see who else has fallen. Gandalf shouts, “Quickly, follow me!”

Bilbo, bound as she is and weakly clutching her sheathed dagger, doesn’t have time to scramble up. She doesn’t have to. Dori suddenly appears above her, reaching down to grab her around the middle, and she’s picked right into the air and thrown over his shoulder. He goes racing off with the others, her bouncing against his back while he holds her legs against her chest. Gandalf smashes out the goblin torches wherever they go, but his pale light leads them on, too bright for the goblins to look at but something of a star for the dwarves. Bilbo’s immeasurably grateful that Dori’s grabbed her, because she doesn’t think she could’ve made this race on her own. Everywhere they go, they can hear the goblins howling to follow, and the clatter of swords breaks through every few moments.

They run for another small eternity, Bilbo thoroughly beaten and bruised and out of air, but nonetheless miraculously alive. For a while, she’s convinced they’ll make it, somehow they’ll find a way, but then Dori slows down and she realizes they’re surrounded, and everything breaks out into the roar of battle. She wants to get down and help, even though she knows she couldn’t really be of any use, but then Dori’s assaulted by two goblins and Bilbo’s thrown form his shoulders.

She smashes into the cavern wall, rolls into a crevice, and is conscious just long enough to see the rock that gets her coming. Then her skull smashes into it, her head explodes in pain, and Bilbo’s world goes dark.
Chapter Notes

A/N: Nothing interesting this chapter, sorry. It’s quick and heavily condensed since I didn’t really have anything to add.

At first, she isn’t sure she’s woken up at all. There is no change when she opens her eyes: everything is still pitch black. It takes a few seconds for her to be able to move her neck and her fingers and toes, because everything is frozen and stiff and aching.

Her head is pounding worst of all. She wants to lift her hands to it, but that jerks at the handcuffs still tightly clamped around her wrists. The chain’s still wrapped around her, rattling when she tries to move. It’s a terrifying feeling, lost in the darkness all alone, and she doesn’t dare call for help. For a few truly awful moments, Bilbo simply lies where she is, fending off a total shut down.

Finally, she starts to squirm. Just a little bit at a time, she lowers her hands, letting the chains crick along one another, until she has her hands at her waist. It takes a bit of searching to find the end of the chain, broken off by Gandalf’s might, but once she does, she can untwist it from the makeshift belt it’s given her. She lets it slither down between her legs and has to roll onto her side to reach it again, then brings it up to her neck. By tossing it over her shoulder and rolling, she’s able to slowly untwist her collar, until she can drop the entire chain behind, and kneel, untied, with only her hands bound.

There’s nothing she can do about that. But now isn’t the time to lie helpless on the ground. She’s already lived through the worst of it, she tells herself, and whatever some of the dwarves might think, she does have bravery in her. Perhaps not as much as them, but it’s there. Picturing the dwarves in her mind gives her a reason to keep going. She refuses to think she’ll never see them again. When she thinks of Thorin braving on, it still gives her strength.

She thinks of Fíli and Kíli talking fearlessly about braving on ahead. She thinks of finding Bombur to hold her and warm her, Dori to rub her torn feet, Bofur’s comforting words in her ear and Nori’s promised silver lining. She thinks of hiding under Dwalin’s strength with Ori, and Balin being kind to her. Bifur quietly looking out for them all and Óin and Glóin bickering in their familial way. She thinks of Gandalf’s light, and she knows she can’t stay here.

She crawls, at first just on her hands and knees, in an awkward, three-legged movement. She thinks they were headed down when they were running, and because she has nothing better to guide her, that’s the way she movies. As she’s shuffling downhill, her palms come across something small and hard—a circlet of metal. A ring, she thinks, and at first it occurs to her that it might one of the toe rings from the hostess at Rivendell, but then, she doesn’t think she was wearing any when they were captured. She can only hope that some of the dwarves managed to get their supplies and all of hers aren’t lost.

Just in case, Bilbo slips the ring into the pocket of her skirt. Then she keeps on, until she comes across something more familiar. For whatever strange reason, she can recognize the feel of her dagger’s sheath as soon as she touches it. Maybe it’s because it’s Elven, like Thorin’s and Gandalf’s, or maybe her mind just wants to have something familiar to latch onto. Either way, she finds the hilt of it and slips it halfway out of its sheath.
It glows a pale blue, far dimmer than it was in the cave. If her goblin lore is right, it means that they’re far away.

With her sword in hand, Bilbo shakily climbs to her feet. She lets it light her way, however dimly, through the dark, and she heads on with the powerful thought of her dwarves in her mind.

Once she starts moving, she can’t stop. She loses breath quickly; the air is stale and thin, but at least hobbits are used to living underground and her sense of direction isn’t in complete shambles. Every step is just as distressing as the last, but she can’t bring herself to pause even for a moment.

Bilbo’s been trudging on through the dark for a very, very long time before her foot plunges into a puddle, and she topples back as if burned. Having her wrists bound robs her of some balance, and she lands on her rear, yelping in pain. She shushes a moment later, hoping desperately that nothing heard her. Her sword is so dim by this point that she may as well have no light at all, but still, there could be other things in the mountain just as willing to eat her as goblins. At first, she sits where she is, trying to regain her breath and be absolutely silent. All she can hear is the thudding of her pulse. In the distance, she starts to notice the gentle trickle of water. She tries to hold her sword up to where she stepped, pulling it completely out of its sheath, but the flat, black surface of the water is difficult to discern from the rest of the rocky world around her. The only difference is that it’s deadly smooth. She considers skipping a rock along it to see how far it goes, but then, there’s no telling what sort of monsters she might call from the deep. Based on the drips, she has to assume it’s a pool or a lake, but there’s no real way to know.

Bilbo isn’t willing to chance swimming across it. She knows how to swim, barely, but certainly not for an unknown distance with her hands tied and a heavy dagger to carry. And she doesn’t fancy the idea of hidden creatures gnawing at her feet. But she can’t go back. She knows that much, at least. By the glow of her blade, she knows that she’s been moving away from the goblins, which is precisely what she wanted to do. The only other option is to try and go around the lake, but she doesn’t know which way.

So she sits back down to think. At least, she tells herself she’s going to think. Really, she’s doing everything she can to keep the terror back. It was easier when she had something to do, when she could walk blindly forward, but as she rocks in a little ball along the shore, she’s lost all over again.

At the first sound, her head jerks up, and she peers through the dark to where she thought she heard it. There’s a very faint, steady movement, like water rippling along the edge of something flat. Her mind conjures the image of a ferry, though she doesn’t dare hope for such a saviour.

Instead, she finds the faint outlines of a little boat. At least, she thinks that’s what it is. She can’t see it clearly, no matter how hard she squints, and she doesn’t dare move closer to look. There’s a hump inside the boat, smaller than a goblin, not that much bigger than her, even, but it’s making hissing sounds that keeps it very much imposing. Bilbo readies her dagger, just in case, and she pushes back to her feet, though she doesn’t know how long she’ll be able to stand.

The boat docks a little ways away from her. It nudges up against the shore, and the creature slinks out of it, slimy and gangly. It moves on all fours like a beast, but when it looks around at her, its giant, luminescent eyes look too familiar. It creeps slowly towards her, muttering in a garbled language she can only just understand, “What iss it, my preciouss?”

It doesn’t look like a goblin. But it doesn’t look like anything friendly, either. Bilbo tries to sound brave when she responds, “I am Ms. Bilbo Baggins, and who are you?” It comes out higher-pitched than she means it to, but she’s at least impressed her voice didn’t crack.
The creature makes a noise in the back of its throat. It sounds like, “Gollum,” but it’s difficult to tell, and she doesn’t even know if it’s really answering, but she knows that if she wants to make it out of this through talk, she’ll need a name. Being on a name basis always helps in fables keep creatures from eating you, and Bilbo would much prefer to survive through talk rather than fighting. But the creature seems mostly to talk to itself when it hisses, “What’s it got in its handses?”

“A sword,” Bilbo squeals, racking her brain and adding on in haste, “an Elven blade from Gondolin!” That, at least, sounds far more impressive than a little dagger held by a Shire hobbit.

The creature, Gollum, recoils back, making pained noises and shaking their ugly head, stingy hairs slithering over their bare skull. They’re practically a skeleton, with only a little cloth over their loins and a decimated chest. In the absence of knowing who they really are, and not feeling inclined to ask at this moment, Bilbo tries to think of Gollum as a ‘they,’ if only to not think ‘it,’ though she’s not sure she wants to stay long enough to find out the correct term. She generally tries to keep an opened mind, but she’s never been so uncomfortable in a stranger’s presence before—aside, of course, from goblins and trolls and that sort of thing. The way Gollum looks at her, Bilbo gets the distinct impression that they’d like to eat her quite as much as the goblins, except, and perhaps worse, under the false pretense of being friendly.

As Gollum creeps around her, Bilbo keeps her sword at the ready. Their eyes scan her, like sizing her up, but so far they haven’t been truly threatening, not in any tangible way she could hang her hat on. Finally, they sit down before her on the rocks, coiling into themself and gurgling, “Sits here and chats with it a bitsy, my preciusss. It likes riddles, praps it does, does it?”

Under the right circumstances, Bilbo loves riddles. Word games can be splendid fun, when one is sitting in a nice hobbit hole with a cup of tea in their hands. In the depths of a strange mountain, not so much. Bilbo’s cold and bruised and growing a little hungry and not at all in the mood for games, but in the interest of keeping the creature talking instead of attacking, she says, “One or two.”

“What has roots as nobody sees, is taller than trees: up, up it goes, and yet never grows?” Gollum asks right away.

Bilbo only manages to say, “Mountain,” because she’s heard it before. She can only hope they’re all like that, because she isn’t in a good spot for thinking at the moment. Miserably and not amused, Bilbo tentatively asks, “Have you seen any dwarves...?”

Gollum wrinkles their nose at the word ‘dwarves,’ but ignores it and rolls on, “Voiceless it cries, wingless flutters, toothless bites, mouthless mutters.”

This stumps Bilbo for a moment, but then she thinks of all the bites she felt over her body trudging up the mountain to this stupid place, and the howl of it in her ears. She answers, “Wind.”

Before Bilbo can come up with a riddle in return, Gollum snarls, “Ss, ss, my precious,” and she has to wonder just what on earth their ‘precious’ is. As far as she can tell, the creature means themself, which is wholly confusing. She can only hope that this is the only creature of its kind down here, and that there aren’t a bunch of creepy, difficult to communicate with monsters with no interest in helping her and a nasty way of staring at half-naked women. Gollum bursts with more fervor, “It cannot be seen, cannot be felt, cannot be heard, cannot be smelt. It lies behind the stars and under hills, and empty holes it fills. It comes first and follows after, ends life, kills laughter.

Bilbo sighs, “Dark.” That’s one she’s firmly acquainted with. The creature scowls at her, as though it’s her fault their riddles are old and she’s clever.

Gollum mutters, “Can we eats it?” It’s so quiet that she can hope she misheard, but she can tell from
the way Gollum looks at her that she didn’t. Their patience is wearing thin, and they’re looking over
her again, hissing horribly, “What does it tastes like, precious? Not like nasty goblins, no—” They
only cut off when Bilbo points her sword right at it, trying to glower like Thorin or Dwalin would,
though in truth, she’s shaking. Under their breath, Gollum grumbles, “One more, yess. One more.
Bagginesses likes games, doesn’t it? If we win, it lets us eat it, won’ts its?”

Bilbo doesn’t want to be eaten at all, and she doesn’t plan to be. But she can tell that Gollum isn’t
thinking clearly. They’re mad, they must be, and Bilbo knows that saying so won’t be of any use.
Instead, she asks, “And what if I win?” Before they can answer, she thinks to insist, “Then you’ll
show me the way out!”

Gollum makes a gulping noise again. They look displeased, but thinking. For a moment, Bilbo
stands ready, but the longer she has to wait, the sorer her arms get. Finally, she allows herself to sit,
only because Gollum’s already sitting and she doesn’t think her legs will last much longer. Gollum
ods.

And as Bilbo takes a seat along the rocky floor, her skirt twists. Something blunt and small presses
into her hip from her pocket. It startles Bilbo, who was growing used to having nothing left, and she
looks down in surprise, murmuring to herself, “What’ve I got in my pocket?”

It’s just an innocent, think-aloud question, perhaps brought on by Gollum’s own habit of doing so.
They suddenly snarl, “Not fair! It isn’t fair, my precious, is it, to ask what it’s got in its nastty
pocketes?” It wasn’t meant to be a riddle at all, but clearly Gollum’s taken it that way, and she can’t
think of a proper riddle under these conditions. So she lets Gollum splutter, “S-s-s-s-s, what is its?”

While Gollum struggles with themself, Bilbo slips her hands into her pocket. She turns her hips to
hide the movement from him, and she scoops out the ring to hold in her hands. It’s smooth and a
perfect circle, without any jewels or carvings, so she thinks it can’t really be one of the ones from
Rivendell. She can’t imagine goblins making jewelry, so she can’t fathom how it got there, but at the
moment, it doesn’t matter. She holds it against the hilt of her dagger, keeping ready, while Gollum
starts to totter back and forth.

Gollum’s mutterings are getting wilder. They go from hissing about what could be in her pockets to
what they like to eat to a feral, “My birthday presents, yes, we wants my present...” They start to pat
along their body, like searching in holes that aren’t there, murmuring, “It won’t see us, will it, my
precious?” But the more Gollum, searches, the more their hands turn up empty, and the whispers
become more frantic, until Gollum is hissing, “Where is it? Where iss it? Lost? Is it losst, my
precious?”

Bilbo’s tempted to ask what they’ve lost, but before she can, their piercing eyes turn to her, widening
around the edges. Frozen on the spot, Bilbo’s hands clutch tighter to their cargo, wishing desperately
that she could pull her wrists apart. Then Gollum slinks half a step closer, extending one drawn arm
and gulping, “What has it gots in its pockets?”

Too anxious to answer, Bilbo scuttles back, but now Gollum’s advancing, making that horrible noise
over and over again, and then, all at once, Gollum curls back and lunges forward, straight at her, and
Bilbo screams, curling up on instinct and falling over to avoid getting hit. As she shrinks in on herself,
her finger sinks into the center of the ring, and all at once the world seems to shift around her. Dizzy,
she nearly drops her dagger, but instead regains herself long enough to retrieve the sheath, holding it
all neatly in her hands. She thinks she might be able to bolt before Gollum straightens back up—
they’ve fallen right past her, now recovering from scraping along the rocks. But they look around at
her too quickly, and Bilbo freezes.

She holds her sword at the ready. She could run them right through if she had to. She’s just close
enough that she could do it, swing forward, even bound as she is, and take off their head in one go. But something about the decrepit body and devastated eyes holds her back. Mercy stays her hand, instead waiting with bated breath for them to move first.

Gollum looks right through her. They don’t seem to see her. They creep once to one side, then the other, scuttling in place and then sitting back to wring their hands. They whisper, “It’s gone. The Bagginses is gone. Gollum.”

And Bilbo understands, wild though it is, that Gollum can’t see her anymore. Somehow, some strange magic has shielded her from him. The only thing she can think of is that it’s the ring—it must be the ring; nothing else has changed. She slipped it on, and now she’s become invisible.

After a few seconds of tortured noises, Gollum hisses, “It’ll run, yes. It’ll escape with it, preciouss! Can’t let it, no!” For a split second, Gollum’s face washes over in a terrible rage, and then they jerk to the side and take off.

Bilbo scrambles to her feet. Clutching her sword and sheath, she takes off after them. She has nowhere else to go, and she can only hope from their paranoid words that Gollum’s headed for the exit. She has no better chance. She bolts along behind them, scrabbling over the uneven ground and racing through the dark, her sword just barely showing her the outline of Gollum ahead.

In their flight, Gollum rasps the turns, counting, “One left, yes, one right, yes, two right, yes, yes,” and at first Bilbo tries to listen, but then it all drowns out in one steady stream. Only adrenaline keeps her moving. Her sword slowly shines brighter, and she knows they’re coming closer to the goblins, but if it’s the exit, that’s the only thing for it; above all, she doesn’t want to die here alone.

Abruptly, Gollum stops. They skid to a halt under a thin crevice, hidden behind jagged rocks, and Gollum’s wracked with ragged breaths as they pant, “What shall we do? We dursn’t go in, precious, there’s goblins down there. Sss!” And indeed, over the hump of Gollum’s head, Bilbo can see the goblins moving about in front of a large, stone door, just slightly ajar. The low light of the outside wreaks havoc on her eyes after so long in the dark, and at first she just blinks and tries to adjust while Gollum worries to themself.

Then, when Bilbo can manage again, she pulls to her full height. She knows there isn’t any sense trying to fight the goblins off. There would be even less sense in running Gollum through, now that she’s at the exit. There’s nothing to do for it but go.

With a shuddering breath, Bilbo slips around Gollum. She creeps along the shadows, just in case she’s wrong about the ring, but she keeps her finger curled around it to avoiding letting it slip off. She passes by all of the goblins, trying to block out their gnawing clatter, and she slips right past them through the stone door, back out into the world.
A/N: This is another of those chapters that varied greatly from book to movie. I kept the book timeline and foes with the movie showdown, plus what totally happened behind the scenes.

It’s both brilliant and irksome to be out in the light. It burns into her eyes, and she tries to shield them with her manacled hands as best she can, and at least it gives her some warmth. But she’s still thoroughly under clothed and, much worse, alone.

She wanders for a bit, picking down the mountain, feeling both miserable and light-headed. Her stomach is starting to chew itself up, but she doesn’t pass anything edible, and she doesn’t want to stop for fear she’ll put more distance between her and the dwarves. She has no way of knowing if they made it out alive, but she has to hope they did—after all, they had a wizard, and they’re all such brave warriors, and if she thinks too hard of them dying in the goblin’s mountain, she’ll end up falling apart.

The one good side is that she seems to have found her way clear across the mountain. If the others made it this way, it will have cut their journey down considerably, and she won’t at all miss those dreadful nights spent up near the cliffs. The terrain is still rocky and sparse, with trees growing at odd angles and boulders everywhere, but it’s much more manageable than the sheer stone inclines she had to climb on the other side.

Just when she’s about to either give up or pass out, she hears noises in the distance. Her first instinct is to stop, the ring still securely on her finger, and then she creeps closer bit by bit. She’s sure that it isn’t goblins, though it does sound like speech. Finally, as she slips between two large rocks, she sees a familiar figure perched on a boulder. Another step, and she knows exactly who it is so sharply surveying the land ahead.

It’s Balin. Bilbo could cry with her relief, and she nearly screams in delight. She wants to run right up and hug him, squeeze him around the middle and bury her face in his magnificent beard, and she almost does. But then, as she comes closer and can make out the voices of the others, she thinks, perhaps, she might just like to surprise them instead. Or she might just go to Gandalf and get her hands freed first, and maybe put on a shirt and a skirt that isn’t falling apart around her.

Slinking right past Balin, Bilbo weaves through the trees and comes to where the others are huddled. She takes count of them first, overjoyed to see that they’ve all escaped unharmed. It isn’t until she’s finished that that she really registers what it is they’re saying, and that gives her pause, right before she’s about to take off her ring.

They’re talking about her. Gandalf is insisting loudly in the middle of them, “I don’t bring things that are of no use; I tell you she was important, and now you’ve gone and lost her!” Turning to Dori in particular, Gandalf scowls. “Whatever did you drop her for?”

“You try fighting goblins and carrying hobbits at the same time,” Dori grumbles, though there’s guilt on his face. “You would’ve dropped her too in my place! After you did your flash and shouted for everyone to follow, I assumed everyone did!”
“It doesn’t matter,” Glóin gruffly jumps in. “We can’t go back in there, no matter what.” This makes Bilbo wilt at what he doesn’t say, but she understands. She only wishes she knew who said she wasn’t of any use for Gandalf to respond so angrily in the first place. All of them look bitter, several angry, and she realizes, belatedly, that part of that must be at her.

Thorin’s the one to say what they’re clearly all thinking. “This was no place to bring her, anyway. If she did, by some miracle, make it out elsewhere, then she’s better off on her own to go right back to her hobbit hole. If she didn’t, then that’s what happened and it couldn’t have been helped. We can’t be expected to baby-sit every time danger comes about. She wouldn’t have made it to the end, anyway.”

Bilbo’s heart sinks. She can see on Thorin’s face how unhappy he is. She likes to think it’s because he’s worried, that he’s only talking out of fear. But the words hurt. The dwarves shuffle awkwardly around him, no one speaking up to disagree.

It occurs to her that she could go back. She might not make it far on her own, but perhaps Gandalf would take her, and she doesn’t have to go all the way to the Shire at once—she could stop at Elrond’s house, and perhaps a few elves would be kind enough to escort her home. She could crawl right back into bed like none of this ever happened, with only her bruises and memories for souvenirs.

The thought brings tears to her eyes. She doesn’t want to leave her dwarves. They’re still her dwarves. She looks up at Thorin, right in front of him even though he doesn’t see her back. She knows the dwarves care about her. She’s felt it through some of their touches, in a way that can’t be lied with. She tells herself that, feeds herself the memories, the ghosts of all the nice things they’ve ever said and done for her.

She slips off the ring.

The dwarves collectively yelp, some stumbling back, others staring forward, and Thorin’s head jerks up in surprise. She holds her manacled wrists over her chest, just barely covering her nipples, but it doesn’t matter right now how indecent she looks. She opens her mouth, even though she hasn’t thought of what to say. Thorin’s face is suddenly wracked with guilt, with relief, twisted, but she’s the one with watery eyes. Finally, she manages to murmur, “You’d better hope I make it; didn’t you need a burglar to come along?"

Thorin looks lost, and then like he might actually laugh.

She’s encased suddenly in arms, Fíli and Kíli pouncing on her from either side, their embrace crushing. Bilbo gasps as their hands brush over her bare skin, the scratch of their beards nuzzling into her cheeks. They squeeze her so tightly that she loses her breath for a moment, but it’s entirely worth it. They’ve exclaimed her name, and then they’re simply holding onto her, and Bilbo can see the other dwarves coming closer around them.

Behind Kíli, Dori splutters, “Bilbo, I’m sorry—”

“It’s not your fault,” Bilbo mumbles. She can feel someone against her back, and she thinks it might be Bifur, judging by the fullness of the beard and the grunting sounds. She can hear Balin shouting in the distance as he comes to join the throng, having missed the commotion out on watch duty.

But before any of the others can say anything, Thorin tugs her forward, out of their arms, and shoos them away. He stands protectively in front of her, and for all his harsh words a moment ago, now he looks like he’d defend her to the death. “Leave her alone, you lot. She’s still bound and... and undressed.” The last part he says with a lightly flushed face.
At his side, Dwalin suggests, “She can take my coat until we can see if we managed to save any of her clothes...”

“Oh, let me through,” Gandalf huffs. He pushes past the dwarves to duck down his staff, tapping it along the manacles. They glow a bright blue from his touch and spring apart a moment later, dropping heavily to the ground and just barely missing her feet. Her wrists are red and sore where they left, but it’s wonderful to have her arms free again. She almost drops them before she remembers her chest, and then she hurriedly clamps her palms over her nipples, covering her breasts and blushing much deeper than Thorin. He’s pointedly looked away, though several of the others are staring.

“How ever did you make it past me?” Balin asks, bewildered, squeezing in front of her. She smiles sheepishly and shrugs her shoulders, but he just shakes his head like he can’t believe it. “I mean it! Nothing’s ever made it past me before! How did you do it?”

Bilbo thinks to tell him of the ring, to tell all of them. But there’s something that holds her back, something she can’t quite put her finger on. It tugs at her, and as she looks around the circle, she can see just how impressed they all look, Balin most of all. Even thinking it might be wrong, she doesn’t want to shatter that.

So, as Ori brings her a change of clothes, Bilbo explains exactly what happened to her after she was separated, as though it was all rather easy.

They move farther from the goblin’s gate before they break for camp, just in case, though all of them are starving and in thorough need of a good rest. They managed to save some of their packs, including Bilbo’s little one, and they have just enough food for a few days. They give Bilbo her rations first, saying proudly that she earned them, but she knows she’s the smallest and takes much less than she’d like. Every little touch they give her is lingering—when Bofur and Nori place bread in her hands, their fingers stay locked around hers too long. Dwalin and Thorin have their eyes on her whenever they think she’s not looking, and Dori apologizes over and over and hugs her each time, Ori joining in from the other side. Bifur pets her head fondly a few times, and Bombur keeps brushing dirt off of her and fussing, probably just for an excuse to be around her. Fíli and Kíli go out of their way to include her in conversation, and even Glóin and Óin seem to be glad to have her with them. Glóin even tells her she’s braver than he thought, and she glows with the praise and almost breaks into tears to explain just how terrified she was.

But they were all scared. They say as much. And she made it through, with only the shreds of her skirt and chains all around her, and in a strange way, she’s almost grateful for the experience, because if she can survive that, surely she can survive anything. And at the end of the day, even when it seemed all hope was lost, she found her dwarves again. It would’ve been nicer if she hadn’t found them begrudging her, but overall, she’s too relieved to harbour any malice. She clings tightly to their sides all the way up until camp. Without their poor ponies, everything must be done on foot, but Bilbo still finds ways to latch onto her companions.

Then the food’s doled out, and she volunteers to take some to Balin, who’s out on watch. She finds him only a little ways away, sitting amidst a circle of rocks. In the fading light, he could be easily missed, whilst his searching gaze surveys the land before them more intently than ever. As she comes up to his side with a bun and a little cup of stew, Balin grins and says, “I spotted you this time.”

“I’m sorry,” Bilbo says instantly, because, clearly, he still hasn’t gotten over her slipping past him. She feels bad for tricking him, but Balin just chuckles and shakes his head. He has a particularly kind air about him, especially towards her, and he waves away her apology with ease. Then he pats the earth beside him, and Bilbo sits down, snuggling up to his side to stave off the cold. They sit with
their backs to a large stone that blocks them from sight of the camp, while Balin takes the bread from her and starts to chew.

“You are a most impressive person, Bilbo,” Balin goes on between bites. She knows from finishing her own just how hard the bread is to chew, but he manages it well enough. The dwarves, she’s observed, have much tougher stomachs than hobbits. “And I do mean in more than just one way. Goodness, and to think we actually doubted bringing you at the start!”

Bilbo smiles, even though she still doesn’t feel she’s done them much good. All she did was save herself. “I doubted myself at the start, too.” She remembers, in fact, Gandalf saying something along those lines, of her surprising even herself. Trust a wizard to be right.

Balin gives her a very broad grin. His smile is always so pleasant, particularly with his big, cute nose and the pure white fluff of his beard. His eyes are very compassionate, and sometimes Bilbo does think he’s the gentlest dwarf, even if he has all the skills of a warrior, and Dori might be more cultured and Ori softer. Balin is the one that always has the right words at the right time. Especially after all the trauma she’s been through today, there’s something peaceful about sitting alone with him, with just a few quiet words and the warmth of his body.

When he’s finished the bread, he takes the cup from her lap, his larger fingers brushing over her hands. She relinquishes the stew to him, although she misses its fire-licked heat when it’s gone, and she curls up in its absence, drawing her knees against her chest. Balin, always noticing the plights of others, lifts his arm around her shoulders and draws her in. The thick fabric of his coat is as comforting as it is warm, and she nuzzles into his embrace. She didn’t at all bring enough clothes for this journey, having set out in the spring and temperate hills of the Shire. But at least the dwarves are always willing to share. She’s often offered cloaks, but she prefers to cuddle up where she can.

She leans on Balin’s body while he drinks his stew, until nothing’s left and he’s setting it on the ground. She knows it can’t be enough to fill him, but he doesn’t ask for more. He settles in against her, watching the world ahead. Neither of them mention that she could go back to the others at any time. She’d had her fill of them, and after seeing Balin like a beacon of hope when she first rejoined them, she wants some time with him.

When she shifts against him, her knees falling over his lap, she has to be careful not to tug his beard. It wafts all down his chest, perhaps the most magnificent of all the dwarves’, long and tamed as it is. She can only wonder how soft it is, knowing that the different beards have different feels amongst the dwarves. Mostly on a whim, she extends one hand to brush through it, her fingers gliding so easily through it. The individual hairs are a little coarse, and there’s a faint scratch, but overall it’s soft and light. It looks thick but feels much thinner, and as Bilbo weaves her fingers more conspicuously into it, she can’t help but run all the way down to the split at the end.

Balin shudders against her, just as Bilbo rubs the back of her hand along the scruff of his chin. She looks up at him, worried, and murmurs, “Did that hurt?”

Balin shakes his head and breathes, “No.” But he’s frowning. His cheeks look a little darker in the pale light, and as Bilbo threads her fingers into his beard, his eyes fall closed and his lips part.

She realizes, suddenly and strangely, that he likes her touching his beard. She knew, of course, that some dwarves like their bears to be involved—Nori always responds well when she tugs on his, and Fili and Kili love to grind their stubble against her bare skin. But she hadn’t thought of simply stroking their beards alone. Just to make sure, Bilbo wraps a loose fist into it and tugs, only light. Balin’s breath hitches, and when his eyes reopen, they’re hazy.

He mumbles, “Bilbo...” but whatever he means to tell her, he doesn’t finish. She looks at him, clearly
understanding, clearly wanting to do it anyway. If he doesn’t want to, that’s another story, but so far, the only time the dwarves turn her down is when they’re worried about taking advantage of her.

Bilbo leans up and presses a small kiss to his jaw. His smile is heartbreaking. She thinks he must’ve known all along about her pleasing all his friends and wanted her too, but never dared to ask.

Bilbo strokes through his beard again. She turns her body fully into him, nuzzling her face into the side of his and breathing in his raw, musky smell and the heat of him, while his arm cradles her close. She runs her little fingers through the length of his beard, over and over, catching here and there to tug, her hands occasionally playing with his face when they come back up. She traces his strong jaw and strokes his throat and chin beneath all the fur, pecking and nibbling at his cheek. Balin is wondrously responsive, and his broken noises make her giddy. Soon she’s grinding her body against him, and she dips one hand down to hold against the bulge in his trousers. She palms it through the fabric while her other hand toys with his facial hair, over and over again. His breathing becomes more ragged, harder, and he squirms against her. She has her thighs parted around him now, and she rubs her own crotch against his hip, wanting very much to be filled, but she doesn’t want to stop long enough to finger herself or ask him to. He seems to have lost control of everything, and all he can do is clutch to her and moan as she pleasures him.

He finishes before she does. He makes a broken cry and humps up against her, the front of his trousers growing damp while her hand keeps kneading him. The other stills in his beard, and she focus instead on all the little kisses. He takes a minute or two to finish completely, then turns his face to hers and gives her a large, wet kiss on her mouth. His bulbous nose presses into her face, and his beard tickles her chin, and overall it’s just very pleasant; he tastes of stale bread, but the kiss itself is very gentle.

She’s still wound up, but she tries to hold herself back while he comes down. He slumps against the rock, her still heavy against his side, and she strokes his round stomach to soothe him. After a bit, he shakes his head and murmurs, out of breath, “I didn’t think such a lovely thing as you would go for an old goat like me.”

Bilbo grins. She isn’t nearly so young as they seem to think her, although, perhaps she may as well be compared to a dwarf. She tells him, meaning every word, “I love all my dwarves.”

He chuckles. “And we love you, my dear. But there is love, and then there is expertly tugging an old man’s beard.”

“You aren’t so old, and I happen to very much like your beard.” And she doesn’t at all see how she could’ve done anything expertly, it being her first time, but clearly, it’s something she’ll have to practice more. Almost as an afterthought, she adds, “And I do mean it. I enjoy being so physical with all of you. It’s very... liberating.” Although, when she thinks on that, about all of them individually, she does add, frowning, “Although, with Bifur... I’m not sure I could communicate well enough to know what xe really understands and wants... I don’t really know the extent of hir injury...” It’s something’s she’s wondered about here and there, with no clear answers.

Balin smile becomes a little sad, but he pats her knee and tells her, “I’m afraid you’ll have to settle for twelve dwarves. Even before the injury, xe never showed any inclination towards sexual activities, so we always assumes he was some measure of asexual. But you’re always free to talk to Bifur, Bofur, and Bombur about this; they would know better than me.”

That all makes sense to Bilbo. After her wild frenzy with the dwarves, it never occurred to her that one of them might not be into such things, and she finds herself musing aloud, “How full of surprises you dwarves are.”
Balin chuckles, “I assure you, we feel much the same way about hobbits.”

Before Bilbo can respond to that, Balin turns towards her, slipping both hands around her waist. He guides her against the rock, while he shuffles in front of her, slowly lying down across the stony floor. She doesn’t understand at first, but then he announces, “Now, I’m afraid you’ll have to keep watch if I’m to return the favour; someone must keep their eyes on the road! Would you be alright with that, Bilbo?”

Bilbo nods as he starts to roll up her skirt and crawl in between her legs. She doesn’t do a very good job of it. Once Balin’s nose is pressed up against her stomach and his beard’s draped along her thighs, she’s quite distracted learning just how much he really knows about pleasuring someone expertly.

Balin is an excellent addition. The next few days are difficult, more so than usual, made worse without their ponies and dwindled supplies. Gandalf keeps them moving briskly, never pausing long, and if it weren’t for Balin eating her out at the end of all his watch shifts, she would probably be a lot crankier than she is. It helps that all the dwarves have more respect for her, too, and more than once she thinks Thorin looks like he wants to say something to her but keeps moving instead. There’s a sense of urgency to make it past the Misty Mountains before the goblins decide that fifteen travelers might be worth the chase.

On the evening they run out of food, spirits are particularly low. They stop early, not to rest but to bicker, because Bombur and Nori say they should branch out to look for food and Gandalf says they must keep going. Most of the dwarves are too weak from hunger to do much and wind up wilting to the floor while the others fight, and Bilbo sways on the spot, feeling miserable. Balin, watching her, leaves Thorin’s side to come to hers. He sweeps her off under his arm, lies her down behind a large tree, and buries his face below her skirt. It does nothing to stave off the hunger, but it is a wondrous distraction.

By now, almost all of the dwarves have tasted her, but Balin is particularly good at it. He’s good at other things, too, just like all of them have specialties and likes but generally enjoy anything they try, but he seems to like pleasing her this way the most, and she isn’t about to protest. She loves the way he drapes her knees over his shoulders, holds onto her rear with his hands and tilts her up into him. His face is magnificently warm, his tongue wet and large, mostly smooth but a little bit bumpy: just enough texture to make her squirm. He pushes it inside her with a languid ease, like he has all the time in the world to please women. He rubs his nose in little circles above her slit and sucks at her lips. For a while, he just plays with her labia, stroking and kissing and suckling, even nipping here and there, and then he diverts to push his tongue in and out of her as deeply as it’ll go, soft and malleable on the way down. Bilbo’s body opens for him, her skin flushing and beginning to sweat as he drags out her pleasure. Sometimes she pets through his hair, others she holds her mouth to keep quiet, and sometimes she just makes fists in the shallow sprinklings of grass and tries to keep her hips from trembling too much. Slowly, the troubles of the real world slither out, and Bilbo’s mind is left with a lovely haze. She forgets that she’s hungry, that she’s tired, even that the ground is very uncomfortable to lie on, because she’d rather focus on Balin’s mouth instead, and she could lie like this for hours.

Then a howl pierces through, and Bilbo’s half-lidded eyes snap open. Another wails against the fading sky, and Bilbo lifts up on her elbows, going rigid.

Balin pulls back from her, looking concerned. His worry increases her own, and she knows they have to stop, even though a part of her whines to stay—she still hasn’t pleased him back, and she’s already daydreamed so many ways to return his kindness—but a third howl snaps them both to life.
They shuffle up to their feet, Bilbo hopping to get her other foot through her panties. She pulls them up around her and Balin smooths down her skirt, muttering hurriedly, “We must get back to the others.”

Bilbo nods sadly. She’s still very wet and breathing hard, but she’ll just have to put up with that for now; there’s no time to finish off. She follows Balin through the trees and quickly back to the group, who are all huddled together. Thorin looks relieved to see them, then announces, “That was too close for comfort; we need to move, now!”

Grumbling circles the camp, but Gandalf hotly adds, “They could already have our scent, you fools! Whether or not you’ve eaten, you’d best hurry along if you don’t want to be eaten yourselves.” So, of course, they set to walking.

Only to break into a jog a few steps later. Thorin and Gandalf keep ahead, and Bilbo hurries to keep up, sadly missing the ponies. They’ve barely gone a few meters when Thorin falls to the back, keeping track of all the others. Bilbo has the hardest time of running, and not just because she just spent most of her energy with Balin and she’s still distracted—her legs are shorter, and her bras weren’t built for this sort of abuse. She tries to be thankful that she isn’t shouldering packs like some of the others, but it’s still a pain, and she winds up at the very back with Thorin next to her, keeping her along.

But the howls keep coming. They wind closer and closer, the dwarves moving as fast as they can, but Bilbo starts to think that it won’t matter; how can they keep up with wolves? She knows it must be wolves, though she’s never seen one herself, only heard their cries described. The others pant to each other about it, while Bilbo tries not to picture them in her head. The sounds are absolutely chilling. The Shire doesn’t have such monstrosities, but then, they don’t have mountains like this, either, and the rocky terrain only makes it worse.

But worst of all is when they finally break through the trees, out into another clearing, and Bilbo notices Gandalf slow. The other slow with him, and with a horrible shock, Bilbo understands why: the land’s run out.

They’ve come to the edge of a cliff, with only a few, scraggly trees rising out of the edges, and they’re too far to make it around. She’s left waiting in the circle of them, until Gandalf declares, “Into the trees!” That makes as much sense as any to Bilbo, who scurries forward.

They all climb up much easier than her; she’s too short for it. But Dori waits with his arms open, and as she reaches up, she’s grabbed around the middle. She squeaks in surprise, and Thorin lifts her into Dori’s arms, the two of them gathering her up. Then Thorin’s scrambling up behind them, just barely in time.

A split-second later, a great, brown beast lunges through the trees. It hurtles forward, landing right where Thorin stood only a minute before. Beside her, Thorin snarls, “Wargs. Worse than wolves.” Which makes Bilbo’s eyes widen, because she didn’t know anything was worse.

The creature is huge. It’s furry, with long claws and gnashing teeth that it snaps up at them, its paws hitting the trunk of the tree. Behind it, more wargs come barreling through, jumping at all the dwarves. They can’t seem to climb, but it’s terrifying nonetheless, to have those massive teeth chomping below. And with how many of them there are, with how heavy they look, Bilbo doesn’t think it’ll take them long to uproot the trees completely.

Several of the dwarves are yelling at the wargs, but there’s so much noise that Bilbo can’t make anything out on its own, and she can see Dwalin swinging his hammer down at their faces. Thorin calls to the dwarves, “Stay in the trees!” Bilbo’s glad of it. She clutches protectively at the dagger
thrust into the long pocket of her skirt, but she can’t imagine she could actually do anything against
the wargs. They have too many ways to kill.

And they have all the dwarves cornered, and she doesn’t see how they’re going to make it.

Then things go even more downhill. While the wargs claw at the roots of the trees and try to
scramble up them, goblins burst out behind them. Bilbo clings to the branches she’s in all the tighter,
hugged up close to the rough bark and spindly leaves, while the goblins bark orders at the wargs.
They seem to be working together, which is a horrible prospect; even though she can’t understand
what the vile creatures say to one another, it’s clear that they have some sort of alliance. And they all
want Thorin’s company taken down.

The goblins are pointing at the dwarves. Bilbo gets the distinct impression that they’ve been
recognized, and the goblins point at Thorin most of all, who’s snarling worse than the wargs across
the trunk from her. Then, to Bilbo’s utter horror, one of the goblins flings a weapon at them. There’s
no time to see what it is. A rush of metal streaks through the air and slams into the bark right next to
Bilbo’s head. She stares at the axe that’s imbedded there, while the goblins laugh and ready another
one.

Two things happen simultaneously. Bilbo, shaken to her core, can only numbly watch both of them.
A streak of light flies past her head, exploding onto the back of one of the wargs, and suddenly it’s
on fire. It screams, roaring in pain, tossing to and fro and rolling on the ground in the process,
spreading flames everywhere. Thorin’s also rushing down the branches. By the time Bilbo realizes
what he’s doing, it’s too late to call him back. Another spark of fire hits a different warg, and it joins
the first in its agony. Thorin’s heavy boots hit the ground, and Bilbo’s instincts have already lurched
to action. She’s following him, scrambling down the branches. In the corner of her eye, a pinecone
hits the ground, and she realizes that that’s what’s hitting the wargs; Gandalf—it must be—is lighting
pinecones on fire and raining them down.

And Thorin’s rushing through before the flames he stop him. The other dwarves are too busy trying
to survive to notice, until Thorin’s in the center of the clearing, rushing out towards the goblins with
his sword lifted. Bilbo knows at once that he’s sacrificing himself, meaning to take out as many
goblins as he can to let the others get by. Or perhaps he’s just racing towards revenge. Either way, he
runs his sword through two goblins before they rally back. With the wargs distracted by the fire and
that fire keeping all the other dwarves back. Bilbo slips to the ground, small and quite forgotten in the
chaos. She runs right past a rolling warg and ducks under a falling branch a second later, singeing the
edges of her skirt.

She’s only just pulling her dagger from its sheath when she sees Thorin go down. There are too
many goblins, and a warg leaps at him from the side, knocking him hard across the rocky floor.
Bilbo screams, but no one bothers to look at her; the air’s already full of pain. Thorin’s sword’s
knocked out of his hand, and as he reaches for it, the goblin standing over him steps on his wrist,
crushing it. Thorin arches back, roaring in agony, and the goblin lifts his sword, ready to take off
Thorin’s head.

Bilbo lunges at that goblin. She tackles it right down, the pair of them rolling to the side. As terrified
and untrained as she is, Bilbo has the element of surprise. She manages to scramble away before the
goblin can swing around her, and she hurriedly comes to stand in front of Thorin, holding her sword
at the ready. Panting and trembling, Bilbo protects him. She’s yet to kill with her blade, but she
knows that if they try to hurt Thorin, she’ll run them right through.

A new sound pierces the air. It isn’t like the other howls. It’s animal, yes, but it makes the goblins
and wargs freeze just as much as Bilbo.
She dares one quick look over her shoulder, sees giant, enormous birds sweeping down on them, and her mouth falls open.

The wargs and goblins scatter. They run for their lives, but the birds, the eagles, come right past her and gather the wargs and goblins in their talons, tossing them away like so much dirt. Bilbo nearly falls over, her knees buckling. Instead, she whirs to Thorin.

He’s reaching for his sword. She brings it to him, and then she drapes over him as she hears the eagles return, trying to protect him from their wrath.

Instead, they’re both scooped neatly into an eagle’s talons, those sharp claws kept carefully away from tearing into their skin. Thorin’s battered body is cradled as it’s lifted into the air, Bilbo nestled atop him. The wind rushes up around them, and they’re swept right over the cliff.

Bilbo’s never been good with heights. Even crushed against Thorin as she is, the ride is a very fearful thing. He’s too weak to talk to her, to even move, and Bilbo isn’t far behind. Whatever warmth his body gives her is snatched up in the billowing wind all around them, slipping in between talons. When she squints, she can see some of the others, either riding the eagles’ backs or clutching onto their legs, but it hurts too much to stare. Bilbo spends most of the ride with her eyes shut and her face pressed against Thorin’s chest, clutching onto his coat with one hand and her dagger with the others. Every so often, an eagle’s call sifts in through the void of sound.

And finally, when she’s shaking from lack of food and exertion and the pressure of the air, the wind slows to a halt. Bilbo opens her watering eyes, and finds that they’ve come right up close to a new cliff, at least not so high up as to be frozen. The eagle soars right into the rocky ledge, gliding past a giant eyrie knit together of bushes and trees. Bilbo and Thorin are dropped into the center, the other dwarves deposited around them. As Bilbo slips off Thorin’s chest, the others groan and try to straighten up. Finally, Gandalf is brought to them, sliding gracefully off the back of a particularly large eagle. He tells them in a gruff voice, “We are very lucky that I have friends in high places.”

Bilbo doesn’t know if the eagles can understand. She doesn’t even know if her words come out as more than a whisper, but she shakily tells the eagle next to him, “Thank you.”

The eagle seems to dip its head, although she can’t be sure if its too her. Then it tells them, “Rest, friends of Gandalf. We will bring you food, and take you as far as we can, before the villages of men that would shoot us down.” Its voice is a puzzling thing, high and warbling but very assuring. At the promise of food, Bilbo can’t worry for anything else. The eagles might decide to eat them all tomorrow, but so long as they feed her now, she’s fine.

“Any help would be much appreciated,” Gandalf tells the great eagle. At least, he doesn’t seem afraid of them. But then, Gandalf seems to Bilbo never as afraid as he should be.

The eagle takes off a moment later. Bilbo watches in awe as its wings spread and guide it off their platform, soaring off into the darkness of the evening, the sun now mostly set. Looking back, she can see the great ledges of the Misty Mountains behind her, or at least, she thinks that’s what they are. She’s never seen the world from so far up before, and it’s even stranger to look ahead, where the green valleys roll down into a towering forest, shrouded somewhat in the clouds.

It’s a beautiful sight, but it’s also very disorienting. Dizzy from it, Bilbo shakes her head and looks away while Gandalf brushes past her. He comes to kneel down at Thorin’s side, Óin running up to join. Dwalin and Balin have come to Thorin’s head, and Bilbo, still tight against his side, is overcome with worry again. She’s not sure how much of a beating he took from the goblins and wargs, but she knows it was far more than she could’ve taken.
While Gandalf runs the tip of his staff across Thorin’s chest and murmurs ancient words, Óin checks Thorin’s head and neck. Thorin groans, his eyes scrunched together, but he’s awake. He’s conscious. It lets Bilbo breathe, though she’s still nervous. Finally, he lifts his hand to wave Óin away. He mutters, rasping and low, “The halfling...?”

Bilbo stiffens. Gandalf replies warmly, “She’s here. And you will be fine enough, if you want to know.” Bilbo wanted to know. She can sense the collective relief wash through all the dwarves, though she doesn’t bother to look up; she’s fixed on Thorin’s face. Gandalf scolds, “Though it’s more than you deserve, running off so foolishly as you did,” and then he pushes up to his feet, leaving Bilbo alone at Thorin’s side. The others keep a respectful distance.

It takes a bit of work for Thorin to push up onto his arms. Bilbo tries to help him, but he brushes her away. He takes a deep breath before he staggers to his feet, but he does it on his own, Bilbo standing close and ready to help if needed. Once again, she thought she’d never see him again. Yet he rises into the king he is to her, to all of them, and stands proud, with his broad shoulders and handsome mane silhouetted in the dying light. She stands before him, watching the ragged beat of his chest and the flow of his hair in the breeze. She expects him to push on past her to Dwalin and Balin, but instead, he stays looking down at her.

The look on his face is so intense that she’s sure she’s going to be scolded the way Gandalf scolded him. It wasn’t fair of him to run off like that and put himself in danger, but perhaps what she did was even worse; she never stood any chance against their foes. If the eagles hadn’t come, she couldn’t have really defended him, probably not even from a single blow.

Yet he clamps a hand on her shoulder, sturdy and heavy enough to make her tremble. He growls in that deep voice of his, “I said you had had no businesses leaving the Shire. That you were too small, too weak to be among us. Even that you had no place with us.” Bilbo’s heart sinks. She already feels like she could be pushed over with one finger, and Thorin’s words take everything out of her, leave her feeling tiny and useless and ready to cry. Perhaps she should’ve taken off, back when she found the ring and had the chance. But Thorin’s so beautiful even like this, that she knows she couldn’t have. She’s still drawn to him.

She’s pulled physically towards him. His arms come around her and tug her forward, and she falls against his chest, the air crushing right out of her. His arms hold her so close, so tenderly, that Bilbo’s eyes really do water. Her nose is buried in his shoulder, her forehead just barely over it, and he murmurs against her ear, “I’ve never been so wrong.”

Bilbo melts against him. She’d probably collapse if he weren’t holding her up, his fingers splayed over her back and his chin hooked over his shoulder. She can feel the scratch of his beard, smell the musk of his hair, feel his heat and strength all over her. It’s the first time they’ve really touched since this journey’s started, and now she can’t imagine letting go.

But he does let go eventually. He pulls slowly away, looking down at her with such pride and adoration in his eyes that Bilbo starts to cry. She lifts her palms to wipe them away, but she’s sure her voice still sounds shaken when she says, “I’m glad you’re alright.”

“We all are,” Dwalin says behind them, and Thorin half turns, smiling at his friend. Dori’s hand lifts to Bilbo’s back, soothing her through the tears, and she actually laughs, because it seems so silly to cry now, after she’s made it through wargs and goblins and fire. But the quest has new meaning now that she feels so valued, and she falls to her knees in the great eagles’ nest, because it’s all too much to take standing up.

When the eagles do come back carrying meat for the dwarves to cook, Bilbo, despite all her reservations, tries to stand up again to help, but Glóin claps her shoulder and tells her, “Sit down,
lass. You’ve earned a rest.” So she sits next to Thorin against the edge of the nest while the others make them dinner, and she even dares to lean her head on his shoulder.

For the first time since leaving Bag End, Bilbo feels like she really, truly *belongs*.

They plan to spend one night in the eagles’ nest. It’s too dark by now to go on, and the eagles want their sleep, while the dwarves want to stay and digest the food they’ve finally gotten. The dwarves are so small compared to the eagles that it isn’t difficult to find places to curl up. Gandalf disappears with the leader of the eagles, and Bilbo settles in last, feeling sleepy but strangely fresh and new. She has her pick of them, she knows, though she hasn’t decided yet who she’ll spend the night with. First, she weaves her way to Thorin, a little because she wants to double check that he’s alright and a little because she just always feels drawn to Thorin.

She finds him at the back, so ensconced in branches that when she sits down next to him, she can’t see over the hedge. He sits up on his elbows, otherwise lying on his back. He’s one of those not fortunate enough to have rescued a sleeping bag from the goblin’s keep, although she suspects he’s really just given his away, choosing to be the one to suffer. Hopefully, they’ll find somewhere to get another one, but for now, he’s just strewn along his cloak, his clothes having to make do. She’s nervous, kneeling down next to him, expecting to be brushed away, but he only watches her with the usual level expression.

She opens her mouth, though it takes her a second try to say quietly, “I wanted to thank you. For what you said earlier.”

Thorin sighs. He looks tired, beyond the exhaustion that they all have: the full weight of the journey and all the road ahead. “I should never have doubted you in the first place.”

“I doubted me.” She smiles, wanting to laugh. But she didn’t come here to rehash all that, so she doesn’t say anymore, just... lingers in his presence.

To her surprise, he shuffles closer. In the exposed starlight, it’s still easy to see him, his twinkling eyes and his chiseled face, and the silvery highlights of his hair. With an almost hesitant expression, he murmurs, “I hope the other dwarves are treating you well.”

Bilbo blushes instantly. She wants to splutter that she’s alright, but at first she just chokes, then manages with a shake of her head, “...I didn’t think you knew...” But of course, she’s been so very wanton about it, cavalier, and perhaps she should’ve been more careful. More thoughtful, more private. Thorin snorts, but it’s more of a chuckle than anything derisive.

His voice is very gentle when he tells her, “Bilbo, we all know.” Now she’s blushing even deeper, if possible. She lifts one hand to cover her face, though he continues, “It’s nothing to be ashamed of. And I... I can understand why you like them. They’re a good group.”

Better than good. Still, Bilbo licks her lips, stalling, thinking. There’s a small tinge of sadness in his voice that she can’t put her finger on. She thinks of apologizing, but that doesn’t seem right. He isn’t admonishing her. And somehow, her stupid mouth whispers on it’s own, “I like you too.” The words could be innocent enough, except that when she lifts her head, she thinks he can see how very strongly she means them. Then she mumbles, “I’m sorry, I... I don’t mean to impose, and... I didn’t want to trouble you...”

“I don’t want to defile you,” Thorin growls. It comes with a sudden harshness that nearly makes her jump. But he puts his hand on her knee, just below the hem of her skirt, his skin rough from use but warm and comforting all the same, fingers wrapping so perfectly around her curves.
“It isn’t like that,” Bilbo mumbles, confused and trying to explain, “None of them have taken advantage of me. I mean, I know there are a lot, but I... I like having so many dwarves. It’s my choice. They’ve all been very good to me...”

“I would stop them if they were otherwise.” Thorin looks harsh, more alive than he’s ever been with her. “I was not trying to say that any of them have defiled you. Just that I...”

“If you don’t want me,” Bilbo interrupts, though of course it hurts to say. But she would understand —she’d thought it up until now—“it’s alright...”

“No.” Thorin shakes his head. Bilbo’s chest tightens. His hand squeezes her knee, and her pulse jumps higher. “I do want you, Bilbo. How could any dwarf not? You’re beautiful, and you’re loyal, and very intelligent. You’ve been better to us than I gave you credit for. You saved us from the trolls —”

“I made you hump me,” Bilbo cuts in, almost laughing and feeling mildly hysterical. It’s like a dream to have Thorin say these things to her, but she can see on his face just how much he means it.

“Yes, well, it was unorthodox,” Thorin admits, his face turning a bit red under the pale light to match her, “but not entirely unpleasant. It did the trick. And I would be glad to know it was not entirely unpleasant for you, either.”

Bilbo bites her lip. Having Thorin grind into her has been one of the highlights of her journey, but she doesn’t say it, and instead lets him roll on.

“Anyway, you are very helpful. You’ve earned my respect, though I should’ve given it to you much earlier. And you seem to have forgiven me for my foolishness, which is more than I could ask for. But...” and this is where he pauses. He shifts awkwardly, and it looks so strange on him, for a man of Thorin’s bearing to be uncomfortable, but she can see that he is. Slowly, he continues, “But I don’t know if I can be a good man to you. I have duties that come first, to my kingdom and to my people. I don’t know if I could ever marry a hobbit.”

That gives Bilbo pause in more than one way. She’d never even thought of such a thing. She’d had vague notions and daydreams, yes, but the serious thought of truly marrying a dwarf, or dwarves, wasn’t something she considered. She wasn’t suggesting that now. Yet hearing Thorin say that they can’t irks her. She wants to ask why not, what’s wrong with her, but she stops herself because she knows nothing of Dwarven laws. And Thorin might be a king, but right now, he’s a king without a throne and only twelve dwarves to his kingdom. He’s only one man in a world of many other powers. He looks at her like he’s truly sorry.

Feeling very small, she puts her hand over his. It looks tiny in contrast, pale against the black of his gauntlets that ends just over his knuckles. He looks down at where they’re clasped together, and Bilbo murmurs, “Do we have to worry about that now?”

Before he can answer, she looks up at him again, gaining her resolve. She does want him, very badly, emotionally and physically. “Even if only for a little while,” she starts, her fingers lightly stroking the back of his knuckles, “If you’d have me... I’d like to at least have that chance.”

For a very long moment, he looks at her. She tries to sit tall and immoveable under his gaze, because she thinks he’s sizing her up, but she knows she isn’t as steady as she’d like. Not so close to him, with the cool breeze washing over her. Thorin lifts his free hand to cup her cheek, and Bilbo’s eyes close, her whole body shivering in delight.

She can feel him lean forward, and she lifts her head, waiting. His lips close over hers, soft and firm,
his mustache and beard scratching against her skin. He doesn’t try to push inside her, though his lips are parted, and after a blissful minute of trying to mold herself into him, Bilbo runs her tongue along the seam of his lips, wanting to duck inside.

He pulls back first, saying in a husky, sensuous voice, “I would have you, Bilbo Baggins, if you will have me, knowing that I cannot give you everything you deserve.” Bilbo smiles faintly and runs her hand along the braid that trickles down his shoulder. She’s never deserved a king like Thorin Oakenshield.

But she lifts up on her knees anyway, wrapping her arms around his shoulders, his long hair brushing over them. She pushes in for another kiss, and this time his tongue comes out to meet hers, every bit as wanting.

She’s still moaning against it as his arms wrap around her, one right along her waist and the other cupping her hip, his weight shifting forward and his hands guiding her down. She hits the floor of the nest, his arm making her stomach arch into him and her hands still deep in his hair. Her legs automatically part to let him bear down between them. He nestles along her body, held up on all fours, then pauses the kiss and lifts up just enough to look down at her. She already feels dizzy. She looks back up at him, all her longing clear on her face.

Then he picks her up again. He carries her easily, shuffling them around, so he can lay her down along his cloak instead, the bundle of his pack wadded up for a pillow. He guides her carefully along it, cushioning her head and adjusting her hair so none of it’s tugging, even though it’s short and she’s sure she must look a mess. He looks at her as though she’s the most precious jewel he’s ever seen.

He leans back over her. His head tilts for hers, and her arms slip back around him, her legs following suit. She lets her bare heels rest against his too-clothed back, while her fingers trail through his hair. He’s heavy atop her, but he’s careful not to crush her, balancing just enough weight for her to feel it but not be flattened. Her full breasts still squish against his chest, and he’s so big that she has to keep her legs spread very wide to wrap them around him. He rubs his body against her, the long fabric of his coats digging into her thighs. When he pulls back next, she moans without thinking, “I want it to be you.”

Thorin’s eyebrows knit together, like he doesn’t understand. Flushed from the prospect, his kisses, and the intoxicating feeling of being blanketed by Thorin Oakenshield, Bilbo mumbles. “To... take me. I haven’t... done that before, and... I think I’d very much like to.”

If she didn’t know better, she’d think Thorin was gulping. He asks, “Are you sure?” She nods, and he licks his bottom lip slowly, murmuring, “I didn’t think... I had assumed...” She shakes her head.

Compared to all the others things she’s done, it doesn’t seem such a big deal in this moment, though she does still have her usual concerns. Thorin is no smaller than any of the others, and maybe it would be wiser to start with Fíli or Kíli, but then, there is really no way to know what’s in a person’s pants from their outer shell alone. And she wants it now, with Thorin. She knows that if she tells him her fears, he won’t take her, so instead she just asks, “Can you?”

Thorin opens his mouth. He tilts his head, then replies bitterly, “I don’t have any oil...”

“Oil?” she repeats, confused.

“To ease the way...”

“Oh.” She didn’t think that would be necessary. But she appreciates that he wouldn’t want to hurt her. Still, she tells him tentatively, “I’m... I’m wet. I’ll be very wet for you, Thorin.” It’s a promise
she knows she can keep. Her body’s already longing for him, and the thought of having him inside her… she clenches her channel, and she can feel a familiar dampness pervading her panties. When she looks at Thorin’s handsome face, it’s easy to drown in her desire, and it makes her arch up against him, her breasts grinding into him and her hips quivering. Thorin cups her cheek with one hand.

“You’re very small, Bilbo. And I’m… I’m rather largely endowed…”

Bilbo almost laughs. It isn’t funny, but she thinks of little Thorin asking Gandalf for a big dick, though she has no idea when his transformation took place and what he really asked for, what he really got. Perhaps if he’d known he’d have the option of a hobbit in the future, he might’ve asked for something nice and small. Then she thinks of going to Gandalf now and asking for an adjustment, and she grins in mirth without meaning to. It’s wholly inappropriate. She swallows all that amusement and insists, “Try.”

Bilbo can see the resolve in his eyes. Thorin bends for another kiss, fleeting but so tender, and when it’s gone, he looks down her body, his hands trailing to her hips. He tugs at the fabric of her skirt and starts to scrunch it down her thighs, rolling it gradually to her waist, like he expects her to stop him at any second. She only watches him work and wants to do the same. She wants to undress all of him. She’s seen him bare before, bathing in rivers and the Rivendell fountain, but she’s always tried not to stare, to be respectful. And this is different. This is him bearing over her, ready to take her, and she wants to feel all of him beneath her hands.

Perhaps another time. She’s too overwhelmed to fiddle with clothes. She can only hope there will be many, many more times, and for now, she contents herself with watching him work. He frees her legs completely, and then he presses one hand between them, cupping her through her panties. Bilbo tosses her head back and moans. They’re already soiled from Balin’s attentions earlier, dried in the air and wet through again with her new arousal. Thorin rubs her gently, just feeling her mounds, until Bilbo gasps, “Thorin.”

He mutters, “Sorry,” and moves on. His thumbs hook into the sides, and he draws the thin, lacy material down her thighs. Bilbo shudders the second she’s exposed, the cool night air drifting over her lips, and she squirms after under the heat of his gaze. He keeps drawing the panties off, until he can lay them down beside her, but his eyes stay focused on her body. She’s seen him bare before, bathing in rivers and the Rivendell fountain, but she’s always tried not to stare, to be respectful. And this is different. This is him bearing over her, ready to take her, and she wants to feel all of him beneath her hands.

Thorin’s finger pushes deeper, just a short, shallow jab, but Bilbo’s walls flex around it, trying to suck him in, and she squeezes at it, moaning and wanting. It isn’t enough, not nearly, but it’s a start. His fingers are big, long, thick, and they crook against her so perfectly, stimulating everywhere they
go. At first, he only pushes that one in and out, sinking deeper every time, and then it withdraws and is joined by a second digit. Clamped tightly together, they push into her hole. Bilbo’s breath is coming ragged, and she tries to think of other things, things that aren’t so very erotic, because she’s afraid she’s going to finish before he’s even inside her. After everything they’ve been through today, she doubts she has more than one round in her, and she wants to experience it with Thorin’s cock filling her up.

Soon Thorin’s scissoring her apart, spreading her just a little at a time, always trying to rub her and make her feel good in the process. She wants to give him pleasure back, but when she squeezes her hand between them to grab at the bulge of his crotch, he grunts and hisses, “Unless you want me to spend myself before we’ve begun, I suggest you refrain from touching me.” Bilbo whines but listens. Another time, she tells herself. The Lonely Mountain is a long way away, and there’ll be time for everything.

At a third finger, Bilbo’s sure she’s going to burst. He stretches her wide, but she’s more than interested enough to take it. Still, he keeps working her, until Bilbo thinks he’s going to try and fit his whole hand in first, and she whimpers, “Thorin, please...”

He kisses her forehead and tells her, “Alright.” But as soon as his fingers slip out of her, she misses them. It leaves her feeling stretched too open and empty, and her entrance dilates while she waits for him, looking down his body to see him part his coat. As the fabrics are parted and he pulls himself out, Bilbo stares. She wants to memorize him. Every little bit of him. But it’s too dark, and there’s too little space between them for her to see much. She promises that next time, she’ll get a good look, bury her face in it and nuzzle against his crotch and take in everything she can. For now, she watches the outline of his large cock slip between her legs, the purpling headed nudging into the rim of her opening. It’s massive, just like he said, long and thick and fully engorged, with dark curls swallowing the base of it. Thorin grips the shaft and guides the head slowly around her entrance, while Bilbo makes keening noises and tries not to fall apart. It’s bizarrely arousing to feel it tracing her, teasing and not quite going in. She has to fight the urge to reach down and push him inside, to devour him whole.

Finally, he draws the tip to her middle, holds it there and breathes, “Are you ready?”

Bilbo hisses, “Thorin,” because she’s never been so ready for anything in her life, and if he doesn’t take her soon, she’ll go mad.

Still, he insists, “Tell me if there is any discomfort.” She nods against him, ready to growl that he do it already, but then she feels the bulbous head of his cock thrust inside her, and Bilbo arches back, losing all her air.

At first, it hurts. There’s a faint sting around the edges, and Bilbo whimpers pathetically, shoving one hand over her mouth to keep herself from screaming. She puts the other hand on Thorin’s shoulder, and he stills immediately. She thinks of pushing him off, but she wants him too badly, and she knew this might happen. Thorin waits for her. She can see his huge body trembling, wanting to go inside, but she holds him at bay until she’s taken several breaths and flexed her channel and willed herself to take it. She nods and tugs at him, and he pushes in a little bit more, then slips almost out before she can stop him, and then forward again. He goes in little, shallow thrusts, just a tiny bit at a time, and it feels both sore and strange, then, as he brushes along her inner walls, good in certain places. She keeps making him stop. Each time she pushes at him, he freezes to a statue, waiting while she squirms and pants and tries to adjust. When he mumbles, “Bilbo—” she shakes her head.

“No, I... I want it,” she insists, panting and trying to explain. She wraps her fingers around his hair, looks up at him and wants him so much. It helps ease the way. He’s so big, she knew it to look at
him, but still, he feels gigantic inside her, and she doesn’t know if it’s just because it’s her first time or because she’s a hobbit or because their bodies just won’t work, but it isn’t easy. But it’s worth it. She regains herself again and insists, “More.”

Thorin obeys. He’s still slow, and that part’s torturous, because she wants to be full, but she knows if he goes any faster he’ll tear her open. A part of her is scared, the rest of her delighted, most of her heady and heavy and overheated. His body is so incredibly hot, draped all over her, covering her completely, and her legs are clinging to him so fiercely that she’s not sure she could let go. He strokes her side with one hand and her face with the other, his knees and elbows keeping him up. Bit by bit, she takes him deeper, and then it really starts to feel good; she doesn’t understand why and thinks it should hurt more, but there are places inside her he keeps brushing that drown out all the pain. Maybe it’s just because she’s still getting wetter, still stretching wider. He’s so good to her. That, more than anything, makes her so happy.

Then he stops moving, stays fully insider her, his hard cock pulsing along her walls. She clutches tighter to him, holding him down, and tries to understand why there isn’t more. It takes a moment to register the scratch of his pubic hair amidst her own, his balls draped over the curve of her ass. He’s completely sheathed inside her, and Bilbo needs a minute just to take that in. Her body’s swallowed all of Thorin. When he lifts to peck her cheek, it changes the angle just enough to make her moan. He drags his mouth to her lips and captures them, kissing her full of teeth and tongue, claiming her from both ends.

She claims him right back, and she’s the first to break away, ordering him, “Move.”

Thorin listens. He drags his cock halfway out of her, then slides back in, languid and smooth and delicious. He’s careful, and there’s no pain because of it, now just a wave of pleasure that comes with each thrust. He takes her in luxurious strokes, one after another with a steady roll of his hips that tilts his cock to graze her channel, while she alternatively squeezes and loosens around him. Lewd, wet sounds come with each thrust, followed by the shuffle of their clothes against each other and his heavy breaths and her choked moans. He makes love to her perfectly.

Now that she has him inside, Bilbo wants to hold onto him forever. She’s sure, so blissfully sure, that this is exactly where she belongs. There’s a burning connection that sparks through them every time he kisses her, every time she pets through his hair or he hisses her name under his breath. She can feel the force of his restraint, but he never falters. He makes slow, gentle love, while she wretches on his cock, rocking steadily closer to the edge. She doesn’t want to finish. She wants to lie like this for as long as she possibly can, but she loves him too much. She’s wanted this too long, he feels too good, and he’s too sweet to her. She loses even the ability to coordinate kisses, and she guides his head against hers instead, leaning their foreheads together and watching him through half-lidded eyes as he takes her closer to her end.

He finishes first. He hisses and stiffens, and then he’s rushing into her, grinding her hard into the nest below, and all Bilbo can do is moan and hold on. She can feel him bursting inside her, filling her up with a hot, sticky liquid. She still doesn’t know if she can get pregnant from it, doesn’t really think she can, but she still hopes, despite everything Thorin said before and how irresponsible it might be. Her body sucks in his heavy load, and he just seems to keep coming and coming, while she squirms against him and starts pressing little, needy kisses to his chin.

He kisses her hard, and she follows. The ecstasy sweeps over her in a blinding heat before he’s even done. Bilbo explodes in that pleasure, lets it fill and consume her, clawing to hold onto it until there’s nothing left and she’s tumbling down. Then she’s just lying there, spent and shuddering, her body still wracked with the spasms of it, while she struggles to breathe. Her eyes feel watery at the ends, and she wouldn’t be surprised to find out she was crying.
For a few dizzying seconds, that’s all they are. Neither of them moves, though Thorin’s become heavy and she’s still burning up. The feeling of his cock inside her becomes strange, then uncomfortable, and she pushes at him, because she wants him out before she grows aroused again; she has no energy for it.

Thorin pulls himself out. He drags a trail of liquids with him, and her body feels like it’s gaping afterwards, like it’ll never shrink back again and she’ll be stuck like this, though she knows, of course, it must. Thorin looks at her for a few moments, then rolls her skirt down.

He shuffles down to kiss her stomach through it, and then he comes to lie beside her, one arm draped over her body.

She summons all her remaining strength and uses it to roll onto her side, cuddling into him. He can fit with her on the same bundled pillow, though they’re so close that they’re touching everywhere, and she can taste his warm breath ghosting over her face.

They lie in silence for a long while. They’re both still coming down, and Bilbo feels ridiculously wet between her legs, so she keeps shifting and rolling her hips, trying to deal with that. Eventually, she gives up, and figures she’ll have to insist they find somewhere to bathe in the morning. Then she can see Thorin naked properly, and she can’t help but wonder if he’d be up to taking her right in front of all the other dwarves.

But this is no time for dirty daydreams. She settles herself down, and she concentrates on his handsome face instead. He keeps watching her, tired and dreamlike. She lifts one hand to brush a few fallen strands of hair off his sweaty forehead, and she whispers, warm and sincere, “I hope you get Erebor back and everything you ever wanted.”

“Even if I don’t,” he sighs, “I will have been lucky to have had all these brave dwarves around me, and to have met you.”

Bilbo smiles.

She falls asleep in his arms, happier than she’s ever been.
She wakes up to the press of Thorin’s lips against her forehead. She knows immediately that it’s him, because she recognizes the smell of him, and the memories pervaded her dreams. When she opens her eyes, her first sight is the scruff of his beard, then the soft smile that creases his mouth. He looks even more beautiful in the morning light, and Bilbo’s heart melts all over again.

As she moves her stiff legs and adjusts in the makeshift bed of his cloak and the nest, everything comes back to her. She’s slicked with a thin sheen of sweat, and she’s sticky between her legs, crusted and just generally a mess, but it was worth every bit of discomfort. She still wants more, and she mewls as she presses in to nuzzle his warm neck, though he tells her softly, “We have no time to play.”

She pulls away to look at him, understanding. Over the hill of Thorin’s shoulder, she can see the other dwarves climbing to their feet, Gandalf wading between them. Seeing her up, he calls to them, “Come, now! The eagles have entertained us quite enough!” His voice is thin in the mountain breeze. Though Bilbo has no desire to leave somewhere safe with plentiful food, it would be nice to get out of the cold mountain air.

She slips her panties back on before she stands, and Thorin stands between her and the others to shield the view, though at this point, that isn’t much use. They’ve almost all seen her, although, she muses, she does owe it to Glóin and Óin, perhaps, to offer them a chance to enter the fold. Still, Thorin acts a gentleman. He helps her up when she’s finished, and he tugs her blouse into place, though she’d really rather have him taking it off. She wants to fall to her knees right now and see everything she missed in the dark of night, but Thorin turns towards the others. He sweeps his arm around her back and guides her out amongst them, amidst a sea of yawns and grumbling.

The eagles come only a moment after, perhaps having been out for a morning fly. They caw between each other and swoop all around the edges of the nest. Bilbo isn’t particularly looking forward to the ride down—her stomach’s already queasy just thinking about it. But Gandalf leads them all towards the birds and announces to the largest one, “Again, we are most grateful for your help!”

“Indeed,” Thorin chimes in, addressing the same eagle as Gandalf. “The dwarves will not forget this. We will repay you, if ever we can.” A few of the others chime in to agree, and Bilbo imagines, though she’s not particularly acquainted with avian expressions, that the eagles look pleased. Whether or not dwarves could possibly have anything of interest to an eagle, Bilbo has no idea.

Under the guidance of Gandalf’s gestures, the dwarves approach the eagles. Bilbo finds herself dawdling, but Thorin prods her forward. Then he lifts her up by the waist, similar to pushing her onto the back of a horse, except this is much, much stranger. The texture of the eagle’s feathers feels very odd beneath her skin, and she’s nervous to go anywhere near its wings. She doesn’t want to hold onto its down, so she simply sits with her arms at her chest, hoping that she won’t be left here.
Fortunately, Thorin mounts the bird behind her. He sidles up along her back, pulling her against his broad chest, and it makes her feel infinitely safer. But then, almost everything is better when done in Thorin’s arms.

At Gandalf’s word, the eagles take off, and Bilbo’s rushed into the air.

She’s very grateful when she’s back on the ground. She doesn’t say as much to the eagle, as she doesn’t want to seem rude, but she does let out a long sigh. All the dwarves, though heavily under-supplied, seem in renewed spirits. Yet again, they’ve defied the odds, and the eagles have cut several days off their journey.

And, even better, they’ve been dropped before a river. “The Carrock,” Gandalf tells them, “Or at least, that is what I believe he calls it.”

Nori asks, “He?”

“He,” Gandalf goes on, “Is a somebody. One of very few somebodies who lives in this part of the world, and I should think it wise to stop in and see if he can help us. We will have to find him, however—it would be very dangerous for him to find us.”

This seems to Bilbo a rather confusing thing to say, but so are a lot of things that wizards profess. So she accepts as much and turns to Thorin, asking, “Can we bathe in the meantime?”

Before Thorin can answer, Ori says, “It’s in everyone’s best interest if I get a bath.”

“It’s in everyone’s best interest if Bombur gets a bath,” Bofur jumps in, which leaves Bifur laughing. Bombur gives Bofur a strong look, but breaks into a chuckle a moment later. Thorin looks at Gandalf, and he sighs and nods. Perhaps he’s grown tired of the sweat of thirteen dwarves, although it’s a scent Bilbo’s grown too used to to really distinguish anymore.

The river is a pleasant one, and it doesn’t take them long to find a shallow spot with a clear surface right to the stony bottom. The terrain around is all open, grassy and warm, with a few sparse plants here and there but not too many trees. It’s a nice change from the hard slopes of the mountain, and this way they’ll be able to see trouble coming long before it reaches them. As they stop along the shore to put down their packs, Gandalf strolls of. He’s prone to such things and is probably looking ahead again, and for the simple fact that she has no desire to be naked around him, it suits Bilbo just fine. It leaves her amidst all the other stripping dwarves, and after a moment of looking around to admire all the new peeks at skin, Bilbo slowly pulls her top over her head.

Most of them have seen her naked. They all saw her nearly naked after her escape from the goblin town. But this is different, happening all on her own and in front of all of them at once, so there is a little hesitation to her movements. She can feel eyes on her as her hands reach back to the clasp of her bra, only to have it snap open before she even gets there. She yelps in surprise, and Nori walks around her, smiling and winking. Of course he would be able to do it in the blink of an eye. She’s not surprised, but she is blushing. Still, she pulls the cups loose and slips the straps down her arms, dipping to place her bra on top of her blouse. By now several dwarves have jumped into the water, and she keeps pausing to eye them streaking past. Finally, she’s alone on the bank, with Fíli and Kíli leaning over the edge to watch, the others alternatively finding places to sit and glancing back at her. With a quick breath, Bilbo shoves down her skirt and underwear at once. After she’s stepped out of them, she straightens and marches stoically towards the water, wading in around the rocks and staring determinedly forwards.

When Bilbo gets to the center of the river, it laps around her breasts, just barely covering her nipples.
It’s pleasantly cool: a nice relief from the warm air. Many of the dwarves are talking amongst
themselves, and she knows she has her pick of who to wade through. Fíli and Kíli pat the rock next
to them, leaning back against three boulders sticking out of the water. She considers joining them,
but then someone whistles off to her right, and she looks around to see Glóin staring and eyeing her
up and down. He’s looked at her before, but this is the first time he’s been so open about it, probably
because it’s clear she made her own choice to come in naked. Or perhaps news travels fast, and like
Thorin said, they all know. There’s nothing self-conscious about the way he approaches her, like he
expects to slip right into her collection, and she remembers belatedly that, like Bombur, he has a
wife. Obviously, he must have a special prowess.

Or perhaps it’s just his magnificent beard that’s attracted a mate. It bobs in the water before him,
darkened and wafting out. The silver ringlets that hold the different groupings together glitter in the
light, artful and intricate. His thick, red mane is more than impressive, and Bilbo eyes him just as
much as he comes up to her. Only when he’s right in front of her does he take his eyes off her chest,
and he grins down at her to coo, “Nice of you to join us, burglar.”

All the dwarves are on a first name basis with her, but the way he says her title, it sounds almost like
a pet name. It’s a mark of her connection with them: something no one but her dwarves would think
to call her. It sends a shiver down her spine, but even so, she finds herself asking innocently,
“Wouldn’t your wife mind you ogling another woman?”

Glóin tosses his head back to laugh. It’s a delightful sound, the sort that makes her want to join in.
She smiles, remembering what Bombur told her—that dwarves aren’t necessarily constrained to one
life partner. Indeed, Glóin chuckles, “My dear, Bilbo, my wife would love to get her hands on a third
like you!” Bilbo bites her lower lip, not having thought of herself as a ‘third,’ exactly, but she
supposes the term works. And then she thinks it might be nice to have Glóin’s wife in the mix, too,
who she hadn’t even thought of—what would it be like to be sandwiched between two heavy
dwarves, already married and bound to one another, working so easily in tandem? They’d already
know each other, so surely they would have no trouble attending to her, and she would get to feel the
spark of their connection, enjoy both the excitement of something new and the practiced skill of an
existing bond. And if Glóin’s wife is anything like him, anywhere near as strong and hearty, it would
be all the more fun.

When Glóin moves towards Bilbo, she doesn’t move away, until his hands come out of the water to
wrap easily around her biceps. He pushes her back, and Bilbo floats through the water, letting him
guide her up along a steeper part of the shore, a jut of rock that lets her stay submerged with her back
against it. When he’s got her pinned, he muses aloud, “She’ll be joining us in Erebor when the
journey’s done, of course, along with my lad. He’d be a bit young to play with you, but my wife...
she’d eat you alive.” The way Glóin’s expression lifts hungrily at the thought, Bilbo imagines she’d
very much like to be eaten. Especially with him joining in, or even just watching. She’s hyper aware
now that many of her dwarves are watching them this moment, though she finds it difficult to look
away from Glóin long enough to check.

She means to say that she’d like that, like to have Glóin’s wife toy with her; he makes her sound like
a ravenous beast. But instead, Bilbo asks, voice soft and nearly innocent, “Will you play with me in
the meantime?”

“Lass,” Glóin purrs, “I thought you’d never ask.”

The next thing she knows, his lips are on hers, and her chin’s buried in his full beard. His mustache
drapes over her, and his hard body shoves her up against the rock, his stomach flattening hers and
her breasts squishing against him. One of his arms slips around her waist to tug her forward, the other
palming her breast from the side. When he does break the kiss, he scrapes his teeth along her bottom
lip, and Bilbo whimpers, reaching for his shoulders. His hand slips between her tits, his eyes focused on them again, and he squeezes one at a time with palpable lust. Suddenly, she can’t think why she never went to him before. Clearly, Glóin’s wild in bed, or in a river; he’s large and powerful, and there’s a certain ferociousness to the way he tugs at her. Even as she thinks it, Glóin growls, “You know, more than anything, I miss my wife’s tits. I used to play with them every night and several times a day, slipping my arms around her whenever I got the chance... and then you come along, flaunting these things in front of me...” Whatever response Bilbo was going to moan dies off in a gasp when he squeezes her left breast hard.

“What are you two muttering about over here?”

Squeaking, Bilbo’s head jerks to the side, eyes widening in surprise. Óin’s come up beside them, his looped braids floating in the water, and he looks cheerfully from one to the other. Bilbo flushes scarlet but doesn’t move. Óin’s left his trumpet on the land, and without it, Glóin shouts, loud and clear enough for all the dwarves to hear, “I’m about to fuck Bilbo’s tits!” When Bilbo covers her face with her hands, Glóin asks quieter, “If that’s alright with the little lady, of course...”

Burning with embarrassment though she is, Bilbo nods her head. She’s never too embarrassed for sex with her dwarves.

But she’s still a hobbit. She intends to be an accommodating host, so she forces herself to take a breath and lower her hands. She asks Óin, deliberately loud out of respect for his hearing, “Do you want to join?”

Óin grins. He doesn’t even have to answer; she knows he’s in. But the way he quirks a bushy eyebrow looks almost as mischievous as Fíli or Kíli, and she does have to wonder just what she’s gotten herself into. He is very handsome; his hair and beard are just as full and impressive as Glóin’s, except silvery white, and he’s got a quiet strength about him. But she hasn’t spoken with him much, and as his eyes run down her body, she has to wonder just what he has in mind.

While Bilbo’s still assessing Óin, Glóin swims around her. She whines when his weight leaves her, and she turns to watch him go, trying to suppress her smile a moment later as he climbs up onto the bank, revealing all his bare skin, smattered with red hair over hard muscles and thick bulges of fat. Glóin looks so especially Dwarven through and through, and, odd though it might’ve seemed only a few months ago, that’s becoming Bilbo’s favourite thing. He comes to sit in front of her on the bank, plopping his rear down in the grass and spreading his legs, giving her a prime look at his thick, stout cock resting atop his heavy balls. Once he’s settled, he slaps his thigh and beckons, “C’mere, lass.”

Bilbo spares a glance at Óin, and he nods towards his brother as though wondering what she’s waiting for. So Bilbo pushes up onto the bank on her smaller arms, her breasts heaving out of the water. As soon as she drapes her stomach over the land, Óin grabs her legs from behind, and Bilbo squeaks. She was going to throw them up to join Glóin, but Óin settles in behind her instead, keeping her half in the water. He grabs her thighs and lifts her butt onto the narrowed ledge of rock that disappears into the grass, the water lapping at her thighs and the rest of her legs still beneath the surface. She lifts up on her elbows to look around, finding Óin grinning madly down at the curve of her ass.

Then he shoves into it, so abruptly that Bilbo yelps in surprise, thrusting back against the bump of his nose. His beard tickles along her cheeks, lightly scratching her soft skin, and Óin nuzzles right into it, digging his nose insistently into her crack. She’s still squirming at the strange feeling when something wet and slick swipes over her. It takes her a second to realize that it’s Óin’s tongue. He’s licking her ass. And enthusiastically, at that. One lick gives way to another, until he’s coating her crack in spit, running up and down and lingering over her crinkled asshole. It’s a very odd sensation
—it seems so dirty—but it’s also bizarrely thrilling, and Bilbo finds herself writhing against the ground in delight, making needy noises.

As Glóin shuffles closer to her and grabs her chin, guiding her head forward, Óin stops long enough to say, “Speak up, lass! I can’t hear you unless you scream!” He punctuates the statement by slapping her ass, and Bilbo cries out, whilst struggling to retain the mental note to be as vocal as possible.

She doesn’t know how she’s going to do that with Glóin’s cock in her mouth, although she quickly realizes that isn’t where he’s guiding her. Instead, he’s positioning her face over his lap, while his hands reach down to pull her breasts taut. She vacillates between cries over his rough treatment and the wild sensations of Óin’s tongue probing at her hole. Once Glóin has her breasts how he wants them, he grabs her wrists and shoves her hands into place around her tits, holding them together. Then he uses his own hands to push his cock between them. He stabs into her first, then slips along to press between her cleavage, rocking his hips forward to grind into it. It’s an awkward position, but Glóin doesn’t seem to mind. Bilbo certainly doesn’t mind having her face against his full stomach and her ass spread open and her breasts used. The brothers work well together; every time Glóin shoves into her, it pushes her back into Óin’s face, and he eats her out all the harder.

As soon as Óin’s tongue shoves into her hole, Bilbo screams. She didn’t even realize he was stretching her open, but now his mouth opens around her brim to suck, his tongue thrusting inside her and his thumbs spreading her hole apart, the rest of his fingers kneading her ass. Glóin grunts, fucking her tits all the harder, and Bilbo’s arms start to shake, her elbows sore from the abuse every time Óin’s motions slide her up and down. She tries to adjust her angle, but it’s difficult when she’s smashed up against Glóin’s body. Instead, she just whines until he helps her, pulling his cock out to press it in at a different angle instead, now jutting up. It makes her have to arch her back and thrust her chest out even more, her breasts drawn completely forward, but it’s worth it to have his cock pointing at her face. Each time it crowns through her cleavage, she tries to duck her head enough to lick at the bulbous head, but he keeps pulling back so he can thrust up again. The water works as a lubricant to ease the way, though there’s still plenty of friction. In between trying to worship Glóin’s cock, Bilbo lets herself moan and shriek as loud as she can, trying to encourage more of Óin’s tongue.

This goes on for an absurdly long time, and all the while Bilbo wants desperately to finger herself, but she needs both arms to support herself and aid in Glóin’s pleasure. Both of their actions feel good, but it keeps her just near the edge, and in the meantime, she’s used like an instrument for their own desires. It’s something she doesn’t at all mind, but it makes her needy and horny, and she starts licking Glóin’s cock more vigorously, even though it stifles the noises she gives Óin, because if she can’t touch herself, she at least wants to fill her mouth. She cranes her neck to lean as far forward as possible, pushing her breasts up to envelop his length as she laps her tongue around his tip and sucks hard, again every time it thrusts up into her, until Glóin finally cries out and bucks against her face.

Glóin’s seed splashes all over her, and she just barely manages to close her eyes in time. It splatters her cleavage and even her chin, her cheeks, draping over her nose and running right up into her hair. Bilbo keeps her mouth open and catches what she can on her tongue, but there’s far too much of it for that. Before Glóin’s even finished, Óin’s tongue pulls out of her, and he moans against her cheeks instead, grinding his face into her plush rear. She thinks he’s coming, but she can’t move to tell, because she’s busing taking Glóin’s facial.

By the time he’s finished, she’s covered in it. She has to lift a hand to wipe off the cum that got on her eyelids. Glóin’s still holding her up, and after a loud, contented sigh, he helps roll her over onto her back, Óin pulling away just in time.
She lies on the bank, panting and still very much aroused, with her knees bent and her legs in the water. Her rear feels wet against the grass, but there’s nothing for that. It takes her a minute to peer down around her breasts at the river. She wants to call Balin over to finish her off, but she doesn’t want to impose.

Beside her, Glóin pats her shoulder like petting a horse that’s done well. He grins at her fondly, then calls to the water, “Who wants to finish her off?” Bilbo gives him a relieved smile. She knows she needs to slip back into the water and clean off, but instead she lies where she is, hoping someone will come to her first.

She can hear a commotion in the water, but it’s Ori who gets to her first.

As she drapes her pretty body down over Bilbo’s, she murmurs, “This’ll give them a sight to remember.” Bilbo imagines she’s right. Knowing that the others will enjoy watching heightens her own pleasure, but when she lifts on her elbows, Ori lightly pushes her down, smiles and says, “Don’t worry, I’ve got this.”

She really does. Ori puts on a show that has half the company scrambling out of the Carrok for a better look, and by the time Bilbo finally gets a chance to wash herself off in the water, all she can think about is how damn lucky she is to have so many lovely dwarves, and she can’t imagine why she ever imagined going home.

By the time Gandalf returns, Bilbo’s come twice, and is resting comfortably in the water, perched on Dwalin’s lap and leaning lazily against his broad chest. Not long after having Ori finish her off, Nori came up to rut into her from behind, while Ori stayed at her front, and Dori played with her feet and legs behind Ori. Then she had Bofur order her to lick, kiss, and nip at Bombur’s body, until the two of them came all over her and fingered her from either end. Now she’s thoroughly exhausted, although she wouldn’t exactly mind if Thorin and Balin converged in on her right now. Bifur is off having a splashing contest with a resilient Bofur, and Fili and Kili have disappeared around a smattering of rocks. Bilbo has her suspicions about them, but nothing she would voice aloud, and she schools her thoughts away from that before she gets any inappropriate fantasies that would make others uncomfortable.

When Gandalf does show up along the edge of the river, he shields his eyes to talk to them, or perhaps he’s just using the shadows of his hand to fend off the sun. Either way, he calls across them, “Finish up, you lot. We’d best make good time to his house before we run out of supplies again.”

Bilbo groans, even louder when Dwalin gently pushes her out of his lap. It’s with a heavy sigh that she wades towards the shore—she rather enjoyed her break from the troubles of traveling and the burden of clothes. Not to mention the lovely view. Dwalin moves close behind her, the others begrudging following suit.

As Bilbo climbs out onto the bank, helped up by Dori’s arms, she asks Gandalf, “To whose house are we going?”

“The somebody I spoke of,” Gandalf explains, now turning to look away and settle down on a rock, while the dwarves and Bilbo collectively dry themselves with their cloaks and stumble back into their clothes. “He’s a very interesting person, and you must all be very polite when I introduce you. It shall have to be only two at a time, I think, and you must be very careful not to annoy him, or heaven knows what will happen. He can be appalling when angry, though kind enough if humoured.”

Bilbo has her own questions, but before she can ask them, Fili interrupts, “This is the person you’re taking us to now?”
Glóin grunts, “Why are you bringing us to someone who’s so difficult?”

Ori asks, “Could you explain it better?”

The others clamour for more, but Gandalf jumps in with a harried, “Yes, no, and I was explaining very carefully. If you must know more, his name is Beorn, and he’s a skin-changer.

By now, Bilbo’s managed to tug all her clothes back into place, though they cling to her damp skin. A little curious and mostly put-off, Bilbo asks, “Like a furrier?”

“Good gracious heavens, no!” Gandalf looks absolutely scandalized and hurries on to insist, “Don’t be a fool, Bilbo! In the name of all wonder don’t mention the word furrier again as long as you are anywhere near Beorn’s lands, nor rug, cape, tippet, muff, or any other such unfortunate word for that matter! He is a skin-changer, which means precisely that: he changes his skin. Sometimes he’s a huge, black bear, other times a great strong man. I can’t tell you much more, though that should be enough, and I warn you now that he isn’t the sort to ask questions of. At any rate, it’s best that we make for the safety of his home as quickly as we can. There he has all manner of animals, which he talks to and is friends with; he would never eat or hunt one.”

It’s a big mouthful to swallow, but Bilbo doesn’t bother asking anymore, and neither do the dwarves. It’s obvious that Gandalf’s said all he means to on the subject, and finally he turns to look around at them again, as most are properly covered up. Bilbo’s the least dressed, but that’s as usual.

All together, the party follows after Gandalf, heading away from the mountains and towards the smattering of trees before them. They’ve all got enough to think about to be quiet as they go, but Bilbo finds she doesn’t want to contemplate Gandalf’s words too heavily; the idea of staying with a giant bear with a short temper is rather unsettling.

Once, when it’s near nightfall, she thinks she sees a hulking shadow padding through the trees over the far hill, but she purposely looks away before she can be certain. Glóin and Óin must see her nervousness, because they take to flanking her for the rest of the night, and that suits her just fine.

They walk for a long time. The lands get stranger as they go, the plants reaching higher and higher and the animals coming larger. The bees that weave through the air are particularly massive. Bilbo’s never been especially afraid of bees, but she thinks if one of these stung her, she’d swell up twice as big as she is. Bifur keeps nervously hiding behind Bombur, who eyes the bees with a definite fascination, and Gandalf informs them all, “Beorn lives mostly on milk and honey, and this is a good thing to be amongst these creatures; it means we are on the edge of his bee-pastures.”

Indeed, it isn’t long after that when they see a belt of old oaks and a high, thorny hedge that curves off as though in a giant circle. Gandalf leads them straight towards it. More animals are gathered around here, and the neighing whine of a pony calls Bilbo to peer through the oaks. It would be nice if they had ponies again, and she can’t help but hope this Beorn fellow is kind enough to lend them some. Sheep are also grazing here and there, and a few dogs chase each other around. A particularly large, grey hound meanders up to Bilbo alone, and she nervously keeps her head up, trying to be stoic and calm and not pay it any mind. But it follows faithfully beside her, and then suddenly shoves its muzzle between her legs as she’s walking, lifting up the back of her skirt. Bilbo yelps and scurries a few steps away, right into Thorin, while Dwalin comes up to shoo the dog off. Gandalf, at the front of the procession, pays no notice. The dog stays a few paces back from them but still follows, looking warily at Dwalin and happily at Bilbo. Bilbo tries not to look at it.

Two other dogs, tawny yellow and orange, weave through the dwarves when they’re almost at the hedge, also trying to sniff at Bilbo’s crotch. While Thorin protectively guides her away from them,
Dwalin grabs one and Dori grabs the other. The dogs bark, more in whimpers than anger, as they’re shoved aside, and Gandalf looks over his shoulder to insist, “Be nice to those! You never know what they might tell their friends!” Indeed, once the dwarves have let go of the dogs, they hit the ground running off around the hedge, and Bilbo can only hope they aren’t calling more.

Finally, they come around to a broad wooden gate at a pause in the hedge, and Gandalf turns and ushers them all to stop. The dwarves huddle together, and he tells them, “Wait here. When I call or whistle, come after me in pairs, but only every five minutes or so. Bombur, you had best come alone and last. Ms. Baggins, you will come with me.” Not expecting this, Bilbo blinks in surprise, but Gandalf waves her forward, and she reluctantly follows.

The gates are slightly ajar, just enough for a pony to make it through, and Gandalf leads Bilbo in. A smattering of buildings lies at the center of the great hedge circle, over the plane of bright green grass. The buildings are all made of wood, some thatched and made of unshaped logs: barns, stables, sheds, and a long wooden house. Rows and rows of straw beehives with bell-shaped roofs lie off to one side, and the hefty bees fill the air with their buzzing as they fly about the field.

As Gandalf and Bilbo head off towards the house, two elegant horses ride up to them, well groomed and very healthy-looking. For a few steps, they trot along at Gandalf and Bilbo’s side, then gallop off down the slope, and Gandalf murmurs thoughtfully, “Likely, they are informing him of the arrival of strangers.”

Long before they reach the house, Bilbo gets a glimpse of the man in the front yard. At first, she thinks her eyes are playing tricks on her, because even at such a distance he looks exceptionally huge. Everyone she’s met on this quest has been bigger than her, but this man may as well be two dwarves put together. The closer they come, the more apparent it is that he’s far taller than even Gandalf, thicker certainly, made of deep brown-black skin and hard muscles and a wild black mane that runs his hair and beard together and trails down his back. He’s wearing only loose trousers, his chiseled chest shining in the open sun. The horses cluster around him, but he pays no notice to either them or Gandalf and Bilbo, instead busy chopping wood. The axe he wields looks as long as Bilbo’s whole body. The force with which he swings it to the ground makes her think he could split apart a mountain if he wished, and already she can see the resemblance to the bear Gandalf claims he can be. She knows this is Beorn. Even in his human skin, he radiates power.

But the horses seem to trust him well enough, and that gives Bilbo hope. In her experience, people that are kind to animals are kind in general, however ferociously they might chop wood in front of strangers.

At the courtyard he’s centered in, Gandalf slows his steps. Bilbo keeps half a step behind him. Once they’re right in front of him, Beorn stops his motions and rests the metal head of his axe on the ground. His face is very stern, though she imagines it could look sweeter if he smiled, with bushy eyebrows, a flat nose, and particularly round eyes. There’s something purely animal in his gaze, and it’s strangely comfortable to Bilbo, who’s had quite enough of goblins and monsters and wouldn’t mind staying with someone purely at peace with their land.

Peering down at them, Beorn asks gruffly, “Who are you and what do you want?” Of course, Gandalf warned her that he could be ill tempered, and his presence is imposing, but with the horses so calmly swishing their tails behind him, Bilbo isn’t as scared as she would’ve thought. She looks up at Gandalf, leaving the replies to him.

Gandalf simply answers, “I am Gandalf.”

“Never heard of him,” Beorn grunts, looking not at all impressed. But his eyes do linger on Bilbo, and after a moment, he bends down to get a better look at her, musing thoughtfully, “And what’s this
“This is Ms. Bilbo Baggins,” Gandalf announces for her, “a hobbit of good family and impeachable reputation.” Here Bilbo looks sideways at him, because her reputation was probably a good deal better off before this whole thing started, but as Beorn isn’t likely to know much of the Shire if he’s never seen a hobbit, it probably doesn’t matter. Under the formality of Gandalf’s words, Bilbo puts her hands over her lap and bows forward in respect. When she straightens, Beorn’s studying her curiously.

Gandalf has to cough to regain Beorn’s attention before continuing, “I am a wizard. I have heard of you, even if you haven’t heard of me. Perhaps you have heard of my good cousin Radagast, who lives near the southern borders of Mirkwood.”

“Yes; not a bad fellow, as wizards go. I used to see him now and again. Now I know who you are, or who you say you are, but what do you want?” At the mention of Radagast, some of the sternness has gone out of Beorn’s voice, but he still isn’t quite inviting. Beyond the fence, a few sheep have wandered over, and Bilbo can’t help but wonder if they’re listening.

Gandalf goes on all the same, “To tell you the truth, we’ve had a rather bad run of things. We have lost our luggage and our way, and we’re rather in need of help, or at least advice about the coming lands, if you’ve any to give.” As he talks, one of the sheep wanders in towards Bilbo. It’s sniffs at her the way the dogs did, although it’s bigger and can nuzzle right into her stomach, and she steps timidly around Gandalf.

Beorn murmurs something softly, though Bilbo isn’t sure what it is or who it’s to, and the sheep makes a baahing sound and turns. As it trots away, an attractive smile twists onto Beorn’s mouth. He looks back at Gandalf to snort, “And you’ve brought me a wife in exchange for this help and advice? She’s a bit small for me.”

To Bilbo’s horror, Gandalf only chuckles. “No, no. I’m afraid not.” While Beorn is certainly handsome and seems interesting enough, he’s more than twice Bilbo’s height, and of course, she doesn’t plan on being left behind anywhere while her dwarves plow on ahead.

Despite Beorn’s earlier amusement at the idea, he grumbles, “Oh,” at the rejection. “I suppose I can still help out a lovely lass in need.” He gives Bilbo a more than friendly smile, certainly more than Gandalf’s gotten, and she smiles back appreciatively.

But Gandalf says, “Well... I’m afraid there’s rather more than that. You see, it began with a key and a map, and me gathering up a friend or two—”

“Or two?” Beorn interrupts. “I can only see one, and a little one at that.”

“To be quite honest, I did not like to bother you with a lot of us, until I found out if you were busy or not. If you wouldn’t mind, I could give a call?”

“Call away.” Beorn says bemusedly. So Gandalf whistles, long and shrill, and Bilbo turns to watch Thorin and Dori come down the path. They’ve moved much closer than Gandalf told them to come, but the others are still out of sight and do wait. Seeing them too, Beorn amends, “Three or for, you mean. But these are dwarves, not hobbits.”

Once they’re close enough, Thorin announces quiet as gruffly as Beorn did, though Bilbo can see him trying to be nice through his usual demeanor, “Thorin Oakenshield, at your service.” Dori repeats almost the same thing at almost the same time, and they both give short, awkward bows in a show of manners.
“I don’t need your service,” Beorn tells them. “Though I hear you need mine. I am not over fond of dwarves, but I will listen to your tale.”

The dwarves fall silent, and Gandalf continues, “Very well. As I was saying, these friends of mine visited Ms. Baggins in the Shire, for we needed a burglar. Not to steal anything that wasn’t rightfully theirs, I assure you, but we will get to that part near the end. With the lot of us together, we set out on a rather ambitious and perilous journey, if I do say so myself, not the least of which was three trolls intent on devouring the pack of us at once.”

Bilbo can see the spark of interest on Beorn’s face, though Gandalf’s telling of the story doesn’t nearly do the real fright any justice. “But you keep referring to a ‘lot,’ and now a ‘pack,’ and I should hardly think the four of you should make for such a thing.”

“Well,” Gandalf admits almost sheepishly, “There are a few more. We did not want to trouble you all at once, you see. But it is rather a long story, so if you do hear me out, I am sure they shall all be here by the end of it.”

“It seems I’m already in for a party,” Beorn grunts. “So do tell on.”

And Gandalf does, going over each noteworthy moment of their considerable quest, while more and more dwarves come spilling down the pathway, and Beorn listens with increasing attention, until he has to sit down on the stump he was chopping on, waving quiet each new dwarf that comes to join.

By the end of the story, all thirteen dwarves, one hobbit, and one wizard, have squeezed themselves inside Beorn’s home, having come in once it grew dark and cold. It was, indeed, a very long story, but Beorn seemed quite amused by it all, and once it’s over, he claps his hands loudly and declares, “A very good tale! The best I have heard for a long while. You may be making it all up, of course, but you deserve a supper for the story all the same.” All together, the dwarves clamour to thank him, having been deathly quiet during Gandalf’s recount and all very hungry.

Dinner is set at two long tables pushed together, very low to the ground for someone so large, though Bilbo quickly realizes it’s for the animal’s convenience. They meander into the house whenever they choose, and when Beorn calls to them, they bring out the dinner, carrying plates of berries and warm bread on their backs. The dwarves look on in awe, while the ponies roll in logs for them to sit on. Beorn has a chair for himself and manages to find two more for Gandalf and Thorin, and he offers Bilbo a low stool next to himself at the head of the table. The feast looks absolutely wonderful—the best they’ve had since leaving Elrond’s home—though there’s something even more magical about this one, as even the elves didn’t have animals serving food. Every so often, Bilbo notices four-legged creatures walking on their hind legs, using their forefront paws like hands. Many of the animals linger around Bilbo, the dogs most of all, and twice they creep under the table to lap their broad tongues along her thighs. Both times she yelps in surprise, Beorn shoos them away, and Bilbo then takes to sitting with her legs tight together and her skirt clasped firmly down between them. She tries not to make a fuss out of it, because even if they do all seem very intelligent, they’re still animals, and she doesn’t dare insult their host.

The dwarves are much politer here than they were during Elrond’s feasts. They don’t seem to have the same interest in defying Beorn, and even Bilbo can feel Gandalf’s sharp eyes watching them, keeping them all in line. No one dares complain about the lack of meat, but that’s easy enough with how many other things there are. Gandalf tries to keep the conversation light, asking how Radagast is and how the mountains have been, though soon enough the dwarves break into their own conversations, laughing merrily across the table. Bilbo, for the most part, is quiet, content to simply listen and enjoy the good food.
Halfway through a fresh bun, Beorn pushes a bowl of honey towards her and suggests, “Try some of this, little one. A fresher dip you’ll never get.” So Bilbo, smiling around her mouthful, dips the rest of her bun through the shining surface. It clings to the dough and gets on the end of her fingers, messily slicking along her lips as she nibbles it after. It’s absolutely blissful; she’s never tasted honey so good. From then on, she dips all her food in the honey and enjoys the lingering sweetness of lapping it off her fingers.

In her enjoyment, she doesn’t notice until it’s too late a dog slipping its paw onto her stool. It comes in from between her and Beorn, its muzzle ducking under her arm to nip at her breasts. It only bites lightly enough to pierce her bra, leaving her skin alone, but it tugs enough to rip her shirt and tear a hole in her bra before Beorn scoops the dog up and drops it on his other side. Bilbo’s left in shock, trying to straighten out the torn fabric. As Bombur’s on her other side and blocking the view of most of the dwarves, only Ori, sitting across from her, notices, and Ori frowns heavily. Bilbo tries to smile and mutter that it’s alright, but Beorn tells her over the clamour of company, “I am sorry for that. I’ve spoken to my friends, but they find it very difficult to resist such a ripe, fertile woman. I’ll speak with them again, of course.”

Bilbo, only blinking in surprise, mouths ‘ripe.’ She never considered herself particularly fertile, and it’s a very strange thing to say to someone, especially when she isn’t even the same species as the creatures apparently unable to resist her. But then, the lines of different species seem to be blurred in Beorn’s home, and he leans down to whisper to her in a quiet but deep rumble, “You are very attractive, smelling utterly delicious. They are primal creatures and don’t understand that you aren’t doing this on purpose to attract them.” Bilbo nods and wants to say that she forgives them, though she’s busy muddling through his words, feeling too hot to answer properly. She had no idea hobbits gave off such pheromones to other creatures, and it’s even stranger to think that it might be her specifically, in a ripe phase, whatever that might mean.

Across the table, Glóin announces, “This milk is delicious!” Several of the dwarves chime in, the remark clearly directed at Beorn.

He simply muses, “I know where to get better,” and continues to watch Bilbo very strangely.

At night, the dwarves are ushered into one of the barns. There don’t seem to be any real beds in Beorn’s home, and certainly not enough for so many visitors, but after so long on the road, the hay is a welcome change to rock and soil. Beorn even provides them with extra cloaks and a woolen sweater that Ori happily takes, looking quite cute in it. After eating so well and having such a pleasant time, the dwarves are completely jovial, though full and ready for a good rest. They spread out around the barn, and Bilbo follows them in, until a deep voice calls, “Little one.”

Pausing in her steps, Bilbo turns to see Beorn’s tall figure silhouetted by the stars. Just outside the doorway, he makes a gesture for her to follow. She turns to smile and Balin, who’s waiting next to her, and he nods. They have to assume that a friend of Gandalf’s is trustworthy, although she thinks it wise to let the dwarves know where she’s going.

When Bilbo meets Beorn outside of the barn in the cool night air, he starts to walk, drawing her away from the entrance and the noises of the company. She keeps her arms wrapped around her chest, half to stave off the cold and half because her blouse is ripped from earlier. Once they’re in peace and quiet at the other end of the barn, Beorn turns and asks her, sounding more curious than anything, “Would you be interested, perhaps, in bargaining for some of your milk?”

Again, Bilbo blinks and not much more. She squeaks, “Milk?” And it takes her a second to understand what he means. Then she blushed furiously and stammers, “I’m not pregnant.” To her
further confusion, Beorn chuckles.

“I know not what magic was used on your body, but whatever it was, it was very potent.” This makes Bilbo frown and feel distinctly nervous and embarrassed, though there’s no judgment in his voice. She isn’t ashamed of her transformation, not exactly, but it isn’t something she advertises to strangers, and it’s a bit irksome to think that he knows so easily. Perhaps it’s because of his own enchantments, and he can sense body-changing in another.

Still, that has nothing to do with her chest, and she admits, “I’ve never leaked before.” It’s such an odd thing to say, and it sets her cheeks even more fiercely on fire. She hadn’t even thought of leaking milk before this.

Beorn mutters, “Hm,” and lifts a large hand under his chin. He strokes thoughtfully through his beard as he looks down at her, and Bilbo fidgets under his gaze, suddenly unsure of just how much of an animal he sees her as. Of course, he seems to have a very good touch with animals, but the fact remains that she isn’t one. Well, beyond the sense that they all are, anyway.

Finally, Beorn lowers his hand and says, “My own bond with the earth and its creations is very deep. I believe I could coax yours out, if you would be agreeable.”

If this man had first approached her back in the Shire, come to kneel down at her tiny doorstep, Bilbo would’ve baulked and run to hide at the back of her home. But she’s now a very different hobbit than when she first set out, and she can’t help but find the prospect... interesting.

And then, of course, there’s the fact that Beorn’s so very handsome. She thinks she might be developing an interest in men too big for her, being off with dwarves. She knows Beorn could never fit inside her, not like Thorin has, but there are other ways they could, perhaps, have fun. He never offered her such a thing, and she shuffles awkwardly for thinking it, but it simply isn’t every day that Bilbo runs into a shirtless beast of a man with new skills to offer. And it certainly isn’t every day that a man asks to drink from her breasts. She’s more curious than she should be.

Then she thinks of her dwarves. She loves them dearly, but clearly they’re alright with sharing, and she doubts they’ll be staying with Beorn long, anyway. She doesn’t know how long Beorn’s enchantment would last, but she can think of a few dwarves who might actually enjoy the spell—Nori and Bombur, certainly. There’s also the chance that they’ll think it disgusting, because sooner or later they have to think that over something; Bilbo’s just spiraling into such a naughty, improper mess. Beorn didn’t even make the offer anything sexual, and Bilbo knows the act of breast feeding doesn’t inherently mean anything sexual, and yet she’s, once again, picturing herself naked amongst a horde of horny dwarves, letting them suckle away at her tits.

The more she thinks about it, the more she knows she’s going to do it. She’s hasn’t missed an opportunity yet. She makes up her mind and gathers the courage to look up at Beorn, mumbling, “Perhaps... we could work something out as payment for letting my friends and I stay?” That, at least, makes it seem like she’s being helpful rather than horny.

Beorn’s grin could be a lecherous one, but she’s seen worse on some of the dwarves, and it only serves to excite her.

Beorn starts walking again, and this time Bilbo hurries to follow. They turn around the back of the barn, to where some equipment is set up—a wooden bench, several metal buckets both empty and filled with water, and a bundle of rope. The grass here is flattened into the dirt, hoof and paw prints dug everywhere, and the earth is soft and warm beneath her toes. She doesn’t quite know what to do—if she should stand or sit or maybe even lie down—but he takes a seat in the center of the clearing, his back just short of the barn’s wall. He pats the ground in front of her, and Bilbo, understanding,
drifts towards him. When she’s standing before him, she’s just about on eye level with him, and it gives her a heightened sense of just how giant he is. Even Gandalf would be beneath her if he sat, but here, they’re finally on par.

Before she can sit, Beorn asks in a voice close to a purr, “Perhaps you would be more comfortable if you took your clothes off.” The way he says it reminds her of a rider soothing their horse, and he lifts his hands to either side of her, lightly clasping over her hips. He strokes her thighs softly through the fabric of her skirt, and Bilbo, with a sharp intake of breath, nods. After all, he’s already shirtless, and being naked in front of gorgeous men is nothing new to her anymore. She tells herself it’s mostly to make sure she doesn’t stain her clothes, but she knows it’s more than that. She wonders if he sees her like a woman, one he thought might make a perspective wife, or a funny little animal masquerading around in clothes.

Her blouse is the easiest to slip over her head. It’s already loose from the rip, something she’ll have to mend later—she no longer has clothes in abundance. Her bra has a similar tear, and that she unclips a little more hesitantly. Beorn is watching her, but not in a carnivorous enough way to give her pause. He looks almost gentle, like coaxing a sheep out of its wool. Thinking of them so naturally as that, with him already mostly exposed, makes it easier to pull off her bra. Her skirt and underwear she pushes down last, his hands leaving her to make room. Once she’s stepped out of them, she folds everything neatly into a pile that she places a few steps away in the grass, hoping it doesn’t stain.

Then she wanders back to him, and he gives her a sweeping, admiring look. Even though it’s silly, she holds one hand between her legs and one arm across her chest out of instinct. He doesn’t tell her to move them away.

Instead, he takes her hips again. He guides her in a small circle, turning her around, and then he murmurs, “Kneel, please.” So Bilbo lets herself fall to the ground, her knees crushing more grass. He presses a broad hand against her back, his fingers so much longer than the dwarves’ and seeming to cover so much of her. He bends her forward, until she has to use her hands to catch herself, and then he stops. On all fours, she looks back at him, and he gives her a reassuring smile before reaching across the space.

He grabs one of the buckets, dragging it closer, and Bilbo looks back around, her face completely red. She didn’t think it was going to be like that. Of course she knows how cows give milk, but she isn’t a cow. Maybe hobbits are no different to Beorn. At least he was polite enough to ask, but it’s still dreadfully embarrassing.

The bucket’s shoved underneath her, like she expected, and it’s wider and shallower than she would’ve thought a milking pail, but then, she might not have fit over a full one. This has a little room between the brim and her body, though her breasts hang right into it, nipples just past the brim. She expects Beorn to come sit to the side of her, but instead he drapes over her back. His giant legs part around her little body, taking up so much, and the hard imprint of his cock grinds all the way over her ass and against her lower back, his stomach lifting too high for her to feel, even when she tries to arch back into him. She stops herself as soon as she realizes that she’s making mewling noises, although from the twitch of Beorn’s cock, he doesn’t seem to mind. There is something sexual to it, after all. Bilbo can’t help squirming her naked backside against the front of his trousers, until he chuckles, “Patience, little one.”

With his legs supporting him, Beorn’s arms are free, unlike Bilbo’s. He wraps one below her waist, holding her firmly in place, and his other hand starts on her side, running up and slipping around the curve of one breast. His hand is huge and wonderfully warm, the work-calloused skin of his palm making her shiver. When he squeezes, it’s with a careful restraint, though it’s still enough to make Bilbo gasp. He kneads her one breast softly, then runs flat across to the other, squeezing it the same
way. After, he shifts his hand between them and manages to capture both at once, all five fingers splayed across her chest. He tugs on them, his other hand stroking her hip, and Bilbo moans and shifts along the ground, grateful for his arm holding her up, lest she give in and collapse under the ministrations.

For several minutes, all Beorn does is knead her flesh, making her warm and hot and her nipples swell, her mouth dropping open to pant. It’s very easy to lose herself and rub her rear against his clothed cock, and he lets her squirm below him, concentrating mostly on her breasts. When he leans over her, she can feel his beard tickling between her shoulder blades and along her neck. Against her ear, he murmurs a steady stream of deep, low words that she doesn’t understand, though they make her burn hot and breathe all the harder. She thinks it might be magic, but she has no way of knowing, and she doesn’t feel coherent enough to ask. When the mantra’s finished, Bilbo feels a strange tingling in the tips of her breasts, and then Beorn gives a great *squeeze*, and Bilbo gasps for air, her nipples bursting twin jets of white around his fingers. It runs right down them, dripping heavily into the bucket with a loud pitter-patter sound. Before Bilbo’s recovered, Beorn’s shifted his milk-slicked hand to one breast and begun to tug it softly.

Beorn’s skills are expert. Beyond that first spurt, he doesn’t miss a drop. He points her breasts straight down into the bucket, first enveloping her in his hand and squeezing the entire thing, then dipping to hook his thumb and forefinger around her pebbled nipple. He pulls and pinches her at once, milking her out, and he pats her hip as he goes, like urging her to give more. Except that Bilbo has no control over it. She didn’t even think her body could *do* this, and yet she can feel the warm liquid streaming out of her. She doesn’t dare look down, and instead focuses on the exquisite sensation of him handling her tits. Beorn tugs at the first one until her nipple’s horribly sore and raw, and her mewling turns into whimpers and high-pitched whines. Then he kisses the tip of her ear and murmurs, “Good girl.”

Bilbo burns with mingled pride and shame. Beorn’s hand switches seamlessly to the other breasts, giving it the same treatment. Every once in a while, he squeezes a jet out of her so firmly that the milk splashes back up, covering her hanging tits in little flecks of white. He tugs and tugs and massages her chest, until the second nipple’s just as sore, and then Beorn soothes over both of them, while Bilbo’s arms tremble to hold her up. Beorn’s hand keeps smoothing over her, and she can’t help but wonder if he’s going to milk her again, maybe squeeze both at a time, or each at a slightly different rhythm. Instead, he just seems to be wringing her out.

And Bilbo’s still whimpering over it, pushing back to hump herself on his cock, dripping between her legs. When Beorn tugs the bucket out from under her and pushes it off to the side, she’s worried it’s all over and he’s going to send her back to the barn, leaking, trembling, and very much wanting. Yet Beorn’s hand runs thoughtfully down her body, smoothing over her stomach. He thrusts two fingers between her legs, and it takes up the whole space, jammed tightly against her thighs. She can feel herself making his fingers moist, and he sighs, “It’s a pity you’re too small to mate with. You would give excellent young.” Bilbo whines, still wanting to try something. If there’s one thing her dwarves have taught her, it’s that there’s more than one way to indulge.

Beorn, apparently, agrees. One of his hands disappears, and she can hear fabric rustling, the length of his cock disappearing from her back.

It’s thrust beneath her a second later, and Bilbo squeals in shock, dropping her head to peer down her body. Beorn’s massive cock juts out between her legs, lifting all the way up her stomach, thick and impossibly long, meaty and veined and the same dark colour as the rest of him, tinged a lighter pink near the tip. For a long moment, she just stares at it, overwhelmed at the sheer size, and then he drapes over her, mounting her like a dog.
He thrusts against her a second later, letting the blunt tip smear over her stomach and the shaft rub along her body. His huge balls hang against the back of her thighs, his own legs squeezing hers around him. He’s completely hard, and it feels strong as a muscle, something she could drape over and ride. Instead, she tries desperately to stay on all fours while Beorn starts to hump her. Each spasm of his hips drives her forward, rubbing against her pussy. That, combined with the sheer sight of it and the pleasure of having her breasts so expertly used, makes her dizzy. Bilbo does nothing but pant and moan while Beorn dry humps her over and over, casting her entire body in heat and shadow. His thrusts are hard and fast, but they aren’t merciless. She can feel him holding back from crushing her. It’s an intoxicating feeling, made all the better when his blunt teeth scrape along her shoulder. She expects to be bitten ferociously, but he only nips at her and growls, thrusting against her body like she was made to please.

And then, when Bilbo’s shaking all over and sure she can’t stay up any more, his arm loops back around her stomach. He pulls her back, dragging her right into the air, and he sits down with her falling against him. Bilbo’s held in his lap, nestled above his huge cock. While her arms automatically reach back, scrabbling for purchase at his shoulders and hair, her hips go wild, shuddering and grinding and stabbing the air. He bounces her in shallow, easy movements, but Bilbo does most of the work. Just looking at his proud dick makes her impossibly wet, but the position makes it all the more fun. Bilbo rides him so hard that she orgasms all at once, without any warning, suddenly screaming and arching back, stiffening before nearly convulsing. The bliss washes over her, and she just keeps going, unable to stop. She keeps bouncing on him, squeezing her thighs around him and rubbing her dripping hole against him, leaving him slick with her juices. Beorn groans behind her. His voice is hoarse and growling, beautiful and predatory at once. Bilbo rides him right through it, so turned on that she’s not sure she could ever stop.

And then, just when she thinks she’s going to come a second time, he rocks his hips almost violently into her, and the tip of his cock bursts. It sprays a number of sticky white jets into the air, landing all over her, all the way up her body, between her breasts and even around her face. She closes her eyes in time, but she can’t close her mouth, and she catches a heaping glob on her tongue, swallowing a second later and moaning at how delicious it is. It’s bizarrely sweet, like the honey he serves, and Bilbo quickly opens her mouth again in the hopes of catching more.

Beorn’s roar is deafening. He comes for an absurdly long time, still thrusting into her and painting her tiny body, coating her in his seed so completely that she could bathe in it, if she had a basin to sit in. Instead, she catches everything she can on her skin and mourns the stray drops that hit the ground instead. By the time he finally finishes, Bilbo’s drenched in it, and she can’t stop shoving bits of it into her mouth, sucking off her fingers. She whines when he stops spraying her, but she can feel his heavy breathing and knows he’s done.

He picks her carefully up all the same, setting her down on the ground. His seed drips down her stomach and around her thighs, pooling beneath her, but it’s a puddle Bilbo doesn’t at all mind sitting in. She humps it shamelessly while she looks up at him. She’s already fantasizing what it would be like if Gandalf had brought her as a wife in offering, and she stayed behind to drink from his cock and let him milk her everyday. She might not even mind sharing her milk with his dogs, so long as he let her ride him afterwards.

Beorn takes a few minutes to sit in the grass. He’s breathing deeply, looking intensely satisfied and satiated, and he gives her a warm smile. Then he climbs to his feet, and when she whimpers, he turns to wipe the tip of his cock across her cheek, smearing it all over again. Bilbo mews happily, even as he leaves her to fetch the bucket. He climbs out of his trousers on the way, not bothering to cover up, and she admires his firm ass when he bends down to scoop the bucket up.

On the way back, he tells her, “Thank you for the milk. You and yours are free to stay as long as you
wish, and I will be happy to give you any supplies and advice I can.” She can’t do more than weakly
smile up at him, equally as grateful, and he turns off, headed back towards the house. She watches
him go, but can’t move much beyond that. She’s exhausted.

She’s covered. One of the buckets left has water in it, and Bilbo assumes it’s alright to use, so she
does move herself closer, splashing some of the water on her skin to wash away what she can’t eat.
Frankly, she’d be content to fall asleep right here, but she knows there are hungry animals watching,
and she doesn’t want all the hay to glue to her in the night.

It’s no use. By the time Bilbo slips back into the barn, she’s still horny and sticky and leaking from
both her breasts and pussy. She doesn’t bother to put her clothes back on, instead taking the bundle
in her arms and hoping that Gandalf’s still asleep in the house and not in the barn. She half expects
the dwarves to all be sleeping, but instead, they’re sitting about in a circle, talking amongst
themselves. They stop as soon as they see Bilbo, and she smiles sheepishly, wandering over.

Thorin’s sitting at the head, with ample space on either side of him, and Bilbo settles down close
enough that their legs touch. Most of the dwarves have stripped down to their long underwear, but
she’s still dreadfully under dressed, and she’s suddenly very aware of just how much of Beorn’s seed
is still spread over her, and the little white spots that slip down her breasts where her nipples have
leaked. They’re starting to feel heavy, full and swollen, almost painful. The weight of her breasts
isn’t something she usually notices, not when wearing her bra anyway, but there’s something
different about this, and even though she just gave Beorn a full load, she thinks she might need to be
milked again. She can only hope that feeling doesn’t last throughout their journey, though, when she
really thinks about it, it might help keep her dwarves fed healthily.

The dwarves all look at her, their conversation dying off immediately, and while she shuffles under
their intense gaze, Thorin asks, “Did he hurt you?” Thorin’s voice is almost a growl, protective and
fierce. Bilbo shakes her head immediately.

That’s the easy part. What’s harder is trying to explain, and she mumbles, “He, ah... he... used some
of his magic on me, I think. Or... coaxed my own out, or... something...” She doesn’t really know.
It’s an embarrassing thing to explain, but of course she’ll have to sooner or later, and she wants to
now. Even though her nipples are still sore, she feels hot and distinctly like she needs using up.
Dropping her head, she runs her own hands around the slopes of her breasts, deliberately not looking
at the others. “I... um... should be... milked.” The last word she nearly whispers, though she quickly
adds, “I’m not with child. I just. I’m very... full.”

There’s a stunned silence that follows, broken first by Nori shouting, “I volunteer!”

“Don’t be daft,” Dwalin tells him instantly, glaring at Nori before he turns to Thorin, declaring with
an almost proud note to his voice, “Our king should get the first drink. ...Assuming that’s what she’s
offering.”

Bilbo nods, not able to voice her agreement or look up at Thorin. Until his hand lands on her
shoulder, anyway. It slips up her throat, dipping beneath her chin, and she lifts her face to look at
him. The ferocity is still there, but now she can see lust too, warring with restraint. He asks clearly,
“Is that what you’re offering, Bilbo?”

Bilbo moans, “Yes.” Thorin looks down at her cleavage, his tongue slowly tracing his lips.

But in the end he sighs, and he pulls back. “Perhaps I will indulge later, if you’re still offering. But I
don’t think I should in front of all the others.” She might’ve guessed as much, if she weren’t feeling
so foggy-headed. She understands, but she still feels a tinge of disappointment. She turns her face
back to the circle of dwarves, hopeful that someone else will jump in.

Bofur says, eyeing her up and down, “If she came back like this, I think she’s definitely offering that and more.” Bilbo squirms, which is as much as an admission. As much as she appreciates Thorin being protective, if he won’t taste her, she hopes someone will.

Thorin must agree, because he turns to the two princes on his other side, suggesting, “Perhaps my heirs?”

Bilbo sheepishly nods. She’s barely finished bobbing her head when the two of them scramble up, practically lunging across the circle. She’s knocked right onto her back, hitting the wood and scattered hay, while Fíli and Kíli tackle her from either side. She gets a look at two wide smirks before their mouths latch onto her nipples, their faces digging into her chest at once. Their beards and mustaches tickle, but that sensation is quickly overcome by the way they suck at her. Bilbo gasps as both men drink from her at once, sucking her nipples hard and bobbing against her breasts, their hands smoothing over her stomach and sides. She doesn’t know what to do with her hands or who to look at, and at first she just lies there and moans, loving the wetness of their mouths and the rush of it all.

Then she feels something press between her legs, and she looks down between Fíli and Kíli’s busy heads to see Nori’s cock pulled out of his pants, the tip of it running up and down her moist slit. Bilbo whimpers, bucking shallowly into him. The movement rocks her against the men at her chest, and Kíli’s teeth graze her a little too hard. She winces and whines, though he’s quick to recover, careful again, and it makes her more cautious with the way she bucks her hips into Nori, who seems quite content to tease her lips and clit.

She can hear the dwarves shuffling all around her, and she sees Bombur walking around them, so she isn’t particularly surprised when he sits down near her face. He shuffles up and cups her chin, and helping to tilt and guide her to his fat cock as he takes it out of his underwear. Bilbo does her best to lick at it, lapping away amidst all the pleasure everywhere else, but she can’t run on much more than instinct. It’s completely overwhelming, having so much going on at once, but she adores every minute of it.

By the end of the night, she’s taken several more loads across her skin, had several more rounds and tasted or fed most of the dwarves. She’s completely covered in sweat and spit and cum, and even flecks of milk, and she winds up too exhausted to move at all, heavy and dizzy and utterly spent. Dori, the last to take her, scoops her up into his arms after it all. She feels bad to sully his clothes, but he says not to worry; they’ll bath again before they go. She’s not sure she wants to wash it all away right now, although she knows she’ll likely regret it in the morning.

Dori lays her down between Dwalin and Thorin, at Thorin’s instruction. Balin, on Thorin’s other side, insists they let her sleep. In the darkness and quiet of the barn, Bilbo does roll close to Thorin and whisper, “I can still suck you off, if you like.”

But he pets her hair and tells her, fond and impressed, “Sleep, Bilbo.”

So she obeys, stretched out along his side.

Bilbo, at first, is very uncomfortable in the morning. Her skin is crusty, the stench is incredibly pungent, and her nipples and throat are still sore. On top of that, she’s cold, lying completely naked as she is, until she realizes that she’s facing Thorin. She can hear moaning and rustling behind her, but Thorin’s still fast asleep. For a moment, she just watches him breathe so peacefully, hopefully having pleasant dreams. He’s got his cloak bunched up like a pillow and his hair a mess over it, his
arms loose in the hay. When Bilbo can’t take the shivering anymore, she nestles in against him and wraps his arms around her, careful to not wake him up. That makes her much warmer, and she rolls to face the other way.

It gives her a nice view of Dwalin draped over Ori, supporting her on all fours, with one arm around her stomach and the other hand over her mouth. Ori’s face is screwed up in pleasure, her trousers pushed down and her new knit sweater rolled out of the way, her thighs bare as she takes Dwalin’s cock. They’re beautiful together. They’re focused on each other and don’t bother to look at her, but she imagines they won’t mind when they realize; after all, they watched her last night, and they are choosing to do this right out in the open, next to their king and with a horde of other dwarves in the room.

By the time Ori’s eyes slide to Bilbo, she looks almost done. Dwalin’s thrusts have increased since they started, and he has his face buried in her hair, his hand slipping off her mouth to knead her chest through the sweater. Bilbo smiles at Ori’s face and lets her eyes drift down the rest of Ori’s body, to where Dwalin’s thick cock is sliding in and out of her. There’s something strange about the position, and after watching a few thrusts, she realizes why. He isn’t thrusting into Ori’s vagina, but her ass.

Bilbo should probably let it be. It’s none of her business, really, but she’s curious, and by this point she’s so immersed in sex that her mouth opens before she can stop it. She keeps her voice low so as not to wake Thorin, and she asks, “Ori, does that hurt?”

“Ahh, no—” Ori moans, also quiet and shaking her head. She ducks it a moment later, only to shove her hips back against Dwalin’s crotch, toss her head against his shoulder and gasp, “Dwalin’s wonderful.” Bilbo looks up at Dwalin, expecting him to smirk with the praise.

Instead, he hisses, gritting his teeth and looking like he wants to howl. His hips give Ori a few final slaps, her plush rear jiggling with each one, and then he arches forward to grind into her. Ori makes a keening noise, and Bilbo wonders if she’s following along, and what it must feel like to have Dwalin spill inside her ass.

A moment later, the two of them collapse in the hay, Dwalin heavy atop her. He kisses the top of her head before he looks over to murmur, “Good morning, Bilbo.”

Bilbo whispers, “Morning.” With them go all the sounds, aside from the occasional loud snore; the rest of the dwarves must all be asleep. As Dwalin’s hands continue to rub at Ori’s chest beneath her, Bilbo idly says, “You know, Ori, Beorn could probably give you milk, too.”

Ori looks thoughtful for a moment, but then she says, “No, I think that’s alright. Mine are much smaller than yours, anyway.” After another short pause, she adds, “And I think I’ll go back to being a man again.”

Bilbo says, “Alright,” and makes a mental note of it. Dwalin doesn’t appear to have any reaction to the statement. He stays inside Ori’s body, still holding on, and looks as though he has no intention of moving. Ori doesn’t protest.

Bilbo watches them a little longer, then rolls back into Thorin’s chest, mostly for the warmth. She also mentally runs through the other dwarves, wondering if perhaps she could get Óin to play with her rear again, or offer Fíli and Kíli a morning drink, or even wander outside and see if she can ride Beorn’s cock in the light of day.

Instead, she hears footsteps at the mouth of the barn, and she looks up before she remembers she’s naked. Fortunately, Gandalf takes only one look at the mass of sullied dwarves before declaring loud enough to wake even Óin, “I’ll wait outside!”
They all eat breakfast around the table in Beorn’s house, though Beorn himself is conspicuously absent. Gandalf informs them that he’s been off with the bears, checking in on things. The goblins and wargs have been up to suspicious, troubling matters late, though he won’t tell them much more. Balin and Glóin are particularly interested in more details, but Bilbo’s frankly glad not to talk about such things. She’d much rather focus on the fresh bread and creamy honey, and the juicy, exotic berries. They’ve all changed back into their clothes, after several ponies helpfully brought them buckets of water to wash with, and now Bilbo’s only concern is keeping her white blouse clean amidst the array of yummy foods.

They’re almost finished when Beorn ducks through the door, his footsteps heavy but his demeanor light. He takes his seat at the empty head of the table, and the dwarves stop their conversations to look up at him, except for Bombur, who continues steadily eating, and Dori, who continues sipping away at herbal tea. With a friendlier smile than yesterday, Beorn says, “So here you all are still!” Glancing down at Bilbo, he adds just to her, “Your little bunny is getting nice and fat on my breakfast, I see.” Bilbo blushes and thinks of apologizing, but then he claps his giant hand over her shoulder and chuckles, “Have some more!”

So Bilbo, not wanting to be impolite and rather enjoying growing nice and fat, reaches for a biscuit and sets in to nibble at it. She can see the confusion on some of the dwarves’ faces at Beorn’s changed attitude, but it’s Bofur that asks, “And what’ve you been up to this fine morning?” Even though they heard Gandalf’s explanation, surely being with bears and goblins and wargs can’t be so pleasant as this.

And it wasn’t just that. “I’ve been to the mountains,” Beorn answers. “I’ve seen the cindered trees at the bottom from the fire you spoke of and even had such luck as to catch a goblin myself! They seem to be amassing an army, or at least they like to boast they are, if only to catch the dwarves that eluded them and slew their king. It was a very good story, but I like it much more now that I know it’s true. Living at the edge of Mirkwood, you can’t just take anyone’s word for anything. As it is, I hurried home as fast as I could to check that you were all safe. I shall think more kindly of dwarves after this. Killed the Great Goblin indeed!” he shakes his head at the end, looking thoroughly amused. Whatever worry Bilbo might have over goblins and wargs dissipates with his good humour, and when she looks back on it all, escaping the goblin halls was rather impressive.

“Then you would be so kind as to help us?” Gandalf asks from the other end of the table. “Mostly, it is advice we need. Mirkwood has seen many seasons since I last walked through.”

“There are many things to tell you of Mirkwood, but I will tell you the most important right now. No matter what happens, you must stay on the path. Don’t leave for any reason, lest you never find it again.” Here, Beorn pauses to look at Thorin, as though to make sure his point is hitting home. Thorin nods respectively, and Beorn continues, “Beyond that, be wise with your food; there is nothing suitable to eat inside, and dangers lurk around every branch. Even the water can’t be trusted. There is one stream that crosses the path with black water, and you mustn’t touch it, for I have heard that it carries a great enchantment with it. I will send you with all the food you can carry, but starvation may be the least of your troubles.”

That all sound quite terrible to Bilbo, but the dwarves nod solemnly, unfazed by the warnings. Thorin says for them, “That is most generous of you. Thank you.” Bilbo nods in agreement, looking forward to at least having more of Beorn’s delicious food.

Yet it isn’t enough for Gandalf, who asks tentatively, “And is there any chance of rides? A few ponies and a horse for myself would be very much appreciated.” Beorn frowns at this, and Bilbo understands why; his ponies and horses aren’t like any others, and Gandalf is, in a strange way,
asking Beorn to risk his friends.

But after a moment or two of stroking his thick beard, Beorn looks down at Bilbo and says slowly, “Perhaps we could negotiate.” The look in his eye tells her exactly what he means, especially when his gaze lower into her cleavage. Her breasts feel as heavy as they did last night, though she can’t be sure if it’s only because of the pull of him or not. For all she knows, his spell only makes her fertile for him.

It would be nice, she thinks, to be able to give her dwarves milk in the midst of Mirkwood, especially now that they know they’ll have little else. She can only hope it lasts so long, and she nods for just Beorn to see. They’ll have to discus it later.

For now, they dissolve back into light, friendly talk, and when Gandalf informs them they’ll have to leave tomorrow, Bilbo isn’t the only one disappointed.

They thank Beorn most heartily, bowing and promising to always remember him, and he repeats his advice and packs up as much food as they can carry. He lends them each a pony to ride, though only up to the edge of Mirkwood. They were only with him for a short time, but Bilbo’s still sad when they leave, and she gives him a hug that doesn’t reach much higher than his hip. He pats her all the same. He tells her they’ll meet again, but there’s no way of really knowing that.

The ride to Mirkwood isn’t a long one, not with what Bilbo’s used to by now. She spends most of it with Bifur, because after spending herself for Beorn several more times, she’s exhausted, and Bifur was the first to come to her when they were saddling the ponies. They don’t talk on the ride, because Bifur never really talks, but it’s pleasant all the same and gives her a chance to relax against the soft scruff of his full beard. Twice, other dwarves try to cut in, but Bifur grumbles and gestures them away, and Bilbo chuckles, shrugs, and stays where she is. Even with the perils of Mirkwood ahead, it’s hard to be anything but pleased when her stomach’s full of bread and honey and she has a strong dwarf around her.

That dissipates somewhat when they finally come in sight of Mirkwood. There’s still plenty of land between, littered with Beorn’s animals, and more wild creatures the further they go, such as herds of red deer and harts resting in the grass. The pleasant sight of them is incongruous with the boughs of Mirkwood, which look ominous even from a distance. Bilbo can tell immediately that this is the forest they’re coming to, and not just any old smattering of trees. They’re all crowded together, ancient and matted, gnarled and particularly dark, with ivy growing all about them. Even the weeds along the ground look wilted, and Bilbo can hear the trepidation of Bifur’s voice behind her whenever xe grunts.

But far worse than that is the news they receive at the foot of the forest. While they’re unloading the ponies, ready to send them back, Gandalf stays up on his borrowed horse and informs them, “I have business in the south, and I am afraid I must be leaving you.”

Of course, all the dwarves fuss at this, though Bilbo’s caught in shock, staring up at her old friend. She hadn’t thought about him leaving at all, and though he’d murmured here and there about such things, she’d never taken it too seriously. He was never mentioned in the dwarves’ plans of Erebor, but she’d just somehow assumed that he’d be traveling with them through all of it, and it’s a nasty surprise to find out that he isn’t. Gandalf looks at all of them with fondness, but Bilbo is the one he rides his horse right up to, and he looks down at her to smile and say, “Don’t look so sad, Bilbo. I very much doubt this is the last we’ll see of one another, and you’re in very good hands.” She is, but that doesn’t make it any better.

“Couldn’t you just come a little longer?” Fíli asks, coming to Bilbo’s side.
“How are we supposed to make it without a wizard?” Glóin grumbles.

“Perhaps if we went around with you,” Dori starts, but Gandalf waves his hand.

“No, no. You have your quest and I have mine. I’ve taken you quite as far as I can, but this was always your adventure. Going through Mirkwood is simply the only way for you, and I must follow the way for me, though I wish you the absolute best of luck.”

The dwarves still don’t take well to this, and they all start jumping in with objections at once. As the numbing shock slips aside, memories creep in, and Bilbo thinks especially of how Gandalf introduced her all to this and how very much she owes him for it. Twice now, he’s helped her find herself, and the thought of losing that good friend makes her eyes water around the edges, even though she went so many years of her life perfectly fine without him. Goodbyes are always difficult.

But Gandalf is firm about his. He reaches down to shake Bilbo’s hand, and then he nods to Thorin, who’s deathly solemn. He tells them all, “Be good. Take care of yourselves. Think of the treasure at the end, and don’t worry about the forest and the dragon, at least not until morning. Although for goodness’ sake, remember to stay on the path!”

And then he flicks his reins, and his horse whinnies and bucks and begins to trot off. Bilbo watches him go with wet cheeks and tries hard not to sniffle. Her handkerchiefs, what few are left, are all packed away, so it won’t do any good to cry.

When she turns back to the dwarves, Balin comes up to hug her. He envelops her in a great warm hug, pulling her tight against his chest. His beard isn’t quite so long as Gandalf’s, and it’s whiter, but it’s enough to make her think of the wizard and laugh. She hugs him back, until Thorin calls them all together and declares, “On we go!”
A/N: I’m heavily condensing the spider section because I don’t like them, and I’m not making Bombur lose his memory because it’s too cruel. Trigger warning for mild Fili/Kili incest in the second scene and lactation in the third.

From the beginning, the forest is unpleasant. The path is thin and winding so that they have to walk in single file, weaving through trees and matted bushes and ducking low-hanging vines. All of the plants look extraordinarily old. The overhang is thick and heavy, and Bilbo quickly learns not to look up, because it makes her worry that the roof is going to fall in on her, crushing her under masses of dead branches and leaves.

Occasionally, a beam of sun filters down, but those grow rarer the longer they walk. It seems darker than it should be, ridiculously dark, as though they’re in the dead of night all the time. In some ways, Mirkwood is more oppressive than even the halls of the goblins: at least those paths were clear and torches lined the walls.

Worse still are the noises. Strange grunting and rustling pokes up ever now and again, always out of sight and never anything Bilbo can recognize. The dwarves seem just as unsettled, and they flock tightly together. Bilbo’s never left alone, and more than once she clings to whichever dwarf is at her side, more for emotional support than anything. It’s a bitter, lonely sort of place with no cheer at all.

Eventually, Bilbo’s eyes adjust to the dimness of it all, and then she can make out black squirrels here and there. But where the louder noises are coming from, she has no idea. Though they don’t come across any food, fruits, vegetables, or even nuts, there are other things that occasionally block the path and they have to either clear it out or dare to walk around. The nastiest of these obstacles are the spider webs. They’re great, hulking things, incredibly thick and sticky. Bilbo makes the mistake of tweaking one once, and it takes Thorin’s sword and Óin’s ointment to cut her free and wet the skin enough to pull the remnants off. She doesn’t make that mistake again.

Nights are more awful than the days. The forest becomes pitch black, truly black, so dark that she can’t even see her hand when she holds it in front of her face. They always huddle together, and Bilbo tends to spend her time awake burrowing into their beards and trying not to succumb too much to fright, while her dwarves hold onto her like another pillow. She expects the ones she isn’t with are doing the same, and several times she sees other dwarves wrap their fingers through Bombur’s braid, just for a reassuring line to keep them together. Once, she snuggles onto one of the sides of Bofur’s hat, only to wake up in the morning to the horror of it being empty, him having rolled over into Nori in his sleep. From then on, she always sleeps sandwiched between two dwarves at once, just in case she wakes up in the middle of the night and one’s repositioned away from her. She used to be able to sleep alone quite well, but then, she never knew darkness quite this complete.

They can’t start fires. When they do, huge, bat-like moths are drawn to them, the bats themselves even more enormous; the creatures flap about their heads to cover their faces, and it isn’t worth the trouble. Rations run low quickly, because they never come across anything to replenish them. They try to keep moving, because whenever they stop too long, eyes peak out of the shadows, big, iridescent, bulging things, like insects but far too large. It’s disconcerting in the extreme.
As they march on, the days blend together in a fugue of depression, and sometimes Thorin’s will is the only thing that keeps them moving. The forest seems to close in on them, and they hate it.

On the one night where they do find a spot along the path with just a sliver of moonlight filtering through the trees, it’s enough to make Bilbo grateful. The others are still miserable, and Bilbo doesn’t blame them, but she deliberately sits right in the center of it as they share what meager rations they have and settle down for the night.

Óin asks across Bilbo, “Bofur, how about a song?” Some of the other dwarves, their heads having been hung, look hopefully over, but Bofur just shakes his head and shrugs. The darkness is still too complete to see much of his expression, but his body language is plain enough.

“I’m not feeling it.”

No one is. They go back to nibbling at bits of food, and Bilbo lets her mind wander back to Beorn’s, where they had great vats of honey to run their biscuits through. She’s done her food before she’s done the daydream, and without another word, the dwarves start to shuffle down, not bothering to untie their packs and just stretching out across the dirt, dead leaves, and the thick roots of trees. Bilbo shuffles back a few spaces so she can sit between Fíli and Kíli, but she doesn’t dare go far from the light. She thinks they might smile at her on her approach, but it’s difficult to tell.

No one’s been in the mood for sex in the forest. She hasn’t been either, but it’s one of those things she really misses, because for so long, it’s been such a common part of the quest. She misses the warmth and the comfort of it, and most of all, the connection. The forest would be less distressing, she thinks, if her bond with her makeshift mates was strong as it usually is, but like their rations and spirits, its dwindling.

Fíli and Kíli are, at least, the youngest, and the most resilient. As they lie down, they sidle tightly into her, so close that she has to hold her arms over her chest to keep them out of the way. It’s cold in the forest, not freezing but still unpleasant, and at least their combined body heat helps with that. When she runs her bare feet down their legs, they each hook one over her like a blanket, and she reaches to find their arms, bringing those across her too. With their heads pillowed on their packs, Fíli drapes his cloak over them, large enough to cover all three when they squish together. For a long while, they lie together in the dark, while the other dwarves slip off around them. There’s something about Bombur’s heavy snoring that Bilbo finds calming, but she’s sure more dwarves are awake than not.

Kíli adjusts his position first. He nuzzles his face against hers, his stubble running along her bare cheek, his hand smoothing over her chest. At first, she thinks he might squeeze one of her breasts and start something, but he only reaches across so that his elbow is along her cleavage and his hand is pressed between her shoulder and Fíli’s chest. Then Fíli moves in a similar way, reaching across to his brother, with the little circlets of his braids tickling her face.

She wants to tell them to cheer up. She wants to ask them to cheer her up, but she’s not sure it’s something they could do, so she only sighs and runs her fingers idly over their thick sleeves.

Fíli kisses her cheek. She stiffens at it, surprised, and Kíli’s tongue suddenly laves over her jaw. With so little light to see by, her other senses burrow deeper in, each of their subtle touches amply magnified. Their smells is particularly strong, having had nowhere to bathe, and the stench of it should probably turn her off, but instead just lures her in like an animal. Each of the dwarves have their own unique smell, but Fíli and Kíli’s are very similar and mingle well together, like how everything of theirs is a compliment to the other. They both kiss her in tandem, nipping lightly at her face and licking small stripes along her throat, their noses sometimes digging into her and sometimes each other’s. With the three of them starting to breathe heavier, she loses track of which panting
belongs to whom.

When Fíli’s hand gently draws her wrists away from her chest, laying them across her lap instead, Kíli’s broad palm smoothes across her breasts, and Bilbo whispers, “Are you trying to cheer me up?”

Kíli murmurs, “I’m trying to cheer Fíli up,” and he tugs at her ear with his teeth. She tilts away from him to gasp. Fíli chuckles, meeting her mouth as it comes towards him for a chaste, sweet kiss. When he’s finished, he nudges her back to Kíli, and she passes the kiss on.

“It’s easier to sleep after cuddling,” Fíli explains. Bilbo thinks she understands. All of their touches are sweet and soft, but all valuable and warm, and it sets her heart at ease. Even the way Kíli massages her breasts isn’t hyper sexual like she’s used to, more just exploratory, fanning the flames of that bond she wanted back. She can’t help but wonder if, while she’s off each night snuggling with dwarves, the princes are doing the same thing. It’s a very attractive mental image, no matter which way it goes. When she thinks of the two of them resting on each of Thorin’s arms, it makes her heart swell: how cute their family is together. By the same token, picturing Nori with his hands full of mischievous princes is delectable for a whole other reason. And then, of course, there is the possibility that they aren’t speaking of having another dwarf between them at all.

But that feels very naughty, and Bilbo tries not to linger too long on it, however tempting.

Yet Kíli’s the one that suggests, “Want to see something special, Bilbo?”

“Maybe a show would make you feel better,” Fíli muses. Their voices are so soft and close to her ears that she doubts anyone else could hear. Certainly, no one else could see them. She can barely see their silhouettes as it is, and she’s so close she’s touching them.

She wishes they’d offered this to her in the full moonlight of the Last Homely House, or the open air of the eagles’ eyrie, but better late than never. She murmurs, having some inkling of the outcome, “I’d be honoured if you’d put on a show for me.”

They both kiss her at once, chaste but firm on either cheek, and Bilbo’s eyes flutter closed, wanting to bask in just that moment. Perhaps the forest isn’t so bad after all.

She opens her eyes again as soon as they stop. It’s a good thing, too, or she might’ve missed the way they shift over her, heads tilting to fit as one, lips opening as they connect. They block out the last of the light, but it slithers around their edges to show their shape, and she can hear the subtle press of their mouths. Fíli and Kíli share a long, lingering kiss, right before her eyes. Bilbo’s breath holds, and Kíli turns to let Fíli’s mouth trail along his cheek, his eyes closing and his chin tilting in to give his brother more room to touch. They turn in for another, faster kiss, just as delicate and beautiful.

When they part and slither back down her body, she wants to tell them no, she wants to see more of that special bond. But she doesn’t know if it was just a show for her, or if their feelings have truly crossed that line. Dwarves are open things, and Fíli and Kíli are young and impish at best. She doesn’t want to break the magic by asking about their games.

They revert to her so easily. Their mouths return to either side of her face, and Bilbo shivers and surrenders to it. They touch her all over, their hands now petting her body, stroking her sides and gently kneading her breasts, tracing down the curve of her stomach and smoothing over her thighs, dragging back up her arms and hooking over her shoulders. Bilbo can’t keep track of it all. She doesn’t touch them back. There are too many clothes in the way, and she’s paralyzed in the fragility of their warmth amidst the cold. She enjoys their ministrations right until her body unwinds completely, and her mind drifts off to sleep.
She has pleasant dreams.

But in the morning, they’re all woken up to move, and the world is back to a nightmare.

There are still many more days after that. As the supplies dwindle, the water’s worst of all. Everyone’s famished, and it’s Glóin that first suggests, “We’ll have to use Bilbo.”

For one wild moment, crazed with the mind-numbing dread of Mirkwood, Bilbo thinks they mean to eat her. She turns to tell Glóin that she isn’t that tired—she can still fight him off—and she finds his gaze heavy on her chest. From just behind her, Bombur reaches around her stomach. He pulls her flat up against him, his thick chin bearing down over her shoulder. She can feel his eyes devouring her cleavage, and he mutters, “They look swollen enough.”

Honestly, Bilbo hadn’t thought much of her milk since coming into the forest, never having been in the mood to strip and feed the others, but now they’ve all stopped and come to look at her, some frowning in consideration and others looking famished. Just as thirsty as them, Bilbo easily decides it worth trying, because, assuming it will even work, if they get her milk, maybe she can get their water. So she turns around in Bombur’s arm, and she runs her finger along her neckline, wondering how far the shirt will stretch. It’s a bit too cold to strip.

The next thing she knows, she’s being scooped up. She’s pulled back a few steps, long arms around her middle, and she’s pulled down, falling into someone’s lap. She lifts her head up to see Thorin looking down at her, still protectively clutching her stomach. In amidst the tattered roots of a tall, sagging tree, Thorin arranges her in his lap, making sure she’s seated comfortably and kept warm. Sitting on Thorin’s thighs is a good deal better than the ground, and Bilbo squirms into place, rubbing along him until the friction has her warm enough to pull off her shirt. Her bra follows a moment later, and it is, in some ways, a relief to be that free again. With the night as disturbing as it is in Mirkwood, she hasn’t ever taken her bra off to sleep, like she usually preferred to back at home. She takes a moment to soak that freedom in.

And then, before she has the chance to say anything else, Bifur’s knelt down in front of her. Xe never took part in drinking from her before, but evidently, xe was paying enough attention. There’s nothing sexual about the way xe scoops up Bilbo’s left breast in one hand and lifts it to hir mouth. It’s just pure thirst, and when Bifur locks onto Bilbo’s nipple and sucks, xe does it hard. Bilbo has to muffle a gasp as the milk rushes out of her. It’s as loose and easy as it was on Beorn’s farm, and Bilbo realizes at the sudden sensation just how full her breasts have been. All of her body’s been sore, but now she understands that this was a specific ache, and each suck Bifur takes seems to relieve it somewhat. She threads her fingers in hir patchwork hair as xe drinks from her, cradling hir head. When xe’s done, xe pulls away with a wet pop and grunts in gratitude. Bilbo nods, and Bifur stands up, licking hir lips and looking pleasantly satisfied.

Bombur kneels down in hir place, taking the other breast. His fat hands are wonderfully hot against her skin, and he puff’s his breath over her before he laps his tongue over her nipple. They’re already pebbled from the cold, but Bombur gives her a few licks and looks up at her face, as though measuring her interest—she wonders, not for the first time, if his wife fed him regularly during her time with their children. If Bilbo was Bombur’s wife, she thinks she’d feed him whenever she could.

There’s a tenderness to the way he wraps his lips around her nub. He sucks carefully, drawing out just a bit at a time, and Bilbo relaxes back against Thorin while he sucks, enjoying the tickle of his mustache around her. He squeezes her a bit as he sucks, appreciative and fun. She’d probably let him drink from her as long as he wanted, except that Thorin warns over her shoulder, “Bombur, leave some for the others.”
Bombur looks disappointed, but he pulls off all the same. He leans in to peck her cheek after, his braid draping over her bare chest, and she shivers and doesn’t want him to go.

But he does, and Óin and Glóin arrive instead. Both her nipples are glossy wet with spit, but neither of them seem to have any misgivings about taking her in their mouths all the same. They both suck her in and suckle just as hard as Bifur did, merciless as they always are, nuzzling into her chest like competing to drink the most of her. Their thick beards scratch along her stomach, the metal ringlets of Glóin’s beard cold against her and the bundled braids of Óin’s beard digging in. They make her nipples sore too quickly, and she whimpers. She doesn’t have the right words, but Thorin says for her, “Gently.” Glóin grunts and eases up a little, Óin more so. They suck a little longer. By the time they pull off, Bilbo’s over-sensitive nipples are tingling, shimmering a rosy pink in the dim light. Thorin kisses her cheek like a thank-you for all of them, asking quietly, “Are you able to give more?”

Bilbo nods. She thinks it might get painful with much more, but she wants to help, and she still does feel the heaviness and ache of another load. So she lets Dori and Ori come towards her. As Dori settles in to the side and Ori squeezes in between Thorin’s spread legs, Ori mumbles, “Maybe, for the sake of the others, I should’ve asked him to do it to me too.” Dori looks over at him as though scandalized, but Ori ignores the look and latches onto Bilbo’s tit, his tongue gently curling around her nipple. He drinks from her with care, while Dori settles in on the other side. Bilbo wouldn’t have minded sharing with Ori, but then, there is something she likes about being the one special one that can do this for all of them. And this way, they don’t have to deal with Dori fussing over his little sibling whenever they want a drink.

Ori, being quicker, finishes with a satisfied mewl and a little tongue tracing his lips. But the breast in Dori’s mouth dries up before he finishes; Bilbo can feel the milk coming more strained, only drips and drabs instead of a steady flow. She still feels like there’s plenty left in her, her breasts being as large as they are, but she’s strained and Dori can’t seem to get at it. When he settles back, he informs the others, “I don’t think she’ll have enough for all of us...”

“That’s because she’s not in the mood,” Balin says simply, standing next to Thorin and Bilbo. She looks up at him curiously, and with a thoughtful expression on his face, he continues, “I think, perhaps, that this marvel is tied into her hormones and sex drive. I could be wrong, of course, but I think it should come easier if she’s warmed up a bit.”

“So let’s warm her up,” Bofur pipes in, already in line. For the first time since entering Mirkwood, he looks excited. She can’t be sure if it’s over the prospect of fresh milk or warming Bilbo up, but she hopes it’s over her. Before Thorin or one of the more protective dwarves interjects, Bilbo reaches out her arms, bidding Bofur forward, and he grins and gets to his knees.

Grabbing her by her waist, he pulls her out of Thorin’s lap and into his, declaring, “The rest of us need some cheering up, anyway.” Bilbo couldn’t agree more. She didn’t think they stood a chance of any feelings in this forest, but if there’s one person who can put on a spirited show, it’s Bofur. He proves as much when he kisses her, hard and fast and with his tongue pointedly drawing along the seam of her lips, like he’s determined to make this fun.

Of course, Bilbo opens right up for him. She lifts her arms to his shoulders, wrapping around them, and her breasts flatten into the coarse fabric of his coat while his hands run up and down her spine. At first, it’s just strokes, a bit of a massage, and his tongue keeping her mouth busy, but then his fingers stray lower and lower, until they’re slipping over her ass and squeezing her cheeks one at a time, pulling her rear closer to drag her crotch along the growing bulge in his. The more Bofur kisses her, the more her hips shift against him, until she’s lightly humping him all on her own. He breaks the kiss to whisper, “Good girl,” and Bilbo moans, wanting him to tell her that all the time. There’s
something about the way he talks to her that’s just so *sensual*, and it makes her hot and dizzy. She grinds into him harder and tugs at his pigtails, trying to make him kiss her again.

He does, and his hands slip around her front at the same time. One runs between her breasts, sandwiched in the middle and tracing her curves, while the other slithers down into her skirt, right into her panties. His fingers curl around her warm mound, cupping her with the middle digit tickling between her lips. Bilbo’s hips jerk hungrily, trying to roll into him. He plays with her pussy so excellently, rubbing her first from the outside, then pushing one finger in and squirming it around, crooking it to stroke her properly. Bilbo, having gone so long without having her beloved dwarves touching her like this, whines instantly, “*Take me.*” She doesn’t even care who does it, doesn’t care how, she just needs her dwarves. She kisses Bofur again, pleading with her tongue. He lightly pinches her clit and draws his thick finger in broad circles around her middle, while she writhes on his hand.

“Take me,” Bilbo mumbles dazedly, “Two...?” And doesn’t quite understand. She’s taken different dwarves in her mouth and pussy at the same time before, but both are already wet. Nori chuckles, evidently pleased, and his hand pushes lower, up between her legs. She squeals and lifts up on her trembling thighs, splayed across both their laps, as he reaches for her pussy. With Bofur’s finger imbedded inside her and rubbing around, Nori slips in a second, the way eased by her juices dribbling down her slit. She can smell her own arousal thick in the air, her body opening so readily at the chance to quench her thirst. Nori rubs around inside of her, then pulls his finger back, dragging her own juices with it. He spreads them around her asshole and goes back again, while Bofur plucks and strokes and rubs her enough to keep her dripping wet. Finally, when Nori’s got her hole coated and is gently pressing at her with one blunt fingertip, Bilbo mutters, “You’re going to... in... in my...?”

“I’m going to fuck your ass,” Nori purrs so easily, nuzzling his face against her cheek. “If you let me, of course...” Bilbo nods too eagerly. She can’t stop herself. It’s the way he talks to her, the way he holds her, that makes her want to give him everything she can. Bofur kisses her lips and smiles like he’s proud of her. She knows all the other dwarves are watching, but it’s hard to look away from Bofur’s kind face when he’s pleasing her so expertly. When Nori’s finger pushes inside her, Bofur covers her mouth in a harsh kiss, cutting off her scream.

Nori only goes a little way at first. His finger’s very wet, but it’s still *big*, and it feels so, *strange*. It isn’t pleasurable like it is when they play with her pussy, but there’s still an excitement, a forbidden, dirty rush at having her private parts touched. He screws his finger in, just a little bit at a time, and when he can’t go anymore, he pulls back and moves back to her pussy, gathering up more juice. It’s a filthy concept, but then, after spending so long trudging through a forest and even longer on this mad quest, Bilbo’s hygiene is temporarily on hold. It’s easier to fixate on the nice things, like Bofur
and Nori’s mouths kissing her all over her face, and their huge fingers stuffing themselves inside her. She’s sure she’s open wide enough to take Bofur by now, but he’s waiting, maybe to give Nori access to all the lubrication he needs.

Once Nori has his finger inside her to the knuckle, Bofur’s pulls out of her, and Bilbo whines at the loss. Bofur kisses her and murmurs, “Just a minute, love.” She nods, trying to be good and patient, but she wants him.

Behind her, Nori kisses her shoulder and purrs, “Good girl, Bilbo. You’re such a good girl for us...” Bilbo keens, arching back over him, burying her face in his wild hair. She feels the familiar, spongy tip of Bofur’s cock, and when she looks around again, she finds him sliding up and down her pussy, guiding himself by the base. Her skirts’ crumpled out of the way, her panties stretched to their limit across her thighs and tucked beneath her. She can’t take the teasing anymore, but it’s Nori that says for her, “Give the poor girl what she needs.”

Bofur obliges. He pushes into her, slick and hard and so good. Bilbo sucks at him as soon as she can, her hungry walls eating his cock right up. He pushes into her slowly, but in one, smooth glide, and Bilbo takes it all. He’s big, of course, all her dwarves are, but she’s desperate to be used, and all her pent up want has her body completely ready to make up for lost time. She clutches to his shoulders and leans on him as he goes, until finally, he’s in her to the root, and Bilbo can’t do anything but moan. It’s so long. She never thought she’d be able to take a Dwarven cock so easily, so quickly, but Nori and Bofur make it easy with all of their attentions, and by now she’s taken many of the company, but Bofur and Nori have a special way of massaging her pussy, treating her just right, always waiting until she’s ready to give what they want to take.

Bofur just stays inside her, holding her hips to keep her close. Her breasts jiggle against his chest as she squirms on him, wanting him to move, but he just hisses, “Nori...”

“On it,” Nori chuckles. Somehow, he’s gotten a second finger inside her—she didn’t even notice with Bofur’s cock distracting her—and now he’s stretching her gently, scissoring her open. It still feels strange, but with Bofur’s cock rubbing all the right places, all of Bilbo’s nether regions are swamped in good feelings. Add to that the way he kisses her, nuzzles her, nips at her skin, and it’s all she can do not to orgasm on the spot. She’s fighting to stave it off. She doesn’t know if she could come twice in this place, and she wants to take both of them, so she whimpers and tries to subtly shift back on Nori’s fingers. It only drags Bofur inside her.

Finally, Nori inserts a third finger, opens her wider, wider than she ever thought she could be. When he’s thoroughly stretched her and coated her with more of the liquid dribbling out around Bofur’s cock, she finally feels the press of his cock at her hole. She wants to feel it, concentrate on it, she doesn’t care if it burns, but Bofur licks over her bottom lip and whispers, “You’re going to be good for Nori, aren’t you, Bilbo? You’re going to take his fat cock inside your little hole?” She nods, wanting desperatly to please, even more so to be pleased, and Bofur gives it to her in spades. Nori pushes at her, pops inside, and Bilbo gasps loudly and squirms on them, making Bofur’s breath hitch and Nori growl. He grabs her hips tight, keeping her in place, pushing just that tiny bit at a time. It does hurt, just a very faint, tiny bit, but it’s so hard to care with how delicious everything else feels. And then a hand wraps under her chin, and her face is drawn gently aside.

Thorin’s standing at her side, his flushed face and burning eyes looking down at her. She’d almost forgotten her audience, but when she looks up, she can see them all around her, and she remembers what this is for; she wants to feed them all with her breasts, just like she wants to lick Thorin’s fingers and beg him to take her after. He brushes his thumb softly along her cheek while Nori pushes further inside. Thorin doesn’t say anything, but his eyes say enough, his mere presence a silent I’m here, and that makes Bilbo tremble. Her eyes stay locked with his, until Nori slams that final way
inside, and then Bilbo has to scrunch her eyes closed and gasp as he presses her tighter into Bofur. Their two cocks fill her so completely, more than she ever thought she could take, and her hips are wracked with spasms far beyond her control, her skin on fire. She should’ve taken off her skirt, and she wishes they’d taken off their clothes—she can’t breathe like this, crushed and burning, but it’s so, so worth it. Thorin’s hand slithers away from her face, and she whimpers, nearly cries. It’s worse when they’re pulling out of her, both at once.

Halfway, they slam in again, and Bilbo sees stars. She nearly chokes, jostled up between them, dizzy with the pleasure of it and the burn, and they do it again, then again, the two of them working in tandem to leave her achingly empty and plug her up. The few times they fall out of rhythm, one will pause, adjust, and they’ll move back into place, and Bilbo can’t do anything but take it. She couldn’t bounce up if she wanted to—her thighs are boneless. All of her is. They only reason she’s able to stay sitting up is because their chests hold her, their arms everywhere, stroking her sides and her tits and her face, kissing her all over, leaving the burn of their beards everywhere they go. They’re both ravenous lovers, taking everything. Bilbo overheats, melts, rebuilds all over again. With every push of their cocks, she thinks she won’t be able to take it. She can’t think at all. A few times, she’s sure she’ll pass out from the pleasure of it, and yet it just keeps going, fucking her to make up for all the time they missed, until Bilbo just can’t take it anymore.

She screams when she comes, loud and shameless, tossing her head back and going rigid for that split second. They keep plowing into her, and Bilbo’s orgasm is drawn out with each stab, prolonged into a gooey, delicious fog. She can feel her body dilating around them, and Bofur follows first, burying his face in her neck and shoulder and growling into her, his arms wrapping tightly around her while he pumps her full of his seed. Nori follows not long after, giving her just as much. She’s sure she’s going to burst any minute from the sheer volume of it. She tries to reach back to cradle Nori’s head as he thrusts spurt after spurt of his cum into her, and as she leans back, she sees Thorin again, still standing strong at her side.

It’s a wonder Bilbo stays conscious. She’s giddy, warm and spent, incredibly satiated. For a few heady moments, her two dwarves stay inside her, until she starts to feel sore and strange from it and whines.

She expects them to pull out, but it’s Dwalin that picks her up, standing on the other side from Thorin, reaching down to clutch her hips. He pulls her up enough for their cocks to fall out of her, dragging their seed and her juices with them into a sticky mess on the forest floor. Bilbo looks dazedly down at it, acutely aware of just how wide both her holes are gaping open, and the amount of liquid drizzling down her thighs. If she’d ever been seen like this in the middle of a forest in Hobbiton, she’d be excommunicated by sundown.

But her dwarves pet her adoringly, whisper kind words and make her feel blissful, even after all the sex. Dwalin carefully pulls her into his lap, and she feels bad for ruining his clothes, hoping it mostly gets on her own skirt, but he doesn’t seem to mind. He wipes some of the sweaty hair off her forehead, and Bilbo relaxes against him like curling up in her favourite armchair.

Bofur and Nori take a moment to recover, and then they’re at her chest. They each take one of her breasts, and when they suck, she fills their mouths easily. They take big, hungry gulps, and her nipples are painfully oversensitive, but she can take it and has enough for more. When they’re gone, Balin takes their place. One by one, Bilbo feeds the rest of the party. Thorin takes her last.

He lays her down along the grass and suckles the last remnants up from one breast at a time while she holds his hair back. Then he scoops her up in his big arms, and she rests against him while the others walk, the forest blending into a blur of handsome dwarves.
They hear the river long before they get there. Out of water and cooling back down into the usual gloom of the forest, the sound of it rushing by gives them hope. They all walk faster, Bilbo now redressed and following in between Balin and Dwalin. She was just about to ask Dori for a ride when she heard, and the thought of it keeps her moving. It isn’t long before they find it, running fast and strong across their path.

Bifur automatically moves for it, but Bombur sticks out a hand to stop him. It takes Bilbo a second to realize what’s wrong. The water’s black. She’s thirsty enough to drink from it whatever the colour, except that Thorin says gruffly, “This is the river Beorn spoke of. We mustn’t touch it.” Groans ripple through the group, and Bilbo wilts where she stands.

The trouble is that not drinking from it is just one of their worries—there doesn’t seem to be any way across. The ends of a bridge pitter off the path, but they rot into the river shortly over the brim. Whatever wood made up its middle has long since been swept away by the current, and through the darkness and fog, it’s difficult to make anything out on the other side. It’s certainly bigger than they could jump across, and the trees that overhang the path don’t look sturdy enough to climb, the vines all draped too thinly. The dwarves fan out along the edges, trying to find some way to cross but never straying from sight of the path, while Bilbo walks onto the rough wooden ends of the dead bridge.

She peers across the water, trying to see the other ends, but it’s the water itself she ends up staring the most at. After a bit of leaning and squinting, Bilbo’s sure she can make out a smallish wooden boat docked at the other end. She calls out, “I see a boat!” Dori, the closest, comes over to look.

Fíli and Kíli have the next sharpest eyes, and they stare and nod in agreement, until Thorin calls over their heads, “Who has rope left?”

Glóin, it turns out, has a fair length of rope in his pack, and he knots the end in a little loop and tosses it across, only to have the rope land in the river and trail quickly downstream. As he gathers it back up, Bilbo tells him, “A little to the left.” The two of them stand at the edge of the bridge, and after a few more tries, Bilbo manages to guide him to the right space, and she watches his rope hook around the bow. He gives it a firm tug, but the boat doesn’t come.

So Dori, Dwalin, and Óin get behind him, and Bilbo steps out of the way to watch them pull with all their might. Standing back a bit on the shore, Balin sighs, “It must be secured to the other side. But soon enough a crack sounds sharply through the woods, and the boat veers off along the river. The dwarves reel it in vigorously, until it’s come up to the edge of their bridge and bobs against the bank.

“We’ll have to go in teams,” Thorin decides, looking over the tiny thing. “Bilbo, Balin, and Fíli will come with me. Then Kíli, Óin, Glóin, and Dori, then Ori, Nori, Bifur, and Bofur, and Dwalin and Bombur will go last.” Most of them line up for this order, accepting it without a word, because it’s easier to take their leader’s advice than to bicker over it.

But Bombur grumbles, “Why do I always have to go last for things?”

“Because you’re the heaviest,” Thorin tells him bluntly, “And while that might give you an advantage in other things, it will do us no good if you end up in the water. We don’t know anything about how sturdy this boat is, so it only makes sense to send as many over as we can while we can. But there are no oars, so we also need Balin and I to pull us across on the rope, and pull the rest of you over after. And if there’s any danger on the other side, I want to be there to face it.”

This all makes sense to Bilbo, who had just assumed the order was random. She slips between the
dwarves and climbs first into the little boat, nervous at the way it sways, so she can sit at the end and look across to the other side. There is a post from the bridge, but seeing how the last one snapped, she’s not keen on trusting it. She tells herself that at least she’s with three dwarves, and even if she should fall in, there are still ten more to pull her out.

The others climb into the boat while Dwalin and Dori hold it against the shore. With Bilbo’s guidance, Thorin gathers up the rope and throws it across the river, managing to hook a post on the second try. Then Dwalin and Dori let go, and Balin and Thorin pull them across, while Fíli and Bilbo cling to the sides, Bilbo hoping fervently that it doesn’t tip over. The noise of the river used to be appealing, but now it’s unsettling, and she wishes it would stop battering the sides of their very old-looking wood.

When they’re on the other side, Thorin and Balin take a peripheral look around, but the path, as far as they can tell, is much the same as it was on the other side. Fíli and Bilbo hold the boat during this, although it’s something of a strain, and in truth, Fíli does most of the work. The water keeps trying to carry it away, but he’s sturdy and determined.

Then Thorin tosses back the rope under Bilbo’s guidance. He ties their end firmly around the boat so it can be tugged back, with Kíli guiding the rope across after. Óin, Glóin, and Dori climb in with him and pull themselves across. Bilbo stands nervously on the bank and watches, then again as they repeat the process with Ori, Nori, Bifur, and Bofur. Dwalin and Bombur finally come last, probably the two biggest in their own ways, but equally as strong. By now, Bilbo’s seen the boat quite enough, so she turns back to watch Thorin surveying the path ahead, never straying far from his company.

She sees the stag first. A white beast leaps out of the underbrush around them, so pale it almost glows, magical and beautiful enough for Bilbo to lose herself in the moment, her jaw falling open. It charges towards them, and some of the dwarves scatter, shouting in the mayhem of it, knocking each other over. Only Thorin stands still, reaching back for an arrow and readying his bow. Before Bilbo can stop him, he’s shot at the creature. But the arrow misses its mark and lands in the river, as the stag itself canters across, its hooves splashing right through and carrying it fresh to the other side. Under her breath, Bilbo murmurs, sure of it, “You shouldn’t have done that.”

“Help!”

The two of them turn around, the other dwarves already rushing to the bank. Dwalin is reaching into the water, trying to lift out a splashing Bombur, who’s toppled right out the edge of the boat as it upturns around them. Bifur and Dori get there, already hauling Bombur out.

But it’s too late, and as they drag him onto the shore, Bilbo has one horrifying second where she thinks it’s all really, truly, too late. His eyes are closed and his mouth is lolling open, his body utterly limp.

Then he snores, and she lets out a huge sigh of relief. He’s just sleeping.

But it’s an enchanted sleep. No matter how much they poke and prod him, Bombur won’t wake up. They shake him, slap him, yell in his face, and still he slumbers on. They’ve no idea how long it’ll last, and they can’t afford to wait to see. It gives Bilbo a creeping terror to see one of her dwarves like this, and she has to tell herself that they’ll fix this—someone can fix this—to avoid becoming hysterical. She misses Gandalf more than ever.

There’s nothing they can do. They have to take turns carrying him, all but Bilbo, and she spends most of their time walking staying close by his side, desperately hoping he’s okay.
They’re miserable again. Now they’re truly out of water and have very little food, and they have to carry their heaviest member, and the path breaks up, becoming winding and obtrusive and all around difficult to find, let alone stay on. Several times, they think they’re hopelessly lost, and only Bilbo’s careful eyes manage to find the road again.

Eventually, it’s too much, and Thorin stops them in their tracks. Bilbo has such a headache from the mess of the forest that she walks right into him and has to stumble back.

“This is no good,” he grumbles, shaking his head. “This path will be the death of us. We have to figure out where we’re going. Bilbo should be light enough to make it up to the top of the trees; she’ll have to look around.” This makes Bilbo wrinkle her nose, because she’s never been much of a climber, but, like the others, she sees no other way.

So she takes their help hoisting her up the nearest trunk, and she scrabbles around the twisted branches, trying not to step on any too-big bugs or rustle too many dead leaves. The wood is strangely hard and dry beneath her feet; it simply doesn’t feel healthy. But she has to keep climbing, and she does, even when she starts to feel light-headed and the thinness of the branches make her nervous. Every time a different branch or leaf brushes against her unintentionally, she shivers, unsettled. It takes a good deal longer than she would’ve liked to get to the top.

But she does, and with a deep breath like breaching the surface of a lake, Bilbo plunges her head up through the foliage. She almost topples off when she opens her eyes; the sunlight is blinding. After so long in the dark, she can’t seem to adjust, and she clings desperately to the slew of leaves around her, all a morbid, greenish-grey.

When she can finally see, she realizes that it’s not all leaves at all. Large, velvety black butterflies litter the canopy, beautiful but ominous. They sound heavy when they flap about, or maybe it’s just Bilbo’s addled head. She watches them for a few moments, then peers around, twisting along her little perch, but everywhere she looks, it’s only the same sight. The branches slope up around her, and she can’t see anything. She could, of course, have just picked a bad spot, but it seems more likely that the forest is trying to crush her hope. It’s only a little bit warmer out in the sun, and the tiny bit of breeze there is ruffles the leaves enough to make her nervous at each little movement. She keeps straining to see over the hump of trees anyway, but always to no avail.

She’s already frowning as she climbs back down the tree. She tries not to look devastated, but they see it on her face. Thorin nods solemnly, and they walk on.

The next day, they use up all their food. There was very little left, but at least it was something, and the lightness of their packs is poor consolation for having no rations at all. In a way, Bilbo almost feels glad that Bombur’s missing out on starving with them.

But then, a short time after walking, he abruptly wakes up. Dori, Nori, Bofur, and Bifur all drop him at once when they hear his snort, and he lands on the ground to groan.

“Why did you wake me?” he mutters in a sleepy haze, even as Bilbo attaches herself to his side with a big hug—she was beginning to fear he’d never wake up. He yawns and pats her back, grumbling, “I was having a lovely dream about dining with a king.”

No one wants to hear about dining. Glóin grunts, “And while you did that, the rest of us had to carry you and starve.”

Balin tells him, “We’re out of food.”
And Bombur looks utterly heartbroken, poor thing. Bilbo tries to help him sit up. He mutters about being sore, and worse, “It was a beautiful feast, too. With lots of singing, and all sorts of food, and the very best wine—"

“You say one more word about food, and we take you back to throw in that river,” Dwalin growls, which shuts Bombur up fast enough, but doesn’t keep the irritated look off his face. As he and Bilbo pat the dirt off him, the others start walking again. Bombur follows along, quite as miserable as the rest.

Only a little while longer, Bilbo looks up from her feet, since her headache is making it seem like she’s walking backwards—the entire forest is a mind-trip she doesn’t need. She shakes her head and glances sideways, off into the dark, and sees that it isn’t all dark after all.

There’s a tiny glimmer of light in the distance, and Bilbo mumbles, “What’s that?”

Óin, right next to her, asks, “Eh?” Glóin stops, and Fíli and Kíli look to where Bilbo points. The rest of the company fall into it. Catching on, Óin concludes, “A fire.”

“It doesn’t matter,” Thorin says. “It’s too far off the path. You heard what Gandalf said; we can’t leave for any reason.”

“But what if they have food?” Ori whines, which makes several of the dwarves nod.

“We don’t know if it’s people at all,” Thorin answers. “It could be a group with food, or it could just as easily be something else enchanted, meant to lure fools off the road.”

“It looks like firelight,” Glóin insists. “I know firelight when I see it; it must be a camp.”

Thorin sighs. Nori jumps in, and Dwalin backs up Thorin’s position, and Dori says they need to think about this rationally, and Bombur wants food, having gone the longest without eating. They end up in such a big argument that Bilbo’s surprised the camp in the distance doesn’t hear them and pack up and move on. She sits on a stubby rock and watches it while the others fight, until finally Balin shushes them all and says, “Even if it is a monster, or a trap, or some very unfriendly persons without any food to spare, it doesn’t matter, because we’re all going to starve to death if we keep on as we are. If we all go at once, at least we’ll keep together, and surely we can outnumber anything unfriendly it might be.” A few of them still grumble, but no one has any better ideas, so they gather tightly together. The second Bilbo steps past the bushes along the path, she thinks it a bad idea, but she’s also too hungry to care.

The knot of them march forward, bravely meeting the light head on. The closer they get, the more obvious it is that it’s fire. Bilbo thinks that she hears singing and laughing, but it could still be her mind playing tricks on her. The trees are so thick off the path that she never once gets a good look at who’s in the camp, and she doubts that the dwarves at the head of the group do any better.

But as soon as they reach the lip of the fire, someone kicks it out. There’s a quick rush of sounds, first those of whoever had the camp and then the dwarves all around her, and Bilbo can feel the dwarves jostling her about. They start to yell in the confusion, grabbing on to one another, and Bilbo keeps having to dodge their hands. She clings to the nearest dwarf and only know it’s Ori because of the knit of his sweater.

Another fire starts up in the distance. Nori shouts, “Look!” and before anyone can make plans, the group heads off, scrambling to get around one another. Bilbo has to hurry to keep up and almost trips several times, not being able to see anything in front of her, but she’s so frightened of being left alone that she keeps as stuck to the nearest dwarf as she can. As soon one dwarf shifts out of her reach, she
grabs for another one. They reach the second fire, and it’s kicked out just the same.

There’s confusion everywhere. She can understand their voices but can’t discern where anything is coming from, and the blackness is so complete that she feels like she’s trapped in a nightmare. She tries to listen for Thorin’s voice through the crowd, but there’s so much going on, and a third light blinks on. By now, no one has any idea where the path is, and the dwarves rush over like a great current, tumbling across the fire pit when it blinks out just the same. Bilbo’s knocked right to the floor, and it’s all she can do not to get stepped on by all the others. By the time she’s finished covering her head protectively, there’s no one near her to reach; her flailing arms keep threading through nothing but air and sickly plants.

At first, she’s too frightened to saw a word, but then, as she gets up and wanders around, panic takes over her, and she starts shouting their names into the darkness. She can’t hear anything. No matter how far she runs, she can’t find any of her dwarves. She exhausts herself, and still the fear drives her on, until she trips over a root and stumbles down a slope and is left in amidst the plants with absolutely no idea where she is, what she’s lying in, where the path was, or where her friends are. She’s never felt so alone. Even in the goblin cave, there were other things around and sometimes torches here and there, but this forest is sheer blackness, and she’s been starved too long. She doesn’t have any water. She has nothing, and of the whole adventure, this is perhaps her lowest point. She has the ring: she checks her pocket for that and her dagger; but neither of those do her any good when she can’t even see her own hands.

She curls up into a little ball amongst the forest floor, expecting to wither away and die here, all alone. Eventually, she passes out.

The thing that wakes Bilbo is a bump to the side of her skull. It happens while she’s being rolled over, the spindly rope around her body doing another loop and gluing her legs together.

It takes Bilbo several groggy seconds to realize that there shouldn’t be anything around her legs at all. She tries to kick as soon as she does, but by then it’s too late; she’s stuck up to the knees. A sliver of morning sunlight’s filtered down, just enough for her to see her captor when she rolls onto her back again, and she immediately wishes she hadn’t.

The disfigured head of an enormous spider huddles over her body, its towering legs all around her, its little front pincers working to seal her together, and its too-many beady eyes fixated on her squirming limbs. Bilbo’s seized with utter terror. She almost has a heart attack. She doesn’t know what comes over her, but she becomes like a hobbit possessed, frozen and unable to think, and on pure instinct alone, her hand plunges into the pocket of her skirt, having just enough room to grab her sword. It comes straight out of its sheath, and in the blink of an eye, she’s thrust it up into the spider’s head. The Elven blade cuts right through its flesh, spurting little flecks of black cartilage over her shirt as it screeches in agony, twisting around, tossing itself right off her sword and stumbling back on its horrible legs. Bilbo, paralyzed, watches it shrivel in on itself, twitching horribly before it finally goes still.

Bilbo collapses back on the ground, eyes wide open and her brain wishing she could close them. Just looking at its body makes her clench up. She thinks she might pass out again and almost wishes she would; her heart is hammering against her chest so hard that it’s painful. Every part of her is sore. But, after several great gulps of air, she manages to sit up and slice away at the web wrapped around her. It stings when she cuts it away from her bare flesh, and she finds herself looking at her sword with tremendous gratitude. If she it weren’t in her pocket, she would’ve died one of the most atrocious deaths she could think of.

There’s a spark of pride in her, as well. Once the tremours ease up, she realizes just how amazing it
was of her to react the way she did and save herself. She’s never killed anything before. She never
thought she wanted to. But that was the definition of a monster, and she’s proud of her self-defense.
She didn’t even need her dwarves to save her. Her sword had enough of its own sting, and that’s
what she decides to name it, partially because everyone else’s sword seems to have a name, and
partially because if she focuses on her sword, it makes her feel less terribly alone.

Unfortunately, Sting doesn’t glow over spiders. The tiny bit of daylight is all she has to go by,
although it’s an improvement on when she slept. Mostly because she can’t bear to linger by the
corpse, she pushes herself to her feet and forces herself to move away.

For a little ways, she wanders, weak and nervous but incensed to keep going. She keeps wishing
they’d listened to Beorn’s advice; he told them very clearly to stay on the path, and they should’ve
done so.

At first, the only noises are her own footsteps and ragged breathing, but eventually, she hears other
things, bumps and scratches and low hissing. Her instinct is to run, but with all her dwarves to find,
she can’t afford to. They’re all she can think about, and she follows the noises, until she comes to a
little clearing with just enough light to draw her eyes up. Again, she wishes she hadn’t. Several
spiders, quite as big as the one that tried to eat her, are up in the trees, spinning bulges around in their
web. Bilbo doesn’t want to guess what those bulges are, but with how many of them there are and
the sizing, she knows it must be her dwarves. The thought makes her heart sink. She can’t quite
count them, not with all the spiders and webs in the way, but she knows she has to do something,
just in case.

And she better do it soon, too.

The first thing is slip on her ring. That part is obvious; the last thing she needs is to become another
meal. She stuffs it down on her finger to make good and sure she’s safe, and then she looks around
the forest floor, needing something. She can’t go up and fight them all at once with just her dagger.
Invisible or not, there are too many of them with too many legs, and one would be bound to catch
her. So she searches the forest floor, until she finds a good-sized rock she can fit in her hand.

Fortunately, Bilbo’s always been a good shot. With little things, anyway; perhaps she couldn’t
manage a bow like Kili or Thorin, but she can chuck rocks easily enough. She tosses the first one
into the trees, and it hits one of the spiders in the middle of its body. She threw it with all her
strength, and the spider stumbles but doesn’t fall.

Bilbo picks up another, then another. She throws stone after stone at the gathering of them, drawing
all their glossy eyes to her, while they spit and mutter to one another. Then she shouts, “Catch me,
you idiots!” and knocks one of them dead in the face.

It works. The spiders all come careening down at once, some scurrying over the branches and others
dropping lightly to the floor, rushing towards her, and Bilbo barely has the time to roll out of the
way. She grabs another rock and tosses it deep into the woods, letting the rustle draw them off, while
she scrambles to the nearest trunk. It’s bent nearly double, so she more runs up it than climbs,
 hurriedly moving to the closest bundle hanging from the branches. She has to jump to catch it, but
one swipe of her blade and it falls onto the branch. She starts to slice into it, but she has to be careful
as she goes, because she doesn’t want to cut the dwarf inside. It looks like one of the smaller ones,
and after a bit of poking, she makes it through to Fili’s face. He looks stunned and slack, likely
drugged with spider venom. He barely even notices when she slips off her ring, as though it’s
perfectly normal to appear from thin air. Once she gets down to his torso at least, he starts to help her,
pushing out of it and drawing at his daggers. He rasps, “Thank you,” but there’s no time for that.

He helps her scurry on to the next dwarf, and the one after that, each one they free joining to help,
though some are more drugged than others, all weak from their ordeals. Fíli has to half carry Kíli down the branch, and Nori and Dori practically trip over themselves when they try to free Ori. By the time they get Bombur out, he topples right over the branch and down into the leaves along the forest floor, groaning in pain but too weak to move. All the joy Bilbo has at finding them again is drowning out in the haste of it all; there is no time to stop for hugs and congratulations. She frantically hovers about them, swinging Sting this way and that to cut down all the webs. But they’re thick and sticky and don’t slice fast enough. They’re still a half-tied mess when she hears the scurry of too-many feet plow through the forest floor, and she looks around to see the spiders rushing back. There are more of them now, much more, more than she could take, and none of the dwarves are in any position to fight. She has to tell them quickly, pointing out towards where she thinks she came from, “You all have to head that way. I’m going to draw them off and disappear.”

Balin, squinting at her, murmurs, “What?”

But Bilbo just shakes her head and says, “I’ll explain later; there’s no time. You have to go.”

“We won’t leave you,” Dwalin insists, but he’s still tied from his waist down and isn’t in any place to stop her.

Over him, Balin says, “Good luck.” He places a heavy hand on Bilbo’s shoulder, his face worried but proud and understanding, and she nods as if to tell him she can do this.

While the spiders beeline for the dwarves, Bilbo slips back down the bent tree, shoving her ring on. They barely notice her, as creatures rarely do when bigger things are around. But they notice her well enough when she lobbs a rock into their midst, just short of them reaching the dwarves, and she shouts, “Can’t catch me, can you? Lazy spiders!” She chucks another rock, then another, and then she takes off her ring long enough that they all turn and fixate off her.

She throws a final rock and turns to run.

They rush after her. She can feel it, hear it, and through the terror, she forces herself to go several steps before she slips the ring back on. She tries to keep her direction, knowing she’ll need it, but mostly she just avoids roots, turning back every so often to shout insults and hurl stones. She can only hope it works.

It’s a long while before she dares go back. She’s lost most of the spiders in the mayhem, and she stays low to the ground, rustling through plants but ready to go absolutely still at any moment it might be necessary. She picks her way carefully back to the encampment where the spiders were, and then follows the direction she pointed them in, hoping they stuck to it. If they didn’t, she’s in for another problem.

But she finds them eventually, and even though she’s panting and sore, she’s so grateful to see them all that it doesn’t matter. She walks right into Bifur, the closest one to where she’s come out, and holds hir tight. Bifur holds her back and pets her hair, while she trembles and drinks in the smell and sounds of them.

They all look very impressed, and they tell her so, and it makes her feel warm to earn their confidence, but then, naturally, they ask how in the world she did it. She knows she has to tell them, and she shows them the ring, explaining it all while they nod along and listen with wide eyes. They still look just as impressed by the end, and Balin chortles, pleased, “So that is how you snuck past me!” She smiles sheepishly and nods.

She keeps their respect, which she’s very glad of, and she looks through their worn faces one by one.
As bad as it is, life never seems truly impossible when she has her dwarves.

Except that when she gets to the end of them, her smile falls. She frowns, looks again, counts to herself, and then asks in a chilled tone, “Where’s Thorin?”

They all look around. Dwalin starts ruffling nervously between them, but no matter how hard they look, they can’t seem to find him, and no one remembers seeing him with the spiders; there was too much commotion. Bilbo was so sure she’d cut all the sacks, but then, of course, there’s the possibility that he was never caught by the spiders at all, or caught by a different one somewhere else, or something else entirely.

Kíli first suggests, “Perhaps the elves captured him,” and this makes them all look at him curiously. “I saw one,” he insists, gesturing vaguely into the woods. “It was only a glimpse, but there was this tall, beautiful woman with long orange hair and green clothes—”

“We’ve lost Thorin and you’re complimenting elves,” Dori mutters, shaking his head.

“I saw her,” Kíli replies crossly, while Glóin rolls his eyes.

“You’re imagining things,” Dwalin grunts.

But Bilbo hopes he isn’t, because if Thorin was taken by the elves, at least he’s alive, and perhaps well fed. That’s more than she can say for the rest of them.

The rest of them are hopeless, and they sit down in a little circle, leaderless and fading.
It isn’t long before they’re captured. They try to guess where the path is, but of course none have any idea, and they’ve barely taken two steps in one direction before the fires start up around them. Wood-elves spring out of the trees, landing lightly in the clearing around them to stand tall and proud, while the dwarves huddle around each other and give in. There’s no fight at all. Bilbo slips on her ring and steps out to one side while her friends surrender, their tired arms lifting into the air. A few of them actually look happy to be caught, because at least the elves might have food. The light of their torches is distressing after so long in the dark, but Bilbo adjusts and watches carefully while the elves converge around the dwarves.

There are two elves that stand at the head of them. Like all of the elves Bilbo’s seen, these two are tall and lithe, with long, flowing hair swept across their backs. Both have straight locks with braids tying them back, one a woman with red hair and green clothes, the other a man with blond hair and silver armour. There’s something different about them from the elves of Elrond’s home—these are sterner, more mysterious and somber. But they’re still beautiful, in their own ways, and Kíli in particular watches the woman with clear awe.

She seems to be in charge. She tells the others orders in Elven, though it’s the blond man who barks the final one and gestures his hand at the dwarves. It’s immediately obvious that he ordered them searched, as soon the elves are knotting around the dwarves and rifling through their pockets, extracting and confiscating weapons. For the most part, the dwarves go with only annoyed grunts, and Bilbo watches from the side as Kíli weasels his way in front of the leader. While she rifles through his clothes—wearing a slightly amused look on her face, like she sees his awe and finds it just barely noteworthy—the man goes through Glóin’s. Bilbo’s hand subconsciously slips over her own dagger, tucked safely back in her pocket, though she knows it would be foolish to fight the elves. Even if these elves aren’t friendly, better to be taken by them than the spiders, and she can worry about retrieving their weapons later.

The elf searching Glóin draws a large metal locket from Glóin’s pocket and flips it open. He squints down at the drawings in confusion, and Bilbo isn’t close enough or at a good enough angle to see the pictures clearly, but she can imagine what they are. She’s never seen them personally, but she knows how important Glóin’s family is to him, so she isn’t surprised that he keeps memories of them around.

The elf, clearly not understanding that, asks curiously, “Who is this?” He pauses, looking between the locket and Glóin, before adding, “Your brother?”

Looking up, half miffed and half offended, Glóin answers, “That’s my wife.”

The elf lifts his eyebrows like he doesn’t believe it. Turning the locket to look at its other side, he muses, “And this horrid creature? A goblin mutant?” Seeing the expression on Glóin’s face, Bilbo
could almost laugh, if it weren’t cruel and all so very unfortunate.

“That’s my wee lad, Gimli.”

The elf lifts another eyebrow, staring down with none of Bilbo’s amusement. Glóin harrumphs, and when the elf says no more, he suggests in the same lofty rudeness that was given to him, “Obviously you don’t know much about the fairer sex and kids; perhaps I should teach you a thing or two about breeding.” Bilbo has to bite back a snort, and several of the dwarves behind him chuckle heartily. The elf merely wrinkles his nose and stuffs the locket back into Glóin’s pocket. He looks aside at the red-haired woman, and she quickly schools her face into neutrality, having had the slightest grin over Glóin’s retort. She’s just finished taking the last of Fíli’s hidden daggers, while Kíli sticks tight to his side.

Once the dwarves have been thoroughly rid of all their weapons, the elves produce ropes and bind them all together. Their hands are first tied behind their backs, then bound to one another in a long string. There isn’t much point to it; they’re drastically outnumbered, weak, and weaponless, but the elves tie them up like criminals all the same. Few of the dwarves even bother to protest, though as the blond man ties Glóin, Glóin teases over his shoulder, “You do need a lesson—you should at least take someone out to dinner before you break out the ropes!” Again, the dwarves that heard laugh, and the elf goes steely-eyed and ignores it. He looks young enough to be Glóin’s son, but of course, he’s probably far too old for courting lessons; elf ages are deceptive.

As the elves finish up their duties, Kíli tells the woman in charge, “I might be hiding other things. I think you should search me again.”

The elf smiles lightly as though she finds him cute and answers, “Or I could bind your mouth.” But she stops once Kíli’s hands are secured and moves on to Fíli, informing him casually, “You should teach your friend some manners.” Fíli shoots Kíli a pointed look over his shoulder, but he lets the elf bind him without comment.

All tied together, the dwarves are marched into a line. Then they’re paraded through the forest with the elves all around them, Bilbo scurrying behind and careful to make absolutely no noise at all. The forest is considerably lighter where the elves guide them, though Bilbo is sure they never would’ve found such a place on their own. The dwarves are taken across a bridge, over a wide, rushing river of water that looks utterly delicious; it’s all Bilbo can do to keep after them instead of ducking down to drink. Refueling will have to be her first order of business once she’s inside; she’s as ruined as the rest of them. But she’s also the only one not captured, and that means she owes it to them to keep track of where they’re going and stay alive and free. She just barely manages to squeeze behind the last dwarf when they cross into the towering stone doors of the elves’ strong keep. From the way the pillars reach and how the branches are shaped around the halls inside, she imagines they’re in some sort of castle. But there is no time to explore just yet. She has to follow her friends down the gleaming corridors, lit by the sun streaming in through cracks in the overhead rocks and branches.

It’s massive, cavernous, and beautiful. It isn’t so light and floral as Elrond’s home was, but it’s still deeply natural, and the intertwined composition of stone and wood makes it all the more magical. Bilbo’s bare feet hardly make any noise as they scamper across the polished floor, though the dwarves’ boots stomp heavily. The elves lead them through the winding halls, more of the party breaking away, until it’s only the man and the woman from earlier leading them across a giant gulf with two guards and Bilbo taking up the rear. The path becomes like a bridge connecting little mountains internal to the castle itself, with hanging lights and trees everywhere. Bilbo keep staring around in amazement, even though there are no rails along the path and the way down is far enough
below to warrant extra caution. After several of these makeshift bridges, Bilbo realizes where they’re going. In the center of the warm-coloured cavern, high above them, rests an enormous throne, with wild antlers adorning the sides and top. It’s utterly magnificent, and the closer they’re drawn, the more Bilbo’s transfixed, not just by the impressive throne itself, but the man seated in it.

The king of the elves—for he couldn’t be anything else—is devastatingly beautiful. Bilbo realizes this long before they reach the raised platform just beneath his throne. He looks something like the blond elf that captured them, having long, platinum-white-yellow hair but strong eyebrows, pale blue eyes and a handsome, stern face. The crown that circles his head is made of twisted branches and leaves, resting just back behind his pointed ears. His long, silver robes fit him like a glove, and with his arms on the rests of his chair and his legs crossed, he couldn’t look more leisurely. The dwarves don’t seem particularly impressed, but Bilbo can’t stop staring at him. She’s never seen a more majestic creature in all her life.

With a wave of his hand, the Elf King bids in the common tongue, “Tauriel, unbind them. They are no threat to me.” His voice is rich but almost bored-sounding, as though having twelve captive dwarves is nothing of real interest. The elf with the red hair—Tauriel, Bilbo assumes—moves to obey, quickly untying each of the dwarves before her. They’re spread out on the platform more easily, and though they’re still famished and drained, they make a show of trying to stand strong and proud. Just in case the ropes go back on, Bilbo doesn’t dare take off her ring. The surprise of it is still in her favour, and she can only hope the dwarves have guessed where she’s gone.

Balin is the first of them to speak. He’s probably the most diplomatic one, and he comes to the front to bow low enough that the tip of his beard brushes over the dais. “King Thranduil of the elves,” Balin announces, clearly having heard of their captor, “It’s a pleasure to meet you. There seems to be some misunderstanding. We meant your good kingdom no harm.”

“And yet you trespass on my land and invade my people’s camps not once but three times,” the king, Thranduil, muses simply. Balin looks sheepish and like he wants to explain, but before he can, Thranduil continues, “And I have heard that you were quite rude to my son.” Turning to the blond elf next to Tauriel, Thranduil asks, “Legolas, is this true?”

Legolas, who Bilbo can very much see as both a prince and Thranduil’s son, merely looks aside. Glóin grunts from the middle of the party, “He started it.”

The elves ignore the comment. In Legolas’ silence, Thranduil’s gaze shifts back to Balin, and he sighs, “Despite your transgressions, I am a fair king. I will hear why you are in my land, and then we shall see what can be done.”

Balin looks uncomfortable. He doesn’t want to reveal the quest, Bilbo knows. None of them do. Thorin wouldn’t have wanted it, yet as much as she’s worried about him, they can’t even ask if he’s been captured. If he is still free, better to let him continue unnoticed. Thranduil gives no indication of having seen another dwarf or not. He waits patiently for a response, but none of the twelve dwarves offer one.

When it becomes obvious that none will talk, Thranduil rises from his chair. He seems incredibly tall to Bilbo, although the effect is magnified by the rise of his throne. With his hands folding regally behind his back, he strolls down the twisted steps one by one, his robes billowing behind him with the movement. The dwarves tense but don’t flinch away, and Thranduil walks casually around them.

At Fíli and Kíli, his neck arches, shoulders moving down as he peers at them. Bilbo has the horrible feeling that he knows just whose heirs they are, and Fíli makes it worse by staring Thranduil dead in the eye. Kíli’s gaze shifts awkwardly to Tauriel; he doesn’t seem able to keep his eyes off her. She watches her king, awaiting orders.
As Thranduil straightens out again, Dwalin steps in from the side, protectively standing before the two younger dwarves. Thranduil eyes him up and down once, then seems to dismiss him as unimportant and walks a few paces back.

Looking away from them and over the grand sweep of his kingdom, Thranduil announces, “Take them to the dungeons. They’ll be kept there until they’re ready to talk properly.” Several of the dwarves jump to protest, but none offer an explanation of their quest. Tauriel and Legolas round them up and corral them back down the steps. The dwarves go, but grudgingly.

Bilbo lingers behind a few steps, stalling along the platform to view the grandeur of the Elf King. She considers, briefly, slipping off her ring to speak to him. But revealing the truth would seem like a betrayal of Thorin’s trust, and she knows she has nothing else to bargain with.

In the end, she hurries after the dwarves, lingering behind Tauriel and admiring her strength and beauty.

Even the dungeons are lovely. They’re built under the castle, carved roughly out of the earth and stone with a rushing river weaving right through it. There are still places for the sunlight to stream down along the halls, but Bilbo stays out of these beams and sticks to the shadows as her friends are placed into their cells. Most go quietly, though Kíli tries again to talk to Tauriel, and, despite the interest on her face, she responds tersely and moves on. Bilbo wanders away down the bank, closer to the river’s edge, and there she drinks her fill, making up for lost time.

She has to steal food. It’s the only way. Though she left the Shire with the title of a burglar, she never had any intention of taking from more than dragons. Even though the cellars she follows guards to are stuffed with food, she feels terrible for taking even the smallest of scraps. She tries to tell herself that it’s only fair with how her friends are being unduly imprisoned, but it’s a small comfort. She explores the castle while she can, though never wandering too far from the dungeons, lest she not make it back. She never once takes off her ring.

She discovers quickly that Tauriel is the captain of the guards. She’s incredibly skilled with both her bow and blades, commanding the utmost respect from all those that serve under her, and a few civilian elves Bilbo hears from here and there. Tauriel supervises much of the guard of the dwarves herself, though others are usually present, and Legolas strays down from time to time. He mostly only talks to Tauriel, muttering the occasional word here and there to one of the guards, and he gives Glóin’s cell a wide birth. Bilbo wants badly to approach cells and touch and speak with her dwarves, but she doesn’t dare draw attention to herself. She rarely dares to go far into the dungeons, as the winding, narrow path would take her too close to guards, and instead she lingers near the end by the cellar door. They keep great, hulking barrels of wine in the middle of that cellar that the guards occasionally drink from, though most seems to be in saving for a special occasion. Bilbo mostly sleeps in there, curled up in the back on packing hay, only to hurry off like a mouse in the mornings and return to the shelter of shadows.

Two days in, Bilbo gets the chance she’s been looking for. Tauriel dismisses two of her guards early, the dwarves having proven no trouble at all, caged as they are, and apparently there’s some festivities coming up that require extra efforts. The guards leave to attend to these preparations, and Tauriel paces the long halls herself, her hair glistening behind her in the moonlight with her figure straight and full of all her power. Bilbo finds watching her somewhat mesmerizing, and for all the other dwarves’ grumbles over elves, she can’t imagine she’s the only one. Tauriel, at least, is a kind captor. Under her supervision, the dwarves are kept well fed and fairly treated. The only thing they want for is their freedom, but none are willing to trade details of their quests for it.

As Tauriel walks the shelf of the dungeon alone, Bilbo sees her chance. She follows carefully in
Tauriel’s wake, far enough behind so as not to be heard even by sharp Elven ears, and then, when
Tauriel crosses the short bridge to the other side, Bilbo scuttles past and on up the walkway. All
twelve of the remaining dwarves are within sight of the lower dungeon, but Bilbo knows from
guard’s reports that there are other cells farther off around the bend. When Bilbo gets around it, she’s
relieved to see that it’s also devoid of guards. It’s very much the same as the lower dungeons, simply
tucked farther out of sight, with the river pouring down through a waterfall, rolling away to split the
dungeon in two. The roar of it would cover any noise from the cells, but Bilbo can see that all those
on the other side are empty.

She has to walk down her side to survey them properly, and when she comes to the end, her breath
catches in her throat.

She’d hoped Thorin was safe. She’s hoped it desperately, but it doesn’t prepare her for the joy of
seeing him alive. He looks miserable, slumped against the wall of his shallow, rounded cell, but
otherwise he looks healthy, surely treated as well as the others. Bilbo practically runs to him, wishing
that she could lunge right through the bars. Instead, she falls to her knees in front of them, clutching
at the cold metal and calling, “Thorin.” She means to whisper, but her voice comes out like a cry and
a moan. His heavy brows knit together, and he looks towards the entrance in confusion. It takes her a
moment to realize why; in her haste, she’s forgotten her ring.

She practically rips it off her finger. Thorin’s eyes go wide, and as he quickly rises and comes to her,
kneeling down, he mutters in reverence, “Bilbo…”

“My ring,” she tries to explain, holding it up for it to catch in the light and draw his eyes, “I found it
in the goblin tunnels. It lets me become invisible. Oh, but I’ll explain another time—it’s so
good to see you.”

His arm reaches through the bars. His face looks heavy, his eyes sad, but there’s hope in them as he
looks at her, and he slips his large hand along her cheek, finger tips brushing through her hair. Bilbo
leans into the warmth of it, her smile so full that her eyes are almost watering to keep it. For all his
wear and tear, he looks as handsome as he did the day he first arrived in her home. His hand almost
trembles as it touches her face, and she lifts her own to hold it, then turns to press a firm, lingering
kiss to his palm. She missed his touch, like she missed all of him. He murmurs, “I was afraid I’d
never see you again.”

“I’m here,” Bilbo assures him. “We’re all here. The others are in the cells below.” Anger flickers
across Thorin’s face, then resignation. He must know they wouldn’t have made it long in the forest,
anyway. While he thinks, she reaches for him and brushes a few strands of dark waves behind his
ear. He has such nice hair, and she plays with it while he talks to her, mostly just for that
connection she’s been missing. It feels so good to have him in her hands.

“The Elf King will question the others. Have they told him anything?”

Bilbo shakes her had and asks, “Should I pass along any messages for you?”

“Tell them not to answer a single question.” Bilbo nods in understanding, though she knows his
distrust of the elves will keep them here longer. She’s too loyal to fight him. Thorin kisses her wrist
the way she kissed his palm, and he uses his hand on her face to curl beneath her chin, bidding her
closer. Bilbo lets herself be drawn towards the bars. It’s difficult to kiss through them, but Thorin
makes the effort. He presses against her, theirs mouths only able to brush lightly. His beard tickles
her chin, and she wants to grab him for more, but can’t. She leans her forehead against the bars
afterwards, not willing to pull away.

“I’ll try to find a way to set you free,” she promises. “I don’t know how yet, but I’ll look. The castle
is very secure, and the guards are strong, but I’ll...” she trails off and shakes her head, because she
doesn’t know.

“There’s no help with elves,” Thorin growls. She sticks her other hand through to touch his knee
reassuringly, then strokes his thigh. She wishes she could slip through the bars and be with him
properly, but for now, this is all they can have. It’s almost heartbreaking, to be this close and not be
able to hold him, to have to sleep alone in the cold when she could be crushed tightly beneath him,
and for a brief, traitorous moment, she thinks of revealing herself to the guards and begging to be
thrown in with him. But she would be of no use then, and they could be cruel and separate her, and
then she wouldn’t even be allowed these faint but intoxicating touches.

She can hear footsteps in the distance. Thorin’s eyes follow the sound; they both know Tauriel is
returning, and Bilbo can’t stay. She wants to. She looks at him and presses tightly along the bars; she
has to go, but being apart is unbearable.

He kisses her again and murmurs, “Be strong, my Bilbo.” She nods and quietly aches for him.

One last tender kiss, and Bilbo whispers, “I love you.”

“I love you as well,” Thorin returns, so very easily, like he’s meant and known it all along. “And I’m
sorry I ever put you through this mad adventure.”

She isn’t. Because if she’d never come along, she would never have known this feeling. Even if it
hurts, it’s worth all the pain.

He pulls back from her first. In a way, she’s glad he does, because she might not have had the
strength. She clings tightly to the wall as she leaves, willing herself not to look back.

At the bend where the path curves down to the other cells, Bilbo pauses to carefully peer around. It
will be easier to talk to the others without the ring, and she can’t do it with Tauriel nearby anyway,
but as she looks across both sides of the dungeon, she can’t see any elves anywhere. Yet she was
sure she heard approaching footsteps, and Tauriel seems much too competent to leave her prey
unguarded. Bilbo wonders for a moment if Legolas drew her away—he tends to steal glances at her
the way Bilbo might at one of her dwarves. But even then, surely Tauriel would’ve called another to
take her place.

Very, very cautiously, Bilbo slips around the corner. Most of the dwarves looked asleep on her way
up, but surely she can wake one in time to pass on her message. She creeps towards the nearest set of
bars, only to have the footsteps sound behind her.

She whirls on the spot to long, thin green legs, and her gaze trails up to Tauriel’s pale face,
silhouetted in the moonlight. She’s holding something small in her hand, and though Bilbo can see
it’s not a weapon, she knows she’s trapped. She doesn’t even think to put the ring on again and give
it away. She can only hope that Tauriel won’t search her like the others.

“I’m sorry,” Tauriel tells her quietly, walking slowly around her to stand between Bilbo and the other
cells, giving her nowhere to run. Tauriel’s face is soft and kind, though Bilbo knows that this is the
captain of the guards that’s captured her and not a friend to be underestimated. Still, Tauriel looks
genuine in her empathy. “I saw how you were with him. It isn’t good to separate lovers so.” Bilbo’s
throat tightens at the word lovers. She wonders if Tauriel will put her into Thorin’s cell after this, but
Tauriel makes no move to usher her anywhere, only looks thoughtfully down across the dungeons.
After a moment in which Bilbo doesn’t answer, Tauriel sighs, “I suppose dwarves do hold some
attraction in romance.” Her fingers splay across the rounded stone in her palm as she talks, and Bilbo
realizes with some surprise that it’s a trinket she’s seen Kíli hold before. A rock from his mother, if
she remembers correctly, engraved with runes. Perhaps while Bilbo was talking to Thorin, Tauriel was talking to Kíli. Bilbo can only hope she didn’t see everything from the beginning and hear about the ring.

Bilbo dares to say, “He’s a good man.” At Tauriel’s elegantly arched brow, Bilbo adds, “Kíli, I mean. Whatever you’ve heard about dwarves. All of those here are.”

“Yet, you aren’t a dwarf,” Tauriel muses. She takes another step to the side, head tilting curiously so that some of her hair slips tantalizingly over her shoulder. It looks silky soft, and Bilbo can’t help but wonder if Kíli got to run his fingers through it. She’d be jealous, but she wouldn’t trade her time with Thorin for anything. Tauriel takes a step closer. She smells vaguely floral, a pleasant, fresh thing compared to all the hardened men Bilbo’s used to traveling with. Tauriel’s pretty eyes thin, though not unkindly, as she asks, “What are you, and why do you keep such strange company?”

With Thorin’s words still in her ears, Bilbo knows she can’t tell the truth. Yet she feels bad lying, so she only bends reality a little. “I’m a hobbit—we come from the Shire, a land far past the Misty Mountains. And I’m just... a traveling companion.”

“The Shire,” Tauriel mouths. She looks interested, though Bilbo has no idea if she’s ever heard of it before or not. She opens her plush lips, as though to ask more, but then she closes it again, like catching herself. A subtle change comes over her; she steels. There’s still a faint hint of regret when she announces, “I am sorry, hobbit. But I must turn you in to my king.”

Bilbo knew as much. It’s still a frightening prospect. She tries to keep herself from trembling, and through her dry mouth, she says, “I understand.” She must look very frightened, because Tauriel softens again.

Tauriel reaches out a hand to brush along the side of Bilbo’s face. Her thin fingers feel so delicate after the thick, stout Dwarven digits Bilbo’s used to, and the touch makes her shiver. “Do not worry,” Tauriel murmurs. “He is imposing, yes, but he is a great king.” Only that’s a very broad term, and not worrying after being caught sneaking around dungeons is a tall order.

Because she doesn’t know what’s going to happen to her, Bilbo tentatively asks, “If you ever return that stone to Kíli, could you tell him that his uncle is well?” It’s as vague as she can manage.

“You will likely tell him yourself soon enough. I doubt you will all be held forever, and in the meantime, you are certainly safer here than you would be out in Mirkwood. But I will tell him if you cannot and I have the opportunity.”

Then Tauriel’s hand slips around to Bilbo’s back, gently guiding her down the path. Bilbo is brought out of the dungeons, grateful that the dwarves she passes are asleep and don’t know that their last hope’s been taken prisoner.

The long walk to the king’s throne is even more majestic in the light of the moon. In a way, it’s less tense; even though she’s the one that’s caught, she doesn’t have her dwarves to watch with worry, and at least she’s had food and water and knows that Thorin is safe. The king, perched high above, is just as beautiful as she remembers. When Bilbo reaches the round platform just beneath his throne, Tauriel pausing at the last step of the walkway, Bilbo automatically bows. She bends all the way in half, then lowers to the ground instead of rising. When she finally dares to look at him, her kneeling posture is submissive; she can’t afford to be as brash as her dwarves were. It did them no good, and Bilbo can only hope that if Thranduil is a good enough king to earn Tauriel’s respect, he can be reasoned with.
He lifts one straight brow at her, then muses quietly, “You show more respect than your companions.” Bilbo gives no reaction, not wanting to disparage her dwarves. Etiquette is something hobbits have always done well in, though she’s had little reason to exercise them along this journey. In a way, it’s a relief to find someone who respects them, who, perhaps, Bilbo can deal with. Thranduil’s piercing blue eyes sweep over her, then lift to Tauriel without any show of conclusion. “You’ve evidently taken a liking to this one, Tauriel, or you would not have brought her to me outside of ropes like the others.”

Bilbo glances over her shoulder, and she can see Tauriel release a held breath. Her posture is rigid, at attention for her king, her eyes fixed on him in rapt awareness. “I did not think she was anything of a threat, my lord.”

“Indeed not.”

In the silence that follows, Bilbo remains quiet, having not been spoken to. She’s aware that she isn’t fit for the presence of a king, having not bathed properly in too long, having had nothing to comb her hair with but her fingers, her clothes old and caked in mud and torn in places, but she makes up for what she can with her demeanor. Thranduil watches her a little more, while she lowers her eyes subserviently, and then he rises from his throne. She watches out of the corner of her eye as he lets his billowing cloak slither gracefully off his shoulders, pooling in the throne, and he takes long, elegant strides down the spiraled stairs. Even when his feet are on the same platform as her, he stands high above her. He takes one leisurely circle around her, while she tries to be perfectly calm and unassuming.

Finally, he stops in front of her. He bends slightly, offering his hand out to her. His long, pale fingers look too fair for her dirty hand to touch, but she takes it as she’s offered. His fingers clasp around hers, and he gently lifts her, guiding her to her feet. Standing before him makes little difference; she would still have to crane her neck back to look at him. Instead, she keeps her eyes lowered, until he asks, sounding mildly amused, “Clearly, you are not a dwarf. Are you their pet or captive?”

Bilbo’s breath catches in her response. The thought of being held captive by the dwarves is absurd. She half expects Tauriel to say that she’s Thorin’s lover, which would surely have her tossed in the same cells, but Tauriel remains quiet. It gives Bilbo the opportunity to take a strange chance. Seizing his assumption, Bilbo answers, “Only their pet when they ask. I’m a hobbit, and I’m their consort.”

She almost goes on to say that she knows nothing of their quest, but that would be an undeniable lie, and she finds it difficult. As it is, she’s only bent the truth. She still waits for Tauriel to betray her, but it doesn’t come.

“A Dwarven whore then,” Thranduil says in his flowing, alluring voice. The only insult in his words comes in his intonation of Dwarven. Already she knows she’s made the right choice: separated herself and washed her hands of those he considers guilty. With one hand behind Thranduil’s back, the others dips below Bilbo’s chin, curling there and tilting her up. He studies her eyes for a moment, then continues in a hushed purr, “You are a very exotic creature, hobbit. But if this is true, and you are merely with them for pay, why did you not offer yourself to Tauriel when the others were captured? Surely you can see that we can give you more than a pack of stray dwarves.” He frowns as he says it, and Bilbo thinks she can see the conclusion in his eyes: that the dwarves will have turned others against elves.

But Bilbo has an easier explanation for this, and merely admits, “Your subjects are nearly as handsome as yourself, my lord. I wouldn’t presume that such beautiful people would want me.”

Thranduil looks pleased. A grin twists its way onto his lips as he asks, “So you would be willing to bargain with elves instead?” Bilbo nods immediately, unable to believe her luck. She can only hope
that the dwarves wouldn’t begrudge her this. Despite their prejudices, she’s always found elves magnificent. Hopefully they will, at least, understand that she has to do this for their sake, whether or not she experiences a secret enjoyment. Over Bilbo’s head and without taking his eyes off her, Thranduil asks, “Would you also be amenable to this, Tauriel?”

Bilbo holds her breath, expecting rejection. She can’t believe it when Tauriel replies, “I admit a certain... curiosity, my lord.”

Thranduil turns on his heel. He strolls back to the steps that lead to his throne, and as he ascends them, he announces, “I think I will enjoy making use of Thorin Oakenshield’s amenities.” Bilbo stiffens immediately; she didn’t know that Thranduil knew who Thorin was. It gives their interaction more meaning: two kings in a political war. Perhaps Thranduil knows more of Erebor than he lets on. “If what you’ve said is true, then there should be no reason to deny a change in your employers. I will offer you food and lodging in exchange for the use of your skills.” He reaches his throne as he finishes. Settling back in, he seats his elbows on his armrests, his fingers weaving together as he peers down at her.

The only hitch in her plan is that Bilbo doesn’t have great skills. Certainly not like a professional would have. She can only hope that they chalk her failings up to cultural differences, and she bows again to agree, “In that case, I’ll do anything you ask.” A moment later she amends, “...Within reason.” Thranduil nods his head once in agreement, then lifts one hand and crooks his finger.

Tauriel is the one that takes the bidding. Bilbo turns to see her step onto the platform, and Thranduil commands, “Sit, and play with this hobbit as you like.” Something flashes in Tauriel’s eyes, and Bilbo has to fight to keep the excitement off her face. Tauriel settles down on her knees, arms outstretching in offer. It seems surreal that an elf would want someone like Bilbo, small, hairy, and fat, but Tauriel’s face is only appreciative, and Bilbo can tell that her interest goes beyond her king’s command. Yet the idea that Thranduil did command this and watches from above gives Bilbo an extra flair of excitement. It makes her wish that her own king had ordered her about. She would’ve loved to please different dwarves on Thorin’s orders, and she can only hope that this goes well enough for her to have that chance in the future.

She doesn’t quite know what to do beyond stepping into Tauriel’s arms. Tauriel’s hands smooth over her full hips, their faces level with Tauriel kneeling as she is, and it gives Bilbo the chance to appreciate such beauty up close. Everything about Tauriel is new and enthralling, from the rich hue of her hair to the jut of her strong cheekbones, the slight puffiness in the purse of her lips, and the deep brown of her eyes. Intricate braids sweep her hair back to cascade down her slender shoulders. She brings her long fingers to the sides of Bilbo’s face, and she tilts hers as she leans in, her eyelashes falling heavy and her mouth pinching for a soft kiss. There’s a fragility in it that Bilbo hasn’t experienced before, and it piques her interest, makes her lean back when Tauriel kisses her again, a little harder, before finally slipping a small tongue along her bottom lip. Bilbo opens enough for that tongue to slide inside her, and then all she can do is moan while Tauriel gently takes command of her mouth.

Her fingers twitch at her sides. She wants to feel Tauriel’s long hair in her fingers, wants to run her palms down Tauriel’s chest and trim sides. But she hesitates in unfamiliar territory. When Tauriel pulls back, Bilbo mumbles in hoarse explanation, “I... I’m afraid I’m out of the habit of making first moves. The dwarves... they did most of the work.”

In truth, she’s always liked that. It makes her feel doted on, something like a princess, and like most hobbits, she prefers to do the easy, comfortable thing. But Thranduil snorts from his perch above, yanking Bilbo out of her reverie, and she looks up at him as he chuckles, “Of course they would, greedy takers that they are.”
Bilbo’s always seen it more as them giving her what she wanted, but she doesn’t dare say so. Instead, she forces herself to lift her hands and place them on Tauriel’s shoulders. At first, that’s all she can do, and then, as Tauriel kisses her again, she slips her fingers into the orange waterfall she’s been longing to touch. It’s as soft as she imagined it, light and wildly exciting. She gets a flash of a daydream, of watching Kíli fist his strong fingers in Tauriel’s hair, hearing her gasp as he tugs her closer, but Bilbo wouldn’t presume to do such a thing herself. Instead, she only meets Tauriel’s artful kisses with her own restrained interest.

Soon, Tauriel’s hands are drifting lower, running smoothly over Bilbo’s chest, tracing her curves. At Bilbo’s waist, Tauriel’s arms wrap around her and pull her in, and Bilbo gasps into the kiss as she’s pulled into Tauriel’s lap, Tauriel’s legs spreading to accommodate. Sprawled over her, Bilbo’s skirt lifts up her thighs, and Tauriel ducks one hand under it, thumbing tantalizingly at Bilbo’s skin. Mostly to encourage Tauriel to touch more, Bilbo nibbles at Tauriel’s bottom lip the way the dwarves have often done to her. Tauriel makes a quiet mewling noise, as though in surprise, and she gets the message and pushes her hand higher. Her nails trace over Bilbo’s panties. As their lips part in between rounds, Bilbo murmurs, embedded in her role, “If I’d known I was going to work today, I might’ve dressed differently.”

Tauriel chuckles lightly, as though this is perfectly charming. In truth, Bilbo has nothing else to wear and nowhere to keep her panties if not on her. By the same token, she has her ring and sword in her pocket, the weight of which is at her side. She thinks Tauriel must’ve felt it by now, but simply paid it no mind. The memory of it still makes her anxious to protect her belongings though, and she considers taking off her skirt and bundling it up with her things safe inside.

Instead, she only moans as Tauriel rubs over the front of her panties, thumb brushing through the brown fuzz at the top. With a wistful smile, she nuzzles her face into Bilbo’s. They exchange little butterfly kisses while Bilbo rocks into Tauriel’s hand, wanting to touch Tauriel the same way.

“Enjoying yourself?” Thranduil asks lightly, his voice rippling through Bilbo like an aphrodisiac: the reminder that she’s been given such a beautiful woman to play with as a show for a king.

Tauriel replies, “Yes, my lord,” and then, with a note of surprised interest, “she’s... fuzzy.”

“And exotic creature indeed,” Thranduil chuckles, while Bilbo flushes a dark red. She wouldn’t have thought of herself that way, and it sounds almost cute, quaint in those words. After a little more playing, Thranduil suggests, “Perhaps my new consort would be so kind as to show us the body at our disposal.”

Bilbo would very much like to. A few moments ago, being naked in front of elves might’ve seemed shameful; she doesn’t think she can even remotely measure up. But Tauriel seems to like Bilbo as is, and she dutifully lifts Bilbo’s shirt with an expectant smile. Bilbo lets herself be stripped, only grateful that she hasn’t been asked to do it herself; she could never be so graceful as Tauriel. The way Tauriel removes Bilbo’s clothes feels like foreplay. The snap of her bra is drawn back, the straps brushed teasingly down Bilbo’s shoulders, the cups slowly plucked away, until Bilbo’s heavy chest tumbles into the open air, bouncing a little with her breath and shifting in Tauriel’s lap. Her hardened nipples brush over Tauriel’s own breasts, still bound as they are beneath green fabric. Bilbo takes hold of her own skirt before Tauriel can, just in case her sword and ring have still been undetected. She shifts up on her knees, shuffling down her skirt and panties at once, then stretching out her legs the side to tug down and off them. She bundles her clothes in a little pile, then arches her body in Tauriel’s lap, trying to be as tall as possible with her back curved and her breasts reaching forward. Tauriel looks down Bilbo’s body with subdued awe, as though she’s the one getting the real prize.

Tauriel is the masterpiece. But her clothes stay on as she hikes Bilbo up, drawing Bilbo tight towards
her and forcing Bilbo’s legs to wrap around her waist. Then she slowly bends Bilbo back, until Bilbo’s laid across the platform, the polished stone cold against her bare skin. When she lolls her head back, she can look up at the king’s watchful eyes. He looks her over with more scrutiny than Tauriel, and Bilbo blushes for it, but there’s no going back now. Tauriel bends over Bilbo to place a kiss over her breast, soft and lingering.

The kiss trails lower, over the slope of her breast, up to her nipple, and Tauriel’s slender tongue dances once around her nub, then dips along the bottom to trace over her rib. Tauriel kisses her middle and pecks a line down her stomach, tongue slipping into her belly button. Bilbo tries to look down her body at Tauriel, but she’s also drawn to the king, and has to hold herself back, because she doesn’t want to lose herself in just how amazing this is. She never thought she’d see a woman like Tauriel dip between her legs, yet Tauriel’s mouth trails right through the thick curls above and around Bilbo’s pussy. Tauriel’s plush lips spread around her entrance, tongue snaking in, easily burrowing inside, and Bilbo gasps for it and arches up, her arms clawing at the stone. Tauriel licks at her a few times, only tiny, shallow things, like a kitten tasting milk. She licks her lips as she rises after, then stalks over Bilbo, now like a full-grown cat with trapped prey.

Held on all fours above Bilbo, Tauriel reaches down to part her robes. Bilbo hears the tiny clink of clasps drawn aside, of laces undone, and when Tauriel’s crotch rolls into hers, Bilbo can feel the burn of bare skin. Tauriel’s body rolls against her, their lips catching together. It doesn’t feel like there’s any hair around Tauriel’s pussy, but it’s too much for Bilbo to really tell; they keep moving, and she’s lost in that sensation. She wants to push Tauriel back and get a proper look, but for the sake of her audience, she doesn’t interfere.

She lets Tauriel kiss her in small, hungry nips to her neck and throat. Tauriel’s hips work into a tidy rhythm, her long legs between Bilbo’s little ones and her arms bracketing Bilbo’s body. Her chest feels too restrained, probably with armour on top of a bra, and Bilbo starts to entertain thoughts of stripping it away with her teeth. Perhaps, if she’s very good, they might even relocate to the king’s bedchambers, and that makes Bilbo really, hot. She’d love to strip Tauriel bare and tumble together onto a soft mattress, set to stroke and caress and kiss one another as they rocked their naked flesh together, under their king’s heavy gaze and instructions. Then, perhaps, they could fall asleep together, and Bilbo could see such a beautiful veneer at rest, and brush Tauriel’s hair from her eyes and kiss her cheek and wrap her in warm blankets. And then, if they were very, very good, perhaps Kíli would be allowed to join, and then, while Tauriel claimed him, Bilbo could have Fíli for herself, and Bilbo could show Thranduil how truly wonderful the dwarves really are...

But that’s for another time, and for now, all she has is the torturous slide of Tauriel’s clothed body. She whimpers between kisses and dares to reach for Tauriel’s collar, but before she gets the chance, Thranduil orders, “Stop.”

Tauriel freezes immediately. She withdraws, pulling back up to sit on her knees, with her thighs spread and head bowed, her clothes parted around a peek of flesh. She’s breathing just a little heavier than before. She makes no move to cover herself, none at all without her king’s permission, and it gives Bilbo the chance, like Thranduil, to eye Tauriel’s pussy, tight and flushed, only a little crinkle of pink poking out between her folds, glistening with the moistness of interest.

“Leave me with Thorin’s pet,” Thranduil says, even and difficult to discern. “You will go to Legolas and tell him exactly what you have done, and that he is welcome to a turn with this hobbit should he wish.”

Tauriel dips her head and answers, “Yes, my lord.” She only spends a moment retying her clothes, while Bilbo simply lies back, naked and wanting. From what Bilbo’s seen, she doesn’t think that Legolas has an intimate relationship with Tauriel, though he most likely wants one. Bilbo can only
wonder how he will react to hearing of Tauriel putting on a sexual show, however small, for his father. It’s an interesting dynamic these elves have, and Bilbo can’t help but think that, just perhaps, they could use a page out of Thorin’s book.

But that isn’t for Bilbo to say. She watches Tauriel turn and walk down the path, and then she lifts up on her elbows, sits and looks up at the king, asking more bravely than she feels, “How may I please you, my lord?”

Bilbo feels vaguely traitorous for it, but she enjoys sitting in Thranduil’s lap. He lets her curl right up to his chest, her legs folded neatly across his. She’s pulled her clothes back on, but she’s purposely twisted her skirt so the pocket is easy to hide at her front, the bulge of her dagger covered in the folds. He doesn’t touch her much, and when he does, it’s only fleeting things, more thoughtful and exploratory than with any real purpose. He strokes her knee and spays his fingers down her back, and once traces the curve of her round stomach. He has a relaxed, almost bored air to him, and it makes him seem more powerful than ever.

He asks her what she’s done for Thorin and his company, and Bilbo tells him all sorts of tales, most twisted versions of daydreams Bofur’s fed her. When he asks her where they’re headed, she says only that she’s been promised to have a place in their kingdom. This is all true, along with the naughty fantasies she shares of having their soft beds to lie in, and being groomed well and dressed in expensive jewelry and given wealth while she pleasures them. She tries to be as vague as possible about where this treasure will come from and where they’ll settle in, and she doesn’t mention Thorin’s status at all. Yet when she speaks of Thorin, even in passing, she can’t help the slight tremor that comes into her voice, and she’s sure Thranduil notices.

Finally, he asks, “And what would Thorin Oakenshield do, if he knew his concubine had switched sides?”

Bilbo wants to say that there are no sides, but she knows she won’t get away with it, and instead thinks and answers, “I suppose he’d spank me?” She smiles as she says it, biting her lip. She wouldn’t mind that, actually, Thorin’s calloused palm smacking against her rear, only that she wouldn’t want him to be actually upset with her.

Thranduil seems to mull this over, drawling, “Perhaps we should go down and see if that is true. Tell me, little hobbit, would you be willing to go farther in your role for me?”

Bilbo has to stop herself from frowning. She knows that Thorin wouldn’t want to see her working for the elves, even if he figured out it was only to buy time and favour. It would hurt him, and that she doesn’t want, but she can’t think of any way to say so without betraying their connection, so she says only, “I would do anything you like.” And in a way, she’s truly hoping Thranduil takes that chance and plays with her properly. It’s comfortable in his lap, but he’s also dreadfully handsome, and of course she wouldn’t mind riding the cock of an Elven king. She wants her dwarves back more, but that doesn’t stop her attraction to him.

“Perhaps I would like to see Thorin do this,” Thranduil continues idly, his hand now returning to run between her knee and ankle. “Or, perhaps, I could dole out such a punishment to his nephews. I know I have two of them in my dungeons, and I am sure at least one would be amenable to bear punishment in their uncle’s place. I have been informed that the captain of my guards has taken an interest in one. He, certainly, should be taught a lesson, which I’m sure my son would be willing to deliver...”

While she listens, Bilbo can’t help but shiver, picturing Legolas with Kíli bent over his lap. Both princes are exceedingly attractive, and she thinks Legolas’ strokes would be hard and firm, driven by
his jealousy over Tauriel. Kíli might protest, but then, perhaps, his interest in elves might drive him to relish in the treatment, pushing eagerly back into Legolas’ hand and mewling with each blow. The image, both of Kíli squirming across another man’s lap and of Legolas doling out punishment, makes Bilbo grow hot. But as she squirms in Thranduil’s lap, she has to say, “I... I don’t wish any harm to come to the dwarves. Please, only use me.”

Thranduil sighs, but acquiesces, “A pity. I would never wish to abuse my power so, and yet... I must admit, the thought was tempting.” Then a smirk twists its way onto his lips, and he looks down at her to muse, “Perhaps I would enjoying going through you more. I’m sure I could find a fitting muzzle, and parade you down on a leash and collar to show those fools just what’s become of their pet. And then, if they learn some manners, perhaps I might even let one or two have a taste of you through the bars.” His fingers lift to scratch beneath her chin, and Bilbo mewls like the dog she’s become. She’s not sure she’d wear a muzzle for him; his looks have nothing to do with trust, and such a binding would require total faith. But she’d wear one for Thorin, and the idea of being Thorin’s pet, paraded around Erebor in front of the others, makes her moan with want.

Thranduil misinterprets it, grinning.

Bilbo spends the entire day with the elf king, right through into the evening, and it’s growing dark again by the time Tauriel returns with Legolas. Bilbo has eaten berries from Thranduil’s fingers and listened to him speak with his guards, but mostly just nuzzled against his chest while he pets her and made to tell lewd tales. She keeps hoping it will come to more, but it never does. When she sees Tauriel and Legolas coming up the path, she hopes for a chance with both of them, though Legolas doesn’t look particularly interested in her. She wonders if he’s jealous over her experience with Tauriel, however short it was, though he doesn’t look at her with any malice, either.

When they’re on the platform before his throne, Thranduil asks his son, “Would you like to try our new pet?” But Legolas only shakes his head, to Bilbo’s disappointment. “Perhaps you would like to spank one of the dwarves for me, then.”

Tauriel’s eyebrow lifts, and Bilbo has to bite back her grin, while Legolas says tightly, “No.” Thranduil chuckles as though he was only teasing.

“Well, you’re no fun at all,” Thranduil replies. Tauriel looks away, and Bilbo wonders if she might’ve liked the chance to dish out such punishment, but it isn’t offered to her. Instead, Thranduil continues, “Perhaps you will be more interested in sampling life’s pleasures after you’ve had your fill of wine at the festival.” This makes Bilbo start; she’d forgotten about the rumours of such a festival. While Bilbo wonders over what they’re celebrating and how much wine there’ll be, Thranduil taps Bilbo’s side, gently ushering her off his lap. She slips to the thin stone that connects his dais to the stairs, wobbling a bit on her stiff legs, prickling with disuse. His fingers push lightly between her shoulder blades, and Bilbo takes the hint, moving to pick carefully down the stairs.

“Escort our guest to her accommodations and see that she is given something appropriate to wear for the feast.”

Bilbo reaches the platform where Legolas and Tauriel are, and she sends Thranduil an appreciative smile. In the back of her mind, she nervously wonders if he expects her to put on some sort of show, but that will have to be a discussion for another day, along with what she’ll wear. As perfectly comfortable as she’s become stripping before others, she’s not sure she’d want to be in clothes too revealing amidst a whole feast of strangers. For now, she says only, “Thank you, my lord.” She doesn’t intend on staying long anyway, and perhaps she’ll be able to slip away before this festival. After all, they all need to reach the Lonely Mountain by Durin’s Day, and as stunning as Thranduil may be, she can’t afford to wait out his amusement.
When Tauriel and Legolas turn down the steps, Bilbo automatically hurries to follow. Fortunately, their pace deliberately slows to match her smaller legs.

It isn’t until they’re nearly out of the grand hall, far out of Thranduil’s earshot, that Tauriel asks, “What is your name, little one? I don’t believe I ever had the pleasure of learning it.”

“Bilbo Baggins, at your service,” Bilbo replies, subconsciously mirroring her dwarves. Thranduil already asked her name earlier, and she can only hope that if any elf does ask the dwarves about her, they’ll be smart enough to corroborate her story. Of course, she’d rather no one tell Thorin in particular, but she’s in no position to do anything about it. Even now, she knows she couldn’t escape if she wanted to; she’s knows these two warriors would catch her in a heartbeat if she tried to run. If they saw her slip on her ring, they would know they were looking for an invisible intruder, and security would increase for it. She has no choice but to follow them, secretly looking forward to having a nice room to stay in again, even if elves do keep too-large beds.

She only wishes her dwarves were so lucky. Perhaps if they’d shown the king more respect, they might’ve been locked in rooms instead of cells, but as it is, Bilbo will have a difficult time ahead of freeing them.

As they stroll through the darkened halls of the Elf King’s fortress, Tauriel mentions quietly, “I must say, Bilbo. I can see your... interest... in dwarves. Some have proven more enticing than I would have expected.”

Before Bilbo can agree, Legolas says bluntly, “And yet crude, arrogant, and particularly ugly.” He says it so easily, as though it’s all mere fact, and Bilbo finds herself staring at the back of his head, wondering how such a prince can be so wrong about such things.

Tauriel turns her head to him, ready to reply, but it’s Bilbo that interjects, “I think dwarves are wonderful, and perhaps you should take the time to get to know one before disliking them all.” Legolas looks back at her, though his steps don’t falter. Even if it might be better for her cover to pretend she doesn’t care for dwarves at all, Bilbo can’t help regarding him insistently.

Legolas actually responds, “Do you mean to breed with them?” And Tauriel snorts, quickly recovering as he looks at her, while Bilbo blushes hotly. She can’t tell if it’s a serious question or merely teasing because of earlier.

Either way, she feels inclined to say, “Glóin is actually a lovely person. He’s simply loyal and has a gruff sense of humour. And you did insult his wife and son.” At this, Legolas frowns.

But he does look thoughtful, and he says no more insults to dwarves for the remainder of their walk. Tauriel is similarly quiet. Bilbo thinks of asking about this festival, but instead she thinks it smarter to yawn and pretend as though she desperately wants sleep. She is tired, but not enough that she won’t be able to go searching once they leave her. Time is running out, and she needs to find a way to sneak out thirteen visible dwarves and one invisible hobbit.

Bilbo is lucky that the two guards standing by the quarters she’s given are down the hall, so they likely won’t notice if the door opens all on its own. Legolas leaves once they pass through this hall, but Tauriel walks Bilbo right to the doors and explains to ask the guards outside if she should have need of anything. Bilbo says thank you, when really she wants to ask Tauriel inside.

Once Tauriel’s left, Bilbo slips on her ring, and her true job begins.

Bilbo spends several days with the elves, slipping about to explore when she can, getting very little
sleep, and enjoying large chunks of her days knelt at the king’s feet. She’s grateful that he never actually parades her in front of the dwarves, though disappointed that he never spanks her, either. A few times, she half expects him to spank Legolas; the two of them seem to have a complicated relationship. But Legolas, though he has yet to say anything nice about dwarves, says nothing further against them. Bilbo doesn’t see much of him, though she quickly discerns that these elves rarely stray far from the king’s hold. She also learns that this castle is on the very edge of Mirkwood, and the river that runs through it branches off into a lake, which the Lonely Mountain lies on the other side of. She mostly pieces this together through snippets of conversation overheard by others, as she doesn’t dare ask them herself. For all her troubles, she’s never asked more about the dwarves’ quest.

Aside from the king himself, Tauriel is the most fascinating part of her stay with the elves. Bilbo is in constant awe of her, first for her attractive features and the respect she commands, and then for her skills in stealth and weaponry. From the occasional sparring matches Bilbo witness, she knows that Tauriel is not one to be messed with, yet she always stops at the point of mercy, never causing real harm, even when her foe might do the same in her place. Bilbo hears from stories that Tauriel is merciless with the giant spiders of Mirkwood and would be so with goblins or orcs or other such creatures, but the elves’ home has been safe from these things for a long time. More interesting still is Tauriel’s tenacity and her willingness to see new things. On the few times Bilbo dares to sneak into the dungeons, she often catches Tauriel speaking with Kíli, and she can see the genuine desire on Tauriel’s face when Kíli speaks of far off things and places. Their attention to each other makes it easier to sneak past them.

Bilbo only gets to Thorin twice. Once, he’s sleeping, and Bilbo doesn’t dare do anything to rouse him, lest she draw Tauriel as well. On the second, she slips off her ring long enough to kiss him and promise that she’s safe and trying, and she’ll do everything she can to free them. Thorin asks how the others are, and she says much the same as him, although they have the benefit of being closer together and able to talk through the bars. His solitude is what she really worries for.

He takes her hands in his and says fiercely, “I know we will make it out of this. We’ve been through worse scrapes yet, and we may well be through more after. I’m not ready to give up.”

All he’d really have to do is reveal his quest to the king. But Bilbo thinks she might be onto a plan, so she sighs, “Only a little longer.” He kisses her hand.

And the next day, the day before the autumn feast, Bilbo discovers a plan.

On the night of the festival, Bilbo is given a small set of robes, tailored just for her. Pure white and glimmering as though imbedded with crystals, the fabric feels impossibly light in her hands. Bilbo does try them on and look at herself in one of the full length mirrors, admiring the dip of the neckline and the long sleeves, though she knows the style has only been shrunk, and doesn’t work quite as well on her proportions as hobbit-designed clothes might. Still, the real reason she changes back into her normal, now-cleaned clothes is that she doesn’t want to make off with something so valuable. She will escape, yes, but she doesn’t want to truly be a burglar.

She wants to wait until the feast to slip out, because she knows that the guards around the dungeon will be invited to join, only one or two left sparingly around the entrance to that chamber. Before she can, a knock sounds on her door, and Bilbo shuffles nervously over, hoping it isn’t Thranduil himself that she’ll have to slip away from.

Instead, when she opens her tall door, she finds Legolas standing there. He’s always handsome, but he looks absolutely gorgeous tonight, in long, silver-white robes and a crown made of branches and pearly flowers weaved around his hair. There’s a dreamlike quality to him, too stunning for reality, and it’s difficult to believe that he truly says, “I’m here to escort you to the feast.”
Bilbo feels particularly ugly looking up at him. She’s done her best to appear that way, having purposely mussed up her hair, chewed her lips and smudged a bit of dirt beneath her eyes, but she didn’t think he would be so embarrassingly perfect by contrast. She forces herself to fake a cough, and she mumbles in a pretend nasally voice, “I’m sorry, but I... I don’t think I can come. I’ve been feeling rather sick.”

Legolas’ face takes on kind concern, and he asks, “Should I send for a physician?”

Bilbo quickly shakes her head, insisting, “No, no. I know what it is. I just need a bit of rest, that’s all.” With a shaky, reassuring grin, she explains, “My trials in Mirkwood are still catching up with me, I suppose.” She could go on to say that hobbits aren’t built for such madness, which is quite true, but she doesn’t have to.

Legolas says, “My father will be disappointed.” But he bows his head and turns away all the same. A weak smile is the last he gets of her, and she closes the door again, then presses against it to hear his footsteps lead off. A part of her is still sorry she’s turning down the chance to attend a feast with Legolas, where she would, perhaps, have the opportunity to finally be taken by Thranduil, if he has such interests. And, of course, she would enjoy a proper meal with Tauriel, where they could sit and talk, but she knows that her real friends are in the dungeons, and this is more important. The only trouble with her plan is that it might leave Tauriel in trouble. Bilbo can only hope that if it does come down to a spanking session, Tauriel might enjoy such treatment from her king.

Bilbo waits a little while longer before she slips out of her rooms with the ring on her finger and Sting in the pocket of her skirt. There’s only one guard at the end of her hall, and he’s easy to slip past. He’s sullenly slumped against the wall, a very odd look on an elf, but she assumes he longs to be at the feast. Perhaps he’s only been left in case her supposed sickness worsens, which makes her feel guilty, but she can’t afford to dwell on it. Instead, she makes her way through the castle, stuck to shadows and walking very quietly, all the way down the twisted steps that lead to the dungeons.

There is, in fact, only one guard at the entrance, stationed at the junction of the hall where prisoners would have to come by if they meant to escape. Fortunately, Bilbo’s plan doesn’t require leaving the dungeons by way of the rest of the castle. She steals through them, right into the cellars, where the giant barrels of Dorwinion wine—the most potent brew available—have already been half-emptied. Bilbo’s spent enough time in the castle now to know how much this wine is favoured, so she isn’t surprised that the two men in the cellar have also broken into it. Tipsy and chatting about nothing particularly interesting, the two of them sit alone at a wooden table in the middle. The keys, hanging along the cellar wall, aren’t difficult at all for Bilbo to slink up too and carefully pluck away. The elves continue merrily on their talk, and Bilbo retreats back through the open door into the cavern with the river flowing swiftly through it. The river here is blocked, and much too fast to swim anyway, so a prisoner couldn’t simply jump into it, even if they did find a way to reach around the corner to the key. But the river runs through in other places, which is part of Bilbo’s plan.

Even without any guards to watch out for, Bilbo moves swiftly. She pops off the ring only when she’s at the first cell, and Balin, leaning against the wall, looks at her in surprise. He starts to say, “Bilbo—”

But she interrupts, “There’s no time! I’ve got a plan, but we need to do it as quickly as possible. Come with me and please be quiet.” Clearly trusting her implicitly, Balin nods and follows her once she’s twisted the key in his lock and spread the door open.

Unfortunately, all the dwarves aren’t so well behaved. As soon as they realize they’re being set free, they call to each other, while others hurriedly shush them. Once all the other dwarves are in line, Bilbo reaches Thorin last, and he grins at her like he never doubted that she would find a way to free
them. Fíli and Kíli practically lunge at him, latching onto his sides, and Dwalin breathes a heartfelt, “Thorin,” and shakes his head. Bilbo has to shush them all again, and she forces herself to save the reunion for later, instead slipping back down the path to lead them forward. They follow her in a long line, one by one, then wait around the corner as she slips on her ring to check on the two elves in the cellar.

Her luck is even better. Both of them are sleeping soundly across the table, their jugs of wine still in their hands and their twisted black hair covering their faces. Bilbo takes the ring back off to usher the dwarves inside, and they creep across the cellar to where the empty wine barrels are stacked up.

This is the part that gets a little tricky, and as the dwarves look blankly around for a way out, Bilbo explains, “You’ll have to climb inside, I’m afraid. These empty barrels are let out and washed down the river, which seems to be the only way to get out of this castle besides through the front door, which we just can’t do even on the autumn festival.”

The dwarves look horrified by this prospect. Thankfully, they remain quiet, but there’s a good deal of grumbling, and Nori mutters, “We’ll be smashed to pieces before we ever get anywhere!”

“Not to mention drown,” Glóin hisses, while Óin eyes the barrels warily. Even Bifur looks skeptical, and she can see Bofur warring with himself not to say anything.

Bilbo, who’s missing a feast with three very beautiful elves she might not have minded entertaining, finds herself a little cross with her beloved dwarves, and tells them hotly, “If you prefer, I can lock you all back up in your cells, and you can either tell the Elf King what he wanted to know in the first place or sit there forever.”

Thorin says quickly, “Thank you, Bilbo.” He still doesn’t sound pleased, but she blushes all the same. He walks around her, gives a heavy sigh, and lifts off the lid of the nearest one.

Then he clambers inside, which is a bit difficult with how large it is and how it’s rounded, but Bilbo hurries to steady the sides. He waves a hand to the others and insists, “Get in, all of you. I don’t plan on staying with these elves a minute more than I have to.” Fortunately, they listen.

All at once, the dwarves scramble into the barrels, some easier than others. Bombur has a rough time squeezing in, and Fíli, Kíli, and Ori need padding so they won’t be knocked around too much. The trouble is that Bilbo has to stay out of them, and she winds up putting her ring back on just in case, while she pops the lids on over them. The nice thing about being invisible is that they can’t see how little confidence in this plan she really has, but then, like she said, there’s nothing else for it. They can’t even try this plan another night, because who knows when the next feast might be.

No sooner has she packed up the last dwarf when she hears footsteps coming into the cellar. She moves to hide behind the barrels before remembering she’s invisible, and at first she’s worried that he’ll announce the missing prisoners, though she was smart and shut all the cells again afterwards, so it might simply seem as though all the dwarves are hiding at the backs of them.

To her relief, the elf that enters only calls, “Where has old Galion gotten to?”

Another one laughs, “There he is, asleep in his jug. Having his own little feast with his friend, it seems.”

“Well, wake him up,” the first prods. “I don’t want to miss anymore of the feast than I have to!”

Bilbo can only assume that they wake this Galion up; she can’t see anything over the brim of the barrels. A ton of them are lined up along the trapdoor that drops into the river, most empty and
thirteen full, and she finds herself in an awkward predicament that she probably should’ve thought out earlier: she doesn’t know how she’s going to get out. There isn’t time to climb into one of the empty ones now; the elves might hear the commotion. So instead she simply has to wait where she is, while another drunken voice snorts, “You’re all late! Here I am waiting and waiting down here, while you fellows drink and make merry and forget your tasks. Small wonder I fell asleep from weariness!”

The elves laugh, clearly not believing him for a moment, but they head towards the barrels all the same. Soon two of them are there to open the hatch, one pulling the long lever and one pushing the barrels that aren’t quite far enough down. As Bilbo steps out of the way, the first couple barrels slither down the plank and into the water below. Thinking of her poor dwarves in them is a horrible feeling, but she can’t do a thing about it. She watches barrel after barrel go tumbling down, until the elves complain, “Your drinking has muddled your wits, Galion! You’ve sent full barrels here!”

Bilbo tenses, worried for that split second, until Galion harrumphs, “I know exactly what I’ve done, now push these empty things down!” So the elves, to Bilbo’s enormous relief, do as he says. And, as the last one pops over the edge, Bilbo, quite without thinking, tosses herself in after.

There’s nothing else for it. Even as she’s falling, she grabs onto the rim of a barrel, terrified and horrorstruck all at once, both at the mad fall and that she’d even do something so crazy. Then she hits the water with a horrible smack, barely manages to cling on, and is tossed back up above it as the barrel bobs. Invisible or not, the water seeps into her, cold and shocking and weighing down her clothes. It’s an incredibly difficult ride, only made bearable when she sees Dori ahead of her punch off his lid and poke up, freely breathing in the open air.
As soon as Bilbo gets the chance, she wades over to Dori’s barrel, clinging to the edge so she can at least have his support, and by now all the others have poked out of their respective casks. Dazed and battered and generally looking like drowned rats, the pack of them wash as far down the river as they can, until they come to a gate that lets the water swarm through but stops them. The barrels all crowd together, clunking against each other’s sides, and at the head of them, Thorin splutters, “Out! Now!” And they all scramble to listen.

It’s a messy business, but at least the metal bars of the gate stop them from washing away. The dwarves try to paddle their way to the rocky shore, but most wind up toppling over into the water and having to swim in their heavy clothes. Bilbo has a horrible time of it, with her skirt flowing everywhere and knotting between her legs and Sting weighing her down. Thankfully, Dwalin grabs her and hauls her out, taking her right up onto a wide, flat rock and sitting her down away from the rush of the river. As soon as she’s coughed the water out of her lungs, she checks her pocket, sighing in great relief to find the ring still there. The other dwarves throw themselves over the rock with similar weariness, and Ori stays at the water’s edge, dumping out her boots.

“A burglar indeed,” Thorin finally chuckles, and they all look at Bilbo with equal parts pride and fondness. It was a difficult ride, but they got out of it, and now the towers of the Elf King’s home, mostly swamped in Mirkwood’s trees, is far in the distance. It’s still dark out, and Bilbo imagines she has at least until morning until they’re discovered. Hopefully, they’ll be on the lake by then. Bilbo doubts that King Thranduil would send any of his subjects out after them, but then, she knows that Tauriel has been itching for an excuse to see other places. Across from her, Kíli’s looking longingly back towards the forest, and she hopes, for both his and Tauriel’s sake, that they find a way to see one another again. Bilbo’s learned as well as anyone that no one should be confined to love only their own people.

She makes a mental note to speak to Kíli of Tauriel at some point, share her knowledge and see if they can keep the memory of the fearsome elf captain alive, but that will have to be for another time. For now, Thorin ushers them all up and suggests, “We should get under the cover of trees before we make camp for the night. There’s no sense traveling these unknown lands in the dark, but I’d at least like to be out of sight in case the elves come looking.” Bilbo, more than happy to have him in charge again instead of being solely responsible for all of their safety, picks herself up and comes to his side.

He puts a wet hand on her soggy shoulder. Her shirt’s soaked through to her bra, and the fur of his coat is completely flattened, his beard and hair glistening with little drops of water. They’re both cold, but she hugs him and regains some warmth. It’s good to feel him without the press of the bars between. As lovely as it was to have proper rooms and a soft bed with the elves, she wouldn’t trade it for the warmth of Thorin’s arms, not ever. The only trouble is that it makes her think of what she had to do to deliver their freedom, or at least, how she managed to survive in the castle. She feels she...
should tell him, but before she can, he’s turning away from her to clap Balin around the shoulders, pleased to be with his team again. She knows how much he loves them all, but he doesn’t give them the same confessions.

They don’t have any supplies, but they’re less starved than they were in Mirkwood, having had a good last meal with the elves. Tauriel always made sure to bring them proper food, and fortunately, even Thorin has his fill. They have nothing to lie on besides their wet clothes and each other, but they manage to find a sprinkling of grass amidst the trees and settle down. There’s nothing to do for their usual preparations—no ponies to tie, food to cook, and a fire isn’t worth it. So instead they simply lie in a little knot, some talking to one another and others trying to sleep under the shine of the stars. Thorin sits between Balin and Dwalin and starts to talk plans of what they’ll do when they cross the lake—a detail Bilbo thinks they’re leaving out; she certainly can’t swim across a whole lake, especially not if it’s as cold as the river was. She sits practically in Thorin’s lap for this, huddled for warmth like the rest of them.

Then, finally, there’s a pause in conversation, and Balin asks curiously, “How did you make out with the elves, Bilbo?” Some of the other dwarves look over at her, and she blushes, the guilt twisting in her gut. She thinks of merely saying that she managed alright, but it would feel insincere, and she knows she has to get this weight off her chest.

So she admits, looking sullenly at the ground, “I... I’m sorry. I was caught, and I knew I couldn’t afford to be locked up, being the only one left, so I...” her voice lowers, and she mumbles very quietly, deliberately not meeting Thorin’s eye even though one of her knees is over his, “I submitted myself to the Elf King.”

A short pause follows, filled by Bombur’s snoring and the splash of Ori wringing out her sweater for the umpteenth time. What she can see of Balin’s face is worried, not judgmental, but she can’t bring herself to see Thorin’s. She makes herself continue, “Because I knew you wouldn’t want me to tell him of the quest, I... I lead him to believe that I was your... concubine.” Glóin, sitting across from her, straightens up, and Óin leans in to hear her better. “I said I was only with you to be your whore, and I knew nothing of your quest. And he... offered me food and lodging—I was kept very safe—in exchange for... my services.” This last part is mumbled in a quiet whisper, and finally she looks at Thorin.

He’s hardened. Maybe angry, and she can only hope it isn’t at her. His voice still aches with concern as he asks, “Did he hurt you?” She quickly shakes her head, and he presses, “In any way at all? Did he force you to...? If you don’t wish to speak of it—”

“No,” Bilbo insists, “He was very kind to me. They all were. And,” she hurries to add, “he didn’t even really touch me. Well. He stroked me... but my clothes were on. He offered me to his son, but the prince refused—the only elf I touched was... ah...” Pausing to lick her lips, Bilbo glances aside. Kíli and Fíli are now watching her, and Bilbo has to remind herself that dwarves aren’t primarily monogamous, and surely Kili can’t begrudge her for it. “I was asked to put on a few ‘shows’ for him with Tauriel, the captain of his guards. But it was nothing I didn’t want, and she was good to me. And good to... to touch.” Her cheeks are red. She glances at Kíli again, who looks wholly envious but not upset.

Thorin looks less pleased. His anger ebbs into a sort of irritated confusion, as though wondering how he could ever let such a thing happen, though Bilbo’s not sure she would want her experience changed much. To him in particular, she says, “I’m sorry. I am, Thorin. I never wanted to betray you or any of the dwarves.”

“You didn’t betray me,” Thorin replies, and of that, at least, he sounds certain. “I don’t own you,
Bilbo.”

He does, in a way. Just like she would hope that she owns a part of him. But all she says is, “Sorry,” because she means it.

He insists, “You don’t need to be sorry.” She can tell he still isn’t pleased with the news, but he bends to peck her forehead, and that does help alleviate some of her stress. She can feel the tenderness in it; proof that he still loves her.

As he pulls away, she chuckles in a small bit of reprieve, “You know, King Thranduil asked what you would do if you knew what I was doing. I told him you’d spank me.”

Before Thorin can even properly react, Nori pushes through Glóin and Óin, chirping, “I’ll do it!”

Dwalin almost has to physically push him back, and Bilbo can’t help but laugh at the eager way Nori looks from her to Thorin. Thorin wrinkles his nose, but there is a bit of amusement on his face. But his focus remains on Bilbo, and he studies her for a moment, before slowly asking, “...Do you think you should be?” His tone makes it clear that he doesn’t ask for punishment, but for the game of it.

Biting her lip, Bilbo decides, “Yes.” She barely even needs to think about it. Even if it doesn’t make Thorin feel any better, she thinks Nori could make it fun. Any of them probably could. She almost asks again if he’s angry with her at all, but she can see in his softening eyes that he isn’t. He cups her face in his hands and kisses her sweetly on the lips, brushing back through her moist hair. His mustache might need trimming when they get supplies and a razor again; it tickles more than usual. But it’s still wonderfully pleasant, and she clings to his shirt for more.

When he finishes, he mutters, “Go lie across Nori’s lap.” It sounds like an order, and Bilbo shivers, eager to obey.

Nori’s already settled down on folded knees, and he pats his thigh eagerly as she crawls over to him. By now, most of the dwarves have come to watch. As Bilbo lowers herself down across Nori’s legs, Fíli says, “Maybe we should spank Kíli for his treachery, too.”

Kíli gives Fíli a betrayed look, while Fíli innocently looks away, and Thorin gruffly answers, “No one betrayed anybody.” Bilbo tries to contain her disappointment; she wouldn’t have minded seeing Kíli face the same fate. Although, there might still be a chance. If there ever is a reunion between him and Tauriel, she might want retribution for his escape. That thought makes Bilbo squirm, already feeling warm, and she rearranges herself properly, face resting in her folded arms across the ground while her knees press together, feed sprawled out to the side.

Nori takes the hem of her skirt and slowly pushes it up the back of her thighs, his other hand following along to pinch the tender flesh. Bilbo has a sharp intake of breath but doesn’t protest; part of the game is that she’s being punished. She lets him roll her skirt right up over her waist, revealing her rear, and Nori lifts his leg to thrust her up, jutting her rump into the air. Her thighs are cold, her panties glued to her cheeks. Nori asks, “What do you think, boys? Should she get to keep her panties on?”

A few of them mutter their response, all in the negative, Bofur’s, “Nope,” being the loudest. So Nori grabs either end of Bilbo’s panties and pushes them off her cheeks, a harder task than usual with the way the still-damp fabric clings to her. He pushes them all the way down to her knees. Afterwards, his splayed fingers run back up her bare flesh, running tantalizingly over the hump of her rear. Bilbo tries to look back, but it’s too difficult to crane her neck for very long, so she settles for looking at Thorin and Balin and focusing on the feeling of Nori’s probing fingers. He squeezes several times, pinches her on each cheek, and rakes his nails up her crack.
Finally, he pulls his hand away, and before it rains down, he tells her, “Count them out, Bilbo, so I know you’re paying attention to your punishment.” Bilbo dizzily shakes her head, only to lose her breath a minute later when Nori gives her the first, hard smack, right across both cheeks. She yelps, forgetting what to do, until Nori grabs a fistful of her ass and kneads it roughly while he growls, “Count.”

“One,” Bilbo breathes, only to be rewarded with the second smack. It’s just as hard, just as even, and she corrects, “Two.” The next stings, placed over just the same area, and Bilbo mutters, “Three.” He hits her again, again, and Bilbo shakily counts aloud, until it gets to ten and she’s squirming, her ass already very hot and sore; hobbit feet might be sturdy, but the rest of her isn’t built for abuse. Each blow makes her ample cheeks jiggle, too soft to take much of his strength. On the tenth, she finds herself pleading, “Oh, ten, please—” But she doesn’t quite know if she’s asking him to stop or give her more.

“Please?” Nori repeats. “More? You think you deserve more?” Bilbo nods her head, groaning and squirming back into his hand, smoothing over her again. “But that’s right, of course you do. You’re a very naughty girl, Bilbo Baggins, and you deserve lots and lots of blows—you need to be punished, don’t you?”

Bilbo moans, “Yes.” He hits her again, and she counts, “Eleven.” Nori works back into a steady rhythm, but he doesn’t stop at twenty. He keeps going, hitting her over and over, and soon Bilbo’s ass is on fire, and her counting falters. She finds her eyes watering from the ache in her rear, even though it’s a good ache, and half the reason she’s writhing in his lap is that she’s trying to rub herself against him; she’s wet between her legs. She can’t help it, especially when his hands linger in between blows, slipping beneath her thighs and forcibly jiggling her rear, showing her off for all the other dwarves to see. Bilbo’s eyes start to water before too long, until she’s sobbing out her counts, begging in between, “Oh... oh, please...”

The blows keep coming. Each time Nori’s hand connects with her ass, there’s a harsh cracking sound. Heat and pain explode in her, confusingly mingled with pleasure, and she can feel her ass growing redder, her hips pathetically trying to hump him. She’s not sure how many he’s given her—the numbers lose meaning, even though she faithfully recites them, but she can barely stop herself when Thorin hisses suddenly, “That’s enough.”

Nori’s hand stops immediately, landing on Bilbo’s ass in a squeeze instead of a slap, and Bilbo whimpers pathetically, rubbing back against his thick palm. Her thighs are completely trembling, her body wracked with her sobs. Idly petting Bilbo’s back, Nori coos, “I’m not sure she’s learned her lesson. If only I had my paddles...”

“We’ve got a long day ahead of us tomorrow,” Thorin says, a note of warning in his tone. “And she’ll need to be able to walk.”

Bilbo appreciates that. She does. But she also doesn’t want it to be over. She’s very wet, and the way Nori rubs her only makes it worse. It takes her a second to get it together enough to push up to hands and knees, and then she almost topples over, having forgotten that her panties are keeping her knees together. Her skirt stays hiked up her waist, and she keeps her back arched to make her ass thrust out in the air, because she wants them all to look at it. Next to Nori, Óin mutters, “Nice and tenderized.” His hand smooths over her, next to Nori’s, and then he announces, “If the little lass hasn’t learned her lesson, I think I could teach her a thing or two.” Bilbo whimpers in agreement, pushing back into him.

Nori looks disappointed, but he still gets out of the way for Óin to pull her over. He keeps her on all fours, just shifts her a little, and she waits impatiently while he unties his trousers. But it’s only a
moment before his cock is poking into her ass, and Bilbo gasps and leans into it; it hurts just to touch her. He slides his cock down her crack all the same, only to dip between her legs and rub the head along her moist lips. She’s grateful that he’s headed there; she doesn’t think she could take him in her asshole right now. To help urge him on, Bilbo folds her arms on the ground and rests her chin on them, giving her body more leverage to push her ass up and her pussy back. Óin moans in appreciation, and before she knows it, he pushes inside. It’s just the blunt tip at first, parting her outer walls, but he rocks into her with insistent little thrusts that pushes him in a little more each time. Even though it’s been awhile since she last had anything larger than fingers inside her, she opens right up for him, more than wet enough to ease the way—she’s missed them, and her pulverized cheeks leave her hyper sensitive, body reacting to every little touch. It’s so good to have all their eyes on her again, and she’s grateful that she’s positioned to look up at Thorin, able to see his hungry eyes rove over her. As Óin shoves into her, Bilbo’s shirt starts to slide down the arch her body. She wants to rip it and her bra off, but she doesn’t have the wherewithal to wrestle out of them right now.

She means to ask one of them to help her. But before she can, Óin finishes, buries himself to the base, and Bilbo’s lost in her moans and the sensation of being filled. He wriggles around inside of her, his stout cock rubbing all her walls and making her clench around it. Óin gives her side an appreciative pat, and Bilbo moans louder, remembering that he likes to hear it. Yet at the same time, she’s not sure she wants to keep her mouth free.

Thorin, she knows, tends not to get involved in group activities, but as Óin grabs Bilbo and starts to bounce her into his cock, she looks at Balin appraisingly. He’s stroking his beard while he watches her, his eyelids lowered and his cheeks pink, though he isn’t massaging himself through his trousers like some of the others are. He’s just out of reach of her head, too far for her to lick over his lap, but she can make it with an outstretched hand. While Óin fucks her hard, tossing her forward and sliding her back, Bilbo shakily paws at Balin’s leg, groaning, “Oh, I... I want all of you... missed you so much...”

Balin reaches down to pet her hair and murmur, “We missed you too, Bilbo.”

“I think she wants more than that,” Óin grunts from behind her, his breath coming laboured with the force of his thrusts. Bilbo’s breasts keep getting dragged along the ground, jostled, and she tries to push back up onto all fours, even though it makes his thrusts less deep. It’ll be worth it if she can have another dwarf in her at the same time, she thinks. With her open mouth panting and her eyes hazy, she looks at Balin in want, and Óin chuckles behind her, “Get in here, Balin! It takes two old men to satisfy a girl like this.” He slaps her ass again, and Bilbo yelps from the sting of it. If she weren’t busy pining after Balin’s cock, she’d say they aren’t old at all, and they’re enough for her, and she’s quite happy riding Óin’s dick, but right now in particular she just wants to be full of dwarf cock, and if she can, she’ll taste all their seed before they get separated again.

Balin chuckles, but he doesn’t argue. He just shuffles closer, working with his own belt to part his robes. He brushes his beard aside, tossing bits of it over his shoulder. As soon as he’s shuffled closer and pulled his cock out of his trousers, Bilbo opens her mouth and plunges onto it. Balin gasps, and Bilbo moans—it’s been too long since she had her lips around a dwarf. She appreciates the smooth texture, the weight of it on her tongue, the little veins that run across it, and she suckles on Balin happily. She doesn’t even have to bob on and off, because Óin’s thrusts do that for her, shoving her between them. Balin’s hips shiver, but he doesn’t hump her, just takes the preset rhythm, fitting perfectly in. His balls slap against her chin with his subtle movements, but Bilbo’s too busy sucking to pull off and worship all of him as much as he deserves—maybe later. For now, she takes Óin in her pussy and Balin in her mouth, impaled from both ends and thoroughly fucked. This is what she needed.

Óin finishes first, coming with a loud cry and a sudden thrust that nearly chokes Bilbo, his cock
slamming deep into her and spurting her full of hot seed. Her body instantly clutches at it, soaking it in, and she’s happily pumped full of his cum with the next few thrusts. By the time he pulls out of her, Bilbo’s insides are soaked, and yet she whimpers around Balin’s cock, wanting more. Unfortunately, he quickly follows, grabbing her hair and holding her down to come down her throat. She swallows spurt after spurt of it, jaw stretched wide and throat relaxed, while her pussy flexes and dribbles and her ass stings and her breasts strain in their confines. Balin doesn’t let go until he’s finished pouring into her, and then she pulls off, spluttering for air and leaking Dwarven seed off her tongue.

Balin mutters a sheepish, “Sorry,” but Bilbo doesn’t have time to tell him it’s alright.

She’s abruptly grabbed from the side and rolled over onto her back. With her legs in the air, Glóin yanks her panties right off of them. “After all that breeding talk with the elfling, I could use some fun myself,” he announces, looking down at Bilbo’s body in hunger.

He’s already got his cock out, and he slips it right into her loose pussy without any warning. Bilbo hisses at the sudden entrance, but she’s stretched and wet and still very much turned on. So she lets him fuck her wildly, while she tilts her head back and moans. She can feel some of Balin’s cum trickling out the side of her lips. It only makes her want another load, and as she licks it away, she peers at Thorin and Dwalin, hoping one of them will fuck her mouth. She moans, “Take me?”

And several of the dwarves hurry over.

Bilbo has to take a good wash in the river in the morning, scrubbing off the caked on layers of a good deal of love making, but it was all quite worth it. Many of the dwarves join her in a wash, but before they can get to any more fun, Thorin announces, “We’ll need to move on again. We’re in a sorry state, and we’d best get some supplies and weapons while we still have the strength.” This, of course, makes perfect sense. Bilbo is rather hungry, so she pulls her clothes back on and hurries after him, the others following in a tight knit group. No one suggests going back for the barrels; it would probably faster, and far safer, to walk along the whole lake than try to wade across in them.

They walk along the river all the same, because so long as they do that, they have water and know where they’re headed. At first, it’s all rock and a few trees and plants, with too much fog in the distance to see very far. Then, as they come over the hump of a little hill, they find the edge of the lake. It’s much bigger than Bilbo would’ve thought it—far too big to walk around if they have any hope of reaching the mountain before they starve. It also looks dreadfully cold, with chunks of ice sticking up, and for a moment, they stand where they are, peering across it in a solemn silence.

Eventually, Thorin leads them down the slope. Bilbo follows, picking carefully with her arms out to either side for balance. Down at the bottom, they find a dirt-trodden path, twisting along the shore, and they follow it until they see a dock tucked near the mouth of the river, just a little wooden thing, with a small boat tethered to one of the posts. There’s a man at it, hauling empty barrels—perhaps the very ones the dwarves left aside—but the second the dwarves are within hearing range, the man whirls around. Bilbo prepares herself to greet him, but he has a bow out and an arrow trained on them too fast for anything else.

Quick as he is, Kíli tries to draw his bow to match, but the man shoots Kíli’s first arrow out of his hands before it’s lined up, and Kíli swears and drops his bow, shaking his hand. The man calls over the distance, “Who are you?”

Balin’s the one to answer. With his hands held up, he replies, “Simple merchants.” He dares to take a step forward, and though the arrow stays fixed on him, it doesn’t draw any tighter. “We hail from the Blue Mountains, here to see friends from the Iron Hills. He keeps walking, pausing a couple meters
from the man’s spot, and the man slowly lowers his bow.

Thorin walks swiftly to Balin’s side, the others following. Up close, it’s strange for Bilbo to see a man, so much taller than the dwarves but less elegant than the elves, with rounded ears. His frame is trim, but more muscular than lithe, and he has a little bit of a mustache and close-shaven beard, with long, scraggly dark hair pulled away from his face. He’s very handsome, strange as he is: a sort of merging of the dwarf and elf aesthetic. He doesn’t seem particularly surprised to see dwarves, though his eyes do linger over Bilbo. While the man looks about them, Balin eyes his boat and asks, “Would your boat be for hire, by any chance?”

“No one enters Lake-town but by leave of the Master,” the man says neutrally, which doesn’t answer Balin’s question.

“It doesn’t matter,” Thorin says over Balin’s shoulder. “We have no money; the Elf King raided our pockets.”

Perhaps this is a ploy for sympathy, but the man looks up at the mention. “I don’t like to defy King Thranduil.” The way he says the king’s name comes with an air of common use. Bilbo has to wonder if this man knows him, although it seems unlikely that such a grand king would know a bargeman. But then, if the king wouldn’t mind entertaining a lowly hobbit, perhaps he would indulge in a particularly handsome civilian. As if to justify his words, the man adds, “All of Lake-town’s little wealth comes from trade with the forest realm.”

Bilbo looks back up at Thorin. He could say that he’s a king and could soon provide wealth of his own, but she isn’t surprised when he says nothing. Instead, Balin asks, trying to be friendly, “I don’t think we caught your name.”

“Bard,” the man answers bluntly, before returning to his task of loading barrels.

“Bard,” Balin repeats. “You look like a kind soul. Do you have any little ones at home?”

Bard looks over his shoulder, expression curious, as though no one’s ever bothered to ask him such a thing before. Certainly not vagabonds looking for a free ride, anyway. Under Balin’s sweet smile, he admits, “A son, and two daughters.”

“And your wife? I bet she’s a real beauty.”

Here, Bard pauses, his back turned and stooped over a barrel. It takes him a second to reply, “She was.” Balin’s face falls, and Bilbo worries that his efforts have been erased, but Bard only shakes his head and sighs. Bilbo gets the expression that it happened a long time ago, although she has no way of really knowing and isn’t inclined to ask.

The silence that follows is a difficult one. It’s rare for so many of the dwarves to fall hushed, but they all seem to be waiting for the other to come up with something. Thorin and Dwalin simply glare at Bard’s back, while Balin fiddles with his hands, clearly trying to come up with another route.

Bilbo’s the one that steps forward next. It’s a mad idea she has, especially after the way their conversation just ended, but she’s just played concubine before, and they have nothing else to bargain with. She feels vaguely like she did with the elves: inadequate. But it worked with them, so she clears her throat. When Bard looks around at her, she fights to keep her blush in check and asks, “Would you, perhaps, accept... different services for payment?” Hopefully, he understands what she means, because she doesn’t want to explain any clearer.

Behind her, Thorin hisses, “Bilbo,” but she looks back at him with a frown; they have no other
Bard looks at her very oddly. She can’t quite tell what conclusion his sweeping gaze draws, though he does stop hauling barrels long enough to give her a proper look. After a minute, he says, “Forgive me. I don’t know if you are a dwarf or something else, and you are pretty as you are, but you’re as small as my children.”

A little miffed, Bilbo assures him, “I’m much older than that.” She doesn’t feel inclined to give the number, but it shouldn’t matter anyway; she knows men are shorter-lived. Bard looks like he believes her, but is still clearly hesitant to accept such an offer.

“I suppose you’re not into dwarves?” Ori asks, stepping out next to Bilbo. He probably looks like someone Bard would consider male, but Bilbo knows that can be turned around if Bard required it. Then Fíli steps up to Bilbo’s other side and says, “You might have your pick.”

This is evidently too much for Thorin, who grabs Fíli’s arm and pulls him protectively back, to Fíli’s annoyed glare. Before he can offer again, Thorin shifts in front of him and comes to stand in front of even Bilbo, right before Bard. The two of them look similar, in a way, strong and paternal with dark, wavy locks and scruff along their jaw, though Thorin’s presence is heavier and Bard stands taller. “Look,” Thorin says, his voice gruff but level. “I admit we have nothing to offer, but we need to get across this lake, and if you can’t help us, I don’t know where we’ll go. It will be no skin off your back to take us across, and we have our own dealings with the Master on the other side. I assume you are a decent man when I ask: will you help us?”

Bard looks Thorin right in the eye. It’s a blunt, useless offer, but they have no other choice. The way Thorin looks right now, Bilbo knows that in Bard’s place, she’d give Thorin anything. But she has a weakness for dwarves and no loyalties to elves.

Yet Bard sighs, “I’ve always been a sucker for hard luck cases.” He doesn’t look pleased, but he steps aside and lets them board his barge all the same. It’s good enough for them.

As soon as they’re all seated in the back, Fíli makes to go talk to him again, but Thorin forcibly sits him down with a glare that makes Kíli snort.

The ride is a somber one, the dwarves all grouped together and Bard at the head, steering through the ice flows. For most of the ride, the sky is grey and foggy, though there are moments when Bilbo thinks she can see the mountain through the clouds, and it always makes an expression of awe and hope come onto the dwarves’ faces. Though the mountain itself means little to her, their happiness is palpable, and it fills her with joy for them.

The only trouble is that it makes her wonder what she’ll do if that mountain is restored. The end of their journey, beyond Erebor itself, is rarely spoken off—but where will she go? She belongs in Bag End, yes, but how is she ever going to leave her dwarves?

She tries to tell herself that it isn’t something to think of now; they’re still a long way off with plenty of obstacles, and there’s no sense worrying over what may never be. Yet she can’t help the stray thought all the same, and finally she decides she needs a distraction, and she climbs to her feet.

Thorin immediately asks, “Where are you going?”

And before Bilbo can answer, Dwalin grumbles, “We can’t trust him.”

“Don’t be silly,” Bilbo replies with surprising ease. “I’m only going to talk to him; I think someone
ought to thank him for his generosity.” Dwalin wrinkles his nose, but can’t argue that logic, and Bilbo picks across the wooden boards. It’s times like these that she’s grateful for large feet; it makes it easier to keep her balance. The water is mostly still, but the boat still rocks, as anything would in water. Squeezing past the empty barrels, she slowly makes her way up.

When she’s there, she says a polite, “Excuse me.” Bard, fixed otherwise forward, glances back at her. She understands that he has to watch where they’re going, so she isn’t offended when he only nods and looks back around. “I just wanted to thank you.”

“It’s alright,” Bard sighs. He sounds tired, but then, Bilbo figures, he would have to be, raising three children on his own and having to cross such a long way over the lake over just empty barrels, and the silhouette of the town across the lake doesn’t at all look a pleasant place to live. Aside from the cold, the buildings appear to be falling apart, and the people she can make out are mostly stooped over, bustling about with a slow sort of drudgery. As Bilbo peers past him, Bard looks back again and says, “I’m sorry if I offended you.”

“It’s alright,” she repeats. She smiles at him, and he returns it faintly, if a little forced. If Bard doesn’t know the Elf King, he might want to wander up to the castle some time and take those barrels by hand. She thinks of suggesting it—perhaps a little wine would cheer him up, if not Thranduil’s beauty itself, or at least a nice rest in the accommodating splendor of the elves. Unfortunately, if Bard were to mention her to Thranduil, it probably wouldn’t go well.

So instead she’s only quiet. She turns when she hears the heavy plunk of Dwarven footsteps coming towards her. Bofur scoops her up around the middle, huffing, “Come on, little lady. We need to keep you safe.” She’d say she is safe, but by the time she’s hiked up into the air, turned and marched back to her dwarves, she doesn’t want to protest.

Instead, she enjoys being settled down in Bofur’s lap. She doesn’t want to engage in too much sexually when all Bard has to do to see them is turn around, so she gives Bofur a pointed look. It doesn’t stop Bombur from sidling up next to her, and the two of them stroke her thighs and back and leisurely scatter her with kisses to make the journey across a fun one.

As soon as Bard announces, “We’re coming to the toll gate,” Bilbo knows docking won’t be pleasant. The weariness in Bard’s voice is edged with irritation, readiness. The dwarves, always expecting a fight, brace themselves likewise. Thorin steps nearer to the front, Bilbo following close behind. Bard brings the boat into the fold of Lake-town, wading up along a narrow strip of wood, just as icy and tattered as it seemed to Bilbo from afar. The whole of Lake-town, built right on the water, looks thoroughly downtrodden. The poverty is clear everywhere, and the cold air smells of crude fish oil and dirt. As they stop at the battered dock, rusted gates in the water force the boat still. It bobs gently on the smooth surface while Bard climbs out and onto the dock.

Someone calls, “Food inspection,” but before they can even leave their post, embedded in the little hut off to the side, another man weaves across the platform with armoured, uniformed guards following at his back. All of the beauty of Bard falls short with this man, who’s dressed in all black, including a flat hat. He stands in a hunch, and his face looks used to scowling, greasy and in need of a shave, with black eyebrows that knit together in the middle. He looks holy unpleasant to Bilbo, even more so for the way he eyes Bard than for his grubby appearance.

“Bard,” the man greets icily, though a grin twists his teeth, like he’s always happy for a chance to catch Bard at the gate. He comes right up to the end of the dock, peering into the boat and the smattering of dwarves. His nose wrinkles as he looks over them, though his eyes linger on Bilbo, deliberately dipping down to her cleavage and unabashedly staring, before he wrenches his gaze back to Bard and sneers, “Last I checked, your license was for empty barrels from the woodland
realm, not passengers.”

“Have a heart, Alfrid,” Bard returns. His exasperation gives Bilbo the impression that they’ve done this many times before, and while Alfrid looks eager to see Bard, the feeling clearly isn’t mutual. “These people needed passage, and what does it trouble us if they have it?”

“These people,” Alfrid says in mockery, though he looks pleased at having it to complain about, “could be anyone. The Master can’t go letting just anyone into—”

“We want to see the Master,” Thorin barks before Alfrid can even finish. He looks around at Thorin in surprise, as though baffled that anyone would interrupt him in the middle of his cat and mouse game with Bard.

Finally, his nose twitches, and he mutters, “Who’re you to seek audience with the Master?”

“Thorin Oakenshield,” Thorin returns bluntly, to Bilbo’s surprise. Thorin glares at Alfrid with undeniable power. “If you are indeed his servant, then you will take us to him. The men of Lake-town have long been friends with the dwarves of Erebor, and if the Master holds any hope of reclaiming Dale, he’d best help us on our journey. Smaug has held these lands long enough. It is time we took back what is ours.”

Alfrid’s mouth has fallen open. Bard looks around at them, similarly shocked, except that he looks mildly horrified. She gets the bizarre impression that if he’d known, he wouldn’t have taken them across. But it’s too late now, and Thorin’s already climbing out of the boat, then reaching back to help Bilbo onto the dock. The dock is rough and icy, but the boat wasn’t much more comfortable. Looking sharply at Alfrid, Thorin continues, “I doubt your Master will be pleased to learn you’ve kept a king waiting.”

“Y-yes, of course,” Alfrid mutters, still lost but quickly regaining himself. He steps aside to give the dwarves more room to clamber onto the dock, though Bard doesn’t move. As Bilbo slips past Alfrid, his eyes follow her. It’s more than a little creepy, but she doesn’t want to be rude, and Thorin is busy watching the other dwarves.

Bard is the one to grab Alfrid’s collar. The move surprises Bilbo, and Alfrid looks just as shocked, staring wildly up at Bard with wide eyes. Clearly, he never expected their altercation to become physical. Behind Alfrid, the guards tense, some laying their hands on the swords at their sides, but Bard only hisses, “Don’t be rude to a lady.”

While Bilbo appreciates the thought, the way Bard dominates Alfrid makes her more hot than relieved. Alfrid scowls up at Bard, but he submits, looking away and muttering, “I wasn’t going to be,” rather sullenly. When Bard lets go, there’s a bit of a shove in it, and Alfrid grunts. Bard pushes back through the dwarves towards his boat, and Alfrid’s eyes follow his back almost as hungrily as they followed Bilbo.

As Alfrid marches the crowd of dwarves off through the town, he mutters to himself, “He’ll be in his place soon enough,” and the little grin he dons makes Bilbo shiver and fall back a step to walk safely between Dwalin and Glóin.

By the time they reach the hall of the Master, news has spread of the return of the King under the Mountain. Though Alfrid keeps quiet about it, probably playing his cards to see where it goes, the inspector at the gate must’ve told everyone he knew. Songs spring up around them, much muttering, and recounted tales of old, prophecies quoted, and the dwarves don’t deny a single word that reaches them. Thorin walks with his head high, and though the dwarves are sodden and dirty, it must still be
an odd enough sight to warrant excitement. As Alfrid guides them into the Master’s home, the crowd settles in outside, loud enough to be heard even after the wooden doors are closed.

While the guards stay in the first room, Alfrid leads them down a dark hall, lined with wooden pillars and dusty old scrolls. They see the long table at the end far before they reach it, where a huge, fat man is bent over his dinner plate, spilling food all down his red mustache and misshapen beard, his limp hair thinning across his round head. His clothes are more ornate than any of the other people Bilbo’s seen in Lake-town, but he’s still dingy and unpleasant-looking. He looks up at them as they approach, his food falling right of his hands.

Before anyone can explain, Thorin bustles forward, coming right up to the edge of the table. He declares as steadfast as he did at the dock, “I am Thorin, son of Thrain, son of Thror, King Under the Mountain. I’ve returned for my land.”

At this, the Master splutters, turning to gape at Alfrid as though for confirmation. But Alfrid looks as lost as he does. Outside, the din is getting louder, and it forces Alfrid to shuffle his feet and mutter awkwardly, “The people have already heard, sire—”

“They’ve heard of my return,” Thorin fills in, “and they clamour for their homes in Dale again, just as we wish for Erebor.” He makes it sound so easy, as though they haven’t got a dragon in the way, and Bilbo can see the nervousness all over the Master’s face. Clearly, his town is suffering, and from the way he’s perched over a large meal while his people starve outside, she imagines he hasn’t been very good at helping them. Perhaps noticing this, Thorin adds, “Those who help me in my quest will be rewarded, those who do not, forgotten.” Greed shines in the Master’s eyes, though Thorin makes no promises of gold amounts.

Licking his lips, the Master says, “If this is true—”

“Why shouldn’t it be?” Thorin interrupts, “Your people have already foretold my coming, and they’re pleased for it. Are you going to go out there and tell them you won’t support the king soon to be watching over these lands?”

“Of course not,” the Master mutters, looking both afraid and appalled at the idea of addressing his people, “And for a tiny sum—”

“There won’t be any gold at all if we don’t get there. We will expect lodging and supplies from this good town, and then, when the mountain is reclaimed, we will be sure to reward those who aided us.”

The Master nods his head. He seems to consider Thorin’s words, but with the noise outside, he doesn’t really have a choice. Finally, he waves his hand and tells Alfrid, “Find these people some rooms.”

Alfrid half bows, replying slickly, “Yes, sire.”

Bilbo can’t help but think this might’ve all been easier if Thorin had presented this case to the elves. But then, Bilbo thinks, the Master seems a lot less intelligent than the Elf King, and this is a lot closer, and Thorin’s made no concrete promises. Nested not far from the mountain as they are, Thorin turns and allows Alfrid to show them out, to the first beds the dwarves will have had since Rivendell.

They’re given a little house on loan, with plenty of room for fourteen people willing to share beds. They’re supplied with food and water, and the dwarves are immediately given clothes, though Bilbo
is understandably told that she’ll have to wait until they can find something to suit her. She’s about
the size of their older children, except she’s fatter around the middle than most of Lake-town’s
gangly residents, and she smiles and says she doesn’t mind, because inside the house, she doesn’t
spend much time in her clothes, anyway.

On their second day in Lake-town, Bofur and Nori return from the market with a mysterious bag of
toys and take her into one of the side rooms, promising new adventures. They settle onto the bed,
and when she moves to sit between them on the thin cot, they usher her instead to the dark wooden
floor. Kneeling there in her shirt and skirt but her bra long since removed, Bilbo watches them pick
through their findings. Bofur produces a lengthy cylinder that looks made out of the same malleable
material as her cup. He tells her with a broad grin, “This isn’t quite as good as what I would’ve
made, but it’ll have to do.”

Bilbo’s eyes rove up and down the smooth surface, and it takes her a minute to realize what it’s for.
Then she murmurs, “Oh,” and blushes.

“Don’t worry,” Nori chuckles, reaching down to pet through her hair. “You’ll get the real thing soon
enough. But we didn’t want our poor little Bilbo to be empty when we acted out some of the other
toys we bought. Unless you want to be empty?”

Not asking about the other toys because she figures she’ll know soon enough, Bilbo shakes her head
and bites her lip; of course she doesn’t want to be empty. Obviously, that was the right answer. They
smirk down at her, and Bofur passes her the toy, as though they expect her to put it in herself.
Instead, she mumbles, “Oh, can’t you...?” Because Bilbo will always opt to leave her vagina up to
Bofur or Nori if she can.

They grin between each other, and Bofur suggests, “Maybe we should just leave it with her, and she
can go see if one of the others wants to put it in her?”

“And take her out before we’ve done up the rest? I thought we weren’t going to show her off until
then,” Nori says, thought it looks like he might also just not want to share. Not when he’s got his
turn, anyway, and the last time he spanked her, Óin made off with the spoils. Bilbo makes a needy
mewling noise to bring their attention back to her, and Nori sighs. “Oh, alright. But we can’t give
you too much of a treat before we’ve even started. Our fingers will just be in and out, you
understand?” Bilbo nods again, perfectly fine with that, because she likes the idea that they’re going
to draw it out.

Still holding the toy in one hand, Bofur reaches down with the other, grabbing at her leg. Bilbo
moves to climb up, but instead, Nori holds her arm, and Bilbo squeaks as Bofur pulls her leg out
from under her. Nori catches her before she can fall, and he steps half off the bed to lower her down,
so her head and shoulders rest against the floor, while Bofur hikes her thighs over his lap. Without
her bra to help, Bilbo’s breasts sag towards her face, her blood rushing down to her head. Her skirt
slips down around her, and Bofur rolls her panties just a little up, enough to slip his fingers inside.
It’s a very strange position, but Bilbo’s concern over it doesn’t last long. As soon as Bofur’s thick
fingers are rubbing at her, she’s more concerned with being able to look up at him. She has to brace
herself on her arms, hands reaching below the dusty bed, but it’s worth it to see Bofur’s feral grin
and feel him rubbing between her folds.

Bofur strokes her several times before he pokes inside, twisting one finger around her clit and the
others playing with her labia. When he pushes inside, he does it only briefly, plunging back in and
pulling out, then rubbing her some more, making her warm and moist, so when he sticks his finger
back inside, she sucks at him. Moaning, Bilbo takes his finger deeper one little thrust at a time, until
he’s pressing the second in, and Nori pets her thigh and casually tells her, “We can’t let you on the
flushed and focused on her entrance being stretched, Bilbo only barely manages to murmur, “Pet...?”

Nori pinches her, chuckling at her gasp, and purrs, “That’s right. We found all sorts of things at that market place, and believe me, we plan on using them. We got a selection of plugs, restraints, harnesses, you name it. But first, we decided we’ll fit you with a nice collar and leash and teach you how to be a proper pet—the first rule of which is that pets don’t talk, unless, of course, you want us to stop.”

Bilbo would nod, but she has no room for it. Trying to behave, she doesn’t even say ‘yes.’ It’s easy enough, because her head’s already elsewhere, primarily on Bofur’s attentions and now the wild daydreams of all these toys of theirs. She can only hope they plug her up tonight after their games—she thinks she’d rather like to keep their cum inside her.

As Bofur holds the long toy over Bilbo’s entrance, stretched open by his fingers, he coos, “Open up that pretty pussy for me, Bilbo.” Of course, Bilbo obeys, trying to make herself as wide as she can.

The first push is a little strange, and Bilbo gasps, squirming in the odd position—it’s hard, rigid, not at all like a warm, living dwarf cock, and it’s strange how blunt the end is. As he pushes it more into her, the even girth is unsettling, but mostly unforgiving; it just doesn’t feel as natural as being fucked by her dwarves. But the keen looks on Bofur’s and Nori’s faces make it worth it for her, and, she supposes, it’s better than being empty; it still rubs against her as it slides along her walls, and it gives her something to clench around. It isn’t quite as thick as she’s used to, but it is quite long, and Bofur pushes it a good way in before he decides, “That should do it.” With a final tap that makes Bilbo’s breath hitch, he tilts it back and stretches her panties back over it, pushing them back around her waist. Then he nudges her legs, like bidding her to move.

Bilbo topples weakly back to the floor, feeling very strange as soon as her legs are together. The end of it is still poking out of her, too much for her to take, and she can feel a little string inside her panties, perhaps for pulling it back out. Bilbo sits again, shifting awkwardly. Each little movement jostles it inside her, rubbing different places, and it takes her a few seconds to get used to it.

Then she turns and faces them. Feeling playful, she lifts her hands, her fingers curled in like paws, and she sticks out her tongue to pant like a dog.

Bofur laughs, and Nori says, “Looks like we’ll have her licking our boots in no time.” She’d rather lick their cocks, but honestly, she’d probably do anything they liked by this point.

Nori bends forward to pet her, scratching through her hair, while Bofur fishes through the supplies they brought from the village. He pulls out a leathery collar with a pendant in the front and brings it to her neck, pressing it up against her throat. As he clasps it around the back, he tells her, “If you’re a good kitty, we’ll pet you and let you come. But if you’re bad, we’ll have to spank you and tie you up.” Both of those options sound good to Bilbo, who tries to bend to kiss Bofur’s wrist. Nori turns to the supplies, pulling out a long strip of leather, similar to her collar. She assumes it’s a leash, but before he can clip it to her, they hear the door slam in the background. Bilbo looks over her shoulder, but the bedroom one is still ajar, untouched.

Through it, she can hear the slightly raised voices of disgruntled dwarves. On the other end, there’s a stranger, and after a second she manages to place the voice: that of Bard, the bargeman who brought them across the lake. Nori tosses his head back in exasperation, and Bofur frowns, wondering aloud, “Should we...?”
Bilbo’s just about as disappointed as Nori is. She wants to continue, and she nudges her face against his leg, but in the living area beyond, she can hear Thorin’s irritation. She doesn’t catch every word, but she hears enough to know that whatever’s going on, it isn’t good. It’s hard to be in the right mood when she knows Thorin’s troubled, even when she does have a toy inside her and two dwarves ready to play with her.

With a forlorn sigh, Bilbo pushes up to her feet, having to take an extra step to steady herself as the toy shifts inside her. It makes her eyes widen, breath catching for a moment, and Nori says excitedly, “Oop, she got up—we get to spank her.”

Bilbo gives him a mock-glare and furthers her bad pet behaviour by saying, “I’m sorry, but I want to know what’s going on.” And she wants to help, though she doesn’t quite want to admit aloud that she thinks Thorin might need it; he can be stubborn at times, and if she can help calm the situation, she’d like to. Bofur gestures to the door like he knew it was going to happen, and Nori flops onto the mattress. Bilbo promises, “I’ll come right back,” although she’s sure they can entertain themselves with each other in the meantime. Before she’s even halfway across the room, Nori’s leapt back up to pounce on Bofur, who goes toppling off the bed with a quickly stifled yelp, his hat rolling aside.

Each step Bilbo takes gives her pause, the sensation new and both alluring and awkward. It makes her want to squeeze and rub her thighs together, and she knows her gait is unusually wobbly. But at least nothing looks out of the ordinary; her skirt and shirt are still in place. It isn’t until she’s come into the living room that she remembers she isn’t wearing a bra, and her aroused nipples are rubbing against the front of her blouse. No sooner has she shut the bedroom door behind her than Thorin and Bard stop to look over at her, the two of them standing fretfully close with Dwalin poised at the ready.

“And what about her?” Bard immediately says, gesturing over. “She isn’t one of your dwarves, and you’re asking her to risk her life for your quest, just like you’re asking all of us.”

“Bilbo was told the risks,” Thorin hisses back, not backing down for a moment, although she knows that particular accusation must be making his blood boil. “Clearly she’s braver than you lot are. You want to live in this fish stench for the rest of your lives? Have you no pride for Dale?”

“Dale’s dead,” Bard practically snarls, “by the same dragon you intend to unleash on Lake-town. You still haven’t got a way to stop Smaug, and I wouldn’t believe you if you said you did. You’ll bring ruin on us all!”

“Smaug hasn’t been seen in more years than you’ve probably been alive for! For all we know, he’s long dead or gone, and you cowards simply haven’t gone on to look. But it doesn’t matter, because that’s our home, and if you value yours at all than you should understand why we have to fight for ours.”

“Doesn’t matter.” Bard shakes his head, the bitterness on his face overwhelming. Bilbo does feel sorry for him. She understands his position, and it worries her; she hadn’t thought much of what would happen if the dragon were set loose.

But that’s too frightening to worry about right now, and it’s easier to drift to Thorin’s side. He looks at her again, his expression hard and fierce, as though warning her to stay away while they’re shouting. Balin, on Thorin’s other side, looks uncomfortable; he probably tried to soothe their tempters. Bilbo wraps her arms around Thorin’s, hoping her presence will help steady him, and she searches her brain for something to say. She doesn’t know what can be done to make it better, short of going up the mountain to find no dragon at all.

“This idiot was supposed to bring us the weapons we were promised,” Thorin tells her, shooting
Bard a steady glare. “Instead, he comes with the words of a coward.”

Bard opens his mouth, but his sound dies halfway through, and he winds up slamming his jaw shut in exasperation. He grunts, “It’s no use,” and turns for the door.

As he slips back out into the cold, water-logged streets, Glóin asks the ensuing silence, “So... is he coming back with weapons?”

Thorin moves as if to follow, but Bilbo puts a hand on his chest and holds him back. She can see that he isn’t going to help matters the way he is, and she says quickly, “I’ll go talk to him.”

“But—” Thorin starts.

“No,” she finishes. “That already didn’t work.” She tries not to look too stern, but after having his stubbornness get them all thrown into a dungeon and requiring her to break them all out, he’s failed his chance for diplomacy. She still adores her dwarves, but she thinks it a much better idea to head for the door herself.

As she pokes out onto the dock their house is built on, Bilbo can feel the dwarves’ eyes following her protectively through the crack in the door. Bard hasn’t gone far, and he stops as soon as she calls, “Wait.” He turns to frown down at her, eyeing first the bounce of her chest, then blushing and wrenching his gaze back to her face. It’s uncomfortable to go too fast between the toy and her lack of a bra, so she’s grateful that he stays still and waits for her to catch up. Once she’s in front of him, she finds herself shuffling her feet because of the ice along the wood. She tells him in as soft a voice as she can manage, “I’m sorry about Thorin. But he is a good man. And he wouldn’t set the dragon on Lake-town if he can help it.”

Bard snorts. It isn’t a cruel sound, and when he looks down at her, she can tell he’s trying to be nice. But he has children in this town, she remembers, and she tries to put herself in his shoes—she would be horrified if someone were endangering the Shire. But none of that changes the dwarves’ right to their home, and they’re all still hoping for another way. Honestly, she’s been hoping, this whole journey, to go into the mountain and find no dragon at all.

Bard says as softly as her, “You seem sweet. I’m sorry I had to use you to try and get through to Thorin. But you’re also naïve.”

“And you’re jaded,” she returns, more as an observation than an insult. The bitterness of his expression confirms as much.

“I’m tired. Life here is hard, and I think this whole thing is only going to make it harder.”

“But surely there’s something to be done,” Bilbo insists, looking around. She doesn’t want to call this place a mess, but compared to this ‘Dale’ the others talk about, it certainly seems so. “Isn’t there somewhere these people could go, just in case, until the dragon’s dealt with? If you’re so worried, there are still a couple of days before we plan to leave, and a few more still to get inside the mountain; surely precautions can be made in case of the worst.”

Bard looks thoughtful at this. Bilbo doesn’t know how feasible such a plan truly is, but she’s seen that there are guards, armour, and clearly they have weapons. It doesn’t seem a particularly large population, and they are next to hills and mountains—there must be caves people could hide in, if only for a few days. She isn’t equipped to flesh out such plans, and it isn’t Bard’s job, but he seems more likely to protect the people than the actual Master is, and as Bard half turns away, he says, “I will think of this. ...And I will bring the weapons I’ve been asked to ferry, however foolish I think it all.”
That’s all Bilbo can ask, so she smiles and says, “Thank you.” She still feels sad to watch him go, knowing the problem wasn’t really solved, but at least she knows her dwarves will have the weapons they need to defend themselves.

As soon as Bard’s disappeared along the walkway between two rickety houses, Bilbo turns to rush back into the house. The door is immediately closed behind her, cutting off the frigid air. Bilbo doesn’t bother to explain what they said; she’s sure the dwarves heard. Instead of asking her for details, the dwarves part as Nori pushes through them, Bofur hot on his heels.

He tells her, “Open up,” and Bilbo immediately obeys, dropping her jaw and holding her mouth at the ready. She expects to be kissed, but instead, he stuffs a little round ball into it that Bilbo’s teeth can only just sink into.

As Nori ties the straps attached to either side of the ball around the back of her head, he mutters, “Makin’ sure that doesn’t happen again.” Over Nori’s shoulder, Thorin’s irritation has edged a little bit into amusement, and several of the others have looked over from their various tasks.

Once Bilbo is properly gagged, she’s gently pushed down to her hands and knees. Bofur attaches the leash to her collar and gives it a little tug to make sure it’s secure.

Then he walks her towards the bedroom. The leash never has a chance to pull taut, because Bilbo hurries too excitedly after on all fours.

Alfrid comes to check on them occasionally and is always ushered quickly out by the dwarves. The one time he arrives to Bilbo answering the door, he holds out an arm draped with fabric and announces with a smug grin, “Clothes for the little lady.”

Bilbo’s brain isn’t completely functioning at this point. She’s very over-sexed, having just finished feeding Bombur, wearing nothing but her leash and collar. She’s only just unclipped that leash and pulled her clothes back on, and her jaw is still a little sore from biting into the gag earlier while Fíli and Kíli took both her holes at once, her arms bound behind her back with the leash. She still feels stretched open and much too wet to be moving, but she was the closest to the door, and all of the dwarves are out at the market, except for Óin, Bifur, and Bombur, all of whom are getting some much needed rest in one of the back rooms. She can tell from the way Alfrid eyes her that he’s guessed exactly what’s gone on, and from the way he eyes her breasts, barely constrained by her worn-down blouse, he’d very much like a turn.

Bilbo doesn’t even have the energy to think about that right now. She was planning to fill herself up with the thick shaft and beads Bofur and Nori bought her the other day before they get home, so she especially can’t afford to spend all her leftover energy. But as she reaches to take the bundled clothes from Alfrid’s outstretched hands, he licks his lips and says, “I’d also like to offer my other services.”

Part of Bilbo wants to say no and close the door on him. The other is traitorously curious, as it always is, ever-interested. The reasonable and diplomatic part of her says, “I’m sorry, but I don’t think you would... um... fit.” She blushes to say it, but it comes out all the same. She never would’ve back in the Shire, but she’s a long way from there. Alfrid’s face flashes with excitement, probably over the idea of her tiny body being so tight around him. She expects him to press on, sure she caught his correct meaning and he caught hers.

But he only smirks wider and says, “I’m sure I could find another way to accommodate you. After all, they don’t call me Lickspittle for nothing.” He winks as though this is an accomplishment, even though Bilbo’s never heard anyone call Alfrid that. Granted, she’s never heard anyone talk about Alfrid at all, except a few grumblings here and there from the dwarves. He leans down to tell her in a
slick, conspirator’s whisper, “There’s a reason I serve the richest man in town. I’m good at it. What’s the harm in trying a little fun, mm?”

There could still be harm. But she also has three dwarves that would come running if she shouted, and she thinks she could make for Sting well enough on her own. A large chunk of Bilbo finds Alfrid grotesque. But after seeing him lust after and cower before Bard, she can’t help but see him through a sexual lens, and if he’s implying what she thinks... Her gaping pussy twinges at the thought. Her muscles are tightening again, but perhaps she could use an eager tongue keeping her loose, so she can fit those toys inside before her dwarves return.

With the pile of new clothes in one hand, Bilbo uses the other to open the door enough to usher him inside, and Alfrid giddily hurries to oblige. She’s barely got the door closed by the time he’s scooped up the clothing bundle and rushed it off to the corner, placing it on a dusty table, cleared only around the handprints of dwarves. The living area is small, all dark wood with a dank, musky sort of smell and creaking floorboards, two rickety chairs and that one table. There’s a tattered, yellowed rug on the floor that Alfrid drags under his boot towards the chair by the rocky hearth. When he’s got it where he wants, he marches back to Bilbo.

One of her dwarves could’ve picked her up and placed her where they wanted her, but Alfrid doesn’t look strong enough and doesn’t try. Instead, he bows, gesturing his hands out towards the chair, and Bilbo follows awkwardly. She pushes the chair a little to the side, so its back is against the table. Then she rearranges her skirt and sits, only to have him plunk right in front of her, so close that she has to pick her feet up to make way for his knees. He grabs her ankles and wrenches them apart, spreading her legs, and half a second later, he’s got her skirt rolled right up her thighs. She didn’t bother to put her panties back on, not when she’d only stain them. She thinks of apologizing, saying she’ll go clean herself off first, but Alfrid doesn’t look at all put off by the smear of dwarf cum drizzled across her lips and thighs. If anything, his smile only gets greedier.

He mutters beneath his breath, “Nice.” Bilbo almost stops him. But he only has eyes for her pussy, and he dives in too fast, his mouth closing right around her mound. Bilbo makes a squeaking noise, while Alfrid sucks at her, then shoves his tongue along her slit, wigging down the opening. She can feel him scooping globs of still-wet seed off of her, sucking it back into his mouth, but mostly he just pushes his tongue deep inside and wriggles it around. Bilbo moans and squirms against him, which makes him snicker and move his tongue around even faster. He doesn’t fuck her, exactly; he doesn’t just move in and out. He plunges in and zigzags up, twirls around her clit and suckles on it, then drags his tongue right back down and spirals into the middle. His tongue is borderline acrobatic, and Bilbo has to put one hand over her mouth so she won’t wake her dwarves in the other rooms.

With Alfrid’s tall hat and the greasiness of his hair, she doesn’t want to grab onto his head. But she has to hold something. Her own hand, the one not clamped tightly across her lips, smoothes over her breasts. Right when she squeezes, he switches angles, his forehead digging into her stomach and his nose crushed against her flesh, rifling through her curly pubic hair, his tongue now splayed along the bottom of her pussy. He flails it against her, fast, teasing and toying—she didn’t expect it, but he is good at serving, and clearly very eager. He extends his tongue as far into her hole as it’ll go, then curls it at the ends, and Bilbo arches off her chair and moans into her hand.

By the time another knock comes to the door, Bilbo’s completely aroused, too busy humping Alfrid’s face to care. He just keeps drinking up more and more of her juices, like he’s never tasted anything more delicious in his life. The dwarves should have their own key, she thinks, and she doesn’t want to stop—they’ll understand—not with such a vigilant tongue inside her. On the second knock, someone calls through the door, too muffled for Bilbo to recognize the voice.

But Alfrid stops immediately. His tongue pulls back, and he turns his head away from her to peer
over her leg at the door. He blinks, then mutters without looking at her, “Sorry ‘bout that—won’t be a minute.” And he pushes right back up to his feet, leaving Bilbo to blush and hurriedly smooth out her own skirt across her lap. Alfrid straightens out his own black robes as he shuffles to the door in his usual hunch. As soon as he wrenches it open, she understands why it was so important. He smirks and sneers, “Bard.”

Bard pushes right past Alfrid, holding a lengthy bundle across his arms that clanks as he moves—likely the weapons he was supposed to bring. He automatically moves towards the table, grumbling, “What are you doing h—” But he stops when he sees Bilbo, her chair leant against the table, her breasts heaving as she breathes hard, flushed and probably looking like she’s been ravished all day, which she has. Bard stares at her for one lingering moment, then whirls on Alfrid, growling, “What’ve you done?”

“I was merely being a good servant,” Alfrid returns snidely, somehow managing to look both irritated and delighted. He strides quickly back over to Bilbo, coming to stand right between her legs. “She likes me.”

Bilbo wouldn’t exactly say that. But because Bard looks like he’s about to strangle Alfrid, she does admit feebly, “He hasn’t been so bad to me.”

Alfrid snorts. “Don’t bother. Bard doesn’t understand sex; he’s been dry since his wife died.” That sets Bard’s face on fire. It’s a cruel statement, and a bizarre one for Alfrid to make—Bard’s far more attractive than him, especially with the air of empathy and strength that Bard carries. Alfrid grins smugly all the same; Bilbo gets the distinct impression that he’s trying to goad Bard.

In the tense silence that follows, Bilbo offers, “I... I wouldn’t mind him either...” Bard, eyes widening, looks down at her. She squirms in her chair and corrects hastily, “I mean, not that you’d want, I-I just meant that I do think you’re very sexy, um—” She breaks off. There’s no good way to throw herself at someone’s who’s shown no indication of being interested.

Alfrid quickly says, “You’re right; Bard wouldn’t want to. He’s too pure—”

As if just to prove Alfrid wrong, Bard dumps his bundle on the table. Close enough already, he bends down, threading his fingers through Bilbo’s hair. He tilts her face up and presses in for a hard, dry kiss that’s over far too fast. He pulls away, looking vaguely determined, and Alfrid’s staring at him with near-giddy delight coupled with broiling jealousy. For all his words, it’s clear he was trying to push Bard into joining rather than leave, and the reverse psychology worked. Bard completely ignores Alfrid and directs at Bilbo, “I’ll admit, I do find you very... alluring. But I wouldn’t want to be naked around Alfrid, even if I sometimes think he’s wanted to see my cock since we were boys.”

“I have not,” Alfrid splutters instantly, but from the way his face turns red, Bilbo thinks Bard’s hit the nail on the head.

Bilbo, for the most part, ignores their squabbling. She’s decided she’d very much like Alfrid’s mouth back between her legs, and Bard is just so achingly handsome. She wants a chance with him even more. So she leans her face towards his crotch, nuzzling into the rough fabric, the fur lining of his jacket tickling her cheeks on either side. Looking up through hazy eyes, she says hopefully, “You don’t have to?” She brushes her fingers along his belt as she says it, and she can see his hands reaching back to steady himself against the table.

Finally, he sighs and nods. Out the corner of Bilbo’s eye, she can see Alfrid smirking like he won. Self-satisfied, he pushes into her lap again, and Bilbo’s hands stumble over Bard’s buckle, the sudden heat of Alfrid’s breath throwing her off. Bard reaches down to help her, pushing his belt aside and lifting his tunic enough to stick a hand into his trousers. Bilbo watches in fascination as he
pulls out his semi-hard cock, longer and bigger than an elf’s and thinner than a dwarf’s, rod-straight and veined, flushed pink near the end.

Bilbo looks up at him before she takes it in her hands, and then she’s wrapping her fingers tight around his base and sticking out her tongue to let it rest there. Bard’s eyes look heavy, interested, and he twitches as soon as he feels the spongy surface of her tongue. She thinks Alfrid must be right about his dry spell, because she can’t imagine someone so handsome being otherwise interested in her.

Then Alfrid jumps to work with his tongue, and Bilbo moans, having to fight to keep on track with her fair share. Alfrid eats her out even more ferociously than before, his tongue going wild inside her, pushing such a long way in and still finding ways to move around. While he laps at her in hard, dynamic strokes, Bilbo pops the tip of Bard’s cock into her mouth and suckles gently on it. She swirls her tongue all around it, and her fingers run up to gently tug down the foreskin, leaving the slick, pink head below. She wants to pump him into her mouth, but he’s too dry, so she has to stop to run her tongue down each part of it. It takes many licks, because he’s so thick and her tongue’s so small, but Bard seems to enjoy each of these.

By the time she’s back to the tip, smacking her now-dripping lips, Bard’s fingers slide into her hair, and she looks up at him with a smile stretched around his cock. He tastes different than her dwarves, but it’s still something she enjoys. She tries to lower herself over him, taking a bit of him down her throat, but she doesn’t dare take too much with Alfrid going at her like she is; she keep loosing herself in that pleasure.

She has to go slow so as not to choke herself. Bard is patient, keeping his hips still and letting her control it. She can’t help but wish they’d done this in bed, so she could lie down and worship him properly, instead of twisted about in a chair. She’ll have to try and get more later. Frankly, Bilbo wants all of Bard she can.

Bilbo has no sense of how far along Alfrid is. He isn’t even touching himself, his hands instead on Bilbo’s legs, just holding them apart. But Bilbo quickly nears her tolerance, so turned on by Bard’s cock and gorgeous body and all of Alfrid’s attentions. She knows she’s going to finish soon, and thinks she’ll finish first, as she’s clearly getting the best deal and has had the most attention. Each suck brings her that little bit closer, made worse by each stab of Alfrid’s tongue. She tries to memorize the feel of Bard inside her mouth, the way it stretches her open and weighs down her tongue and nudges at the back of her throat. She looks up at his face, glazed over in pleasure. She gives him a great, big suck, hollowing out her cheeks to taste as much of him as she can.

And Bard groans, his hips suddenly jerking forward and making Bilbo gag. He mutters, “Sorry,” through a strangled moan, and pulls his cock out a second later, but it’s too late; he’s already exploded. His cum spurts over her face, and she keeps her grip on his base to keep him aimed at her. She leaves her mouth hanging open, taking one sticky jet after another, until he’s trembling and stepping out of her reach, and she’s dripping in his load.

Bilbo’s sure she’s going to follow, but then she has to whine instead when Alfrid stops to lift his head. His eyes devour Bard as Bard hurriedly tucks himself back into his trousers, looking weak in the knees.

He looks half-ashamed, which makes Bilbo frown, and then Alfrid has to go and crudely lick his lips, asking, “Aren’t you going to complete the circle?”

Bard wrinkles his nose. He mumbles, “Thanks,” and bends to peck Bilbo’s head, catching the top of her skull instead of her messy face. Then he hesitates, looking at her, and she can tell that he feels badly for running out on her. But she has Alfrid still and doesn’t mind. Finally, he says, “I have to
get back to my kids.” And he turns on the spot, practically running straight for the door.

As soon as he’s out it, Alfrid tugs Bilbo’s ankles so hard that she goes crashing into the floor. Her skull hits the rug, and she sees stars for one dizzying moment.

Then Alfrid’s all over her, desperately licking Bard’s cum off her face.

For most of their stay in Lake-town, the dwarves are in high spirits. Kíli’s the only one that seems down at all, though Fíli always manages to make him smile again. When she can, Bilbo tells him that she thinks they’ll see Tauriel again. Next to defeating a dragon, it doesn’t seem so impossible a task.

Few of them seem worried about the dragon. Lake-town bubbles with talk of the prophecy and Dale and treasure, only Bard showing any concern, and every time he does, Alfrid shows up to try and slap him down. The dwarves go through their new weapons and pack new supplies, including a few toys for ‘stress relief’ along the journey, all things they test drive on Bilbo first. As depressing as Lake-town itself is, Bilbo almost wishes she could stay here, in a cozy little house with all her dwarves and nothing to do all day but play and plan. But Thorin talks of leaving, and Balin reminds them all of their timeline: they have to be in the right place on Durin’s Day. This soberes most of them up, and she can see the longing in their eyes whenever they look out the window and see the Lonely Mountain in the distance. Once, she even finds tears in Glóin’s eyes.

On their last night in Lake-town, Bilbo slips into Thorin’s room after dark. He usually shares it with Fíli and Kíli, but they’ve decided to spend the night curled up together in front of the hearth. It leaves him alone, stretched out along his too-long cot, all his usual coats and armour tossed over the end and a dark green blanket pulled up to his shoulders. A little bit of moonlight streams in from the window above his bed. Bilbo creeps across the cutout of it, still moving after Thorin’s turned to spy her.

He’s already pushed the blanket down by the time she gets there, and as soon as she’s climbed onto the bed, she throws one leg over him. She settles into his lap, very much enjoying the sight of him in just his trousers and shirt. It’s one of the Lake-town ones, a little too long on him, and it stretches too tightly across him in places, his chest apparently broader than the average Lake-town citizen. It strains at the buttons. Bilbo reaches for the first one and fiddles to press it through the hole, while Thorin’s thick hands come up to hold her waist.

She hasn’t spent enough time with him. There’s never enough for all of them, but Bilbo spends every moment she can manage in Thorin’s arms, and she knows he loves her even in the times they can’t be together. He loves all of them, just in different ways. When her eyes slip coyly up to his, she can see the strength of their bond in the way he looks at her. Tucked away in a little wooden room like this, it’s hard to believe all the things they’ve been through together—trolls, goblins, wargs, spiders, enchantments and elves—but none were so long ago that she can’t remember the bruises of them. There were too many times they were separated, too many times she didn’t think she’d make it back.

She un-pops his buttons one by one, almost humming to herself while she does it. They don’t even have to talk about it, what they’re going to do; she’s already said it through her fingers. His smooth palms slide along her thighs, his thumbs rubbing little circles. Finally, he breaks the silence to breathe, “You’re beautiful.”

Bilbo smiles. It’s bigger than she means to, reaching her eyes and making her duck her head. He says it like it’s nothing, just a statement of fact, obvious, simple, and inarguable. She almost teases about how he thought she would be useless at the start of this quest, but that was so very long ago.

As she finishes with the very last button, right above his navel, he sighs, “I understand why the Elf King wanted you.” Bilbo’s eyes flicker up to his.
She brushes the sides of his shirt away and comes to lie over him, her lips sealing lightly into his. He kisses her back, though chaste, and she doesn’t open for his tongue, not yet. Instead, she parts from him and murmurs, “I would rather be your concubine.”

His grin verges on a laugh. Lifting one hand to tuck some of her honey hair back behind her pointed ear, he says, “You will have far more than my money, Bilbo Baggins. You will have anything you ask.” He makes her smile so hard that her face hurts.

She kisses him again. This time, when she means to break away, she can’t, and she spends too long lost in his mouth, swiping tongues and the slight scrape of teeth, wet lips and warmth. Sometimes, she stops just to nuzzle into his mustache, enjoying the scratch along her bare skin, or she’ll run the side of her face along his jaw. He murmurs, so full of adoration, “I love all of my loyal company. But you are a very special creature.”

“And I love all my dwarves,” she answers, meaning it every bit as much. “But I don’t think I could imagine my life without you somewhere in it.”

Kissing again is an easy rhythm they fall into. She rolls her hips against his, only once at first, then another and another, rocking them gently together. His fingers dig into her waist, but otherwise he doesn’t move, just lets her do all the work. It’s unusual, for her to have all the control like this, to be the one doing everything, and the fact that it’s Thorin surrendering to her makes it all the better. She grinds into him as she pleases, turns her face against his, cups the side of his cheek and shifts him as she likes. In between kisses, she runs her other hand down his body, coming to the hem of his trousers, no belt there to bother with. She undoes his buttons without looking. She can feel his heartbeat speeding up as she slips her fingers inside afterwards, petting down his shaft.

When she pulls it out, it’s already hard. Thick and full, it pulses in her hand, bigger than all her toys. She lifts her hips and presses him past her skirt, up between her legs, and rubs his head against her bare lips. Thorin staves off the latest kiss to murmur, “I’ll hurt you.”

“No,” she murmurs, kissing his cheek and rocking against his hard cock. “I’ve had dwarves in me all day, and I’m always wet for you.” As she presses another kiss to the corner of his mouth, she can feel him smile.

“I would work for it a little more.”

“You work enough.”

He truly does. While the rest of them have been relaxing, he’s been lost in plans, new maps of the land and his old one, timetables and the best weapons, the best way to go up the vast mountain, the most likely spots to check and the safest to hide should a dragon come spiraling out. He deserves to rest on this last night of peace, just as much as he deserves to be made love to. Bilbo kisses his brow, then lifts up on one elbow, hovering over him while she reaches beneath herself. She draws him along her entrance, holds him in place, and slowly drags her body down. The first little bit that pops inside makes her shiver. She’s already stretched, already wet, and there is no pain. She can see the desire burning hot on his face, and she vacillates between taking him deeper and pecking his face, back and forth, her arms repositioning to keep herself above him, so she can look down at his beautiful face while she takes him into her body.

Even when it’s all the way inside, Bilbo only works in fluid, rolling motions, driving him into her at different angles. She bucks her body, arching forward, then back, her breasts dragging along his chest. Her blouse is still on, but neither of them pause long enough to take it off. She can feel the taut muscles of his chest through the fabric all the same. The only noises in the room are the twin sounds of their struggle for air, her little gasps and a few buried moans. She doesn’t ride him fast enough to
even make the bedsprings squeak. She wants it to last.

She presses her forehead against his. When they can’t kiss because they need to breathe, she just nuzzles against him, and he gives her kisses in other places. His one hand is still on her waist, but the other eventually drops to come to her face instead, threading lightly through her short hair and stroking her skin, and she presses into his warm palm with a shudder of lust and care. He’s so perfect, so good to her, and feels just like he completes her. The ecstasy of their coupling is more than just physical, and the combination is overwhelming. For a long while, she can’t think and doesn’t, just experiences Thorin. She rides him and they kiss, and he strokes her and they exist together in this safe, dark place.

She wants it to last forever, but of course, it can’t. Eventually, it becomes too much, and Bilbo can feel her body tightening. She can feel the heat rising, becoming too much. She whimpers and buries her face in his shoulder, her arms wrapping tightly around his sides. Her hips go a little faster, maybe a little harder, and she rides him right through the wash of pleasure that nearly passes her out. She’s trembling wildly afterwards, existing in a numb, wondrous limbo atop his sweaty body.

He finishes not long after her. He hisses, bucks up once, and spills into her still dilating entrance. She stays on long enough for him to fill her up, and then she lifts her hips, letting him slip out.

Empty and dazed, Bilbo slumps across him. She lies with her head on his shoulder, both of them too hot to bother fetching the blanket. For a while, they’re quiet, just basking in the afterglow.

Then she yawns, and she murmurs through the end, “I’m very glad I came on this journey.”

“It isn’t over yet.” Thorin quietly replies, and he sounds a little sad.

“I know. But no matter what happens, at least I had all of you.” When she looks up at him, he looks down, grinning.

He bends to kiss her forehead one last time, and they settle into sleep.

It’s one of the most peaceful nights Bilbo’s ever had.

The morning is less fun. They greet the Master one last time, who they’ve seen very little of during their stay, and he wishes them good luck with a smarmy smile on his face that makes Bilbo think he’s more than happy to see them go. But then, she’s sure they’ve been very expensive to keep. They’re tucked into boats laden with supplies and promised ponies sent up to meet them. The docks are full of people, wishing the King Under the Mountain well and murmuring about the wonders of Dale to one another. Only Bard, standing in the crowd, looks nervous. Three children are with him, a tall girl standing at his side, a small girl and a boy on the other. The dwarves wave their way off merrily, those that aren’t working oars.

Thorin sits at the front. He looks especially grand in his new robes, his hair wafting in the slight breeze as the boat sets out. Bilbo sits in the back, proud of them but sorry to see their temporary house go. She knows it’s hard times ahead.

The hardest of times, really, if they do find a dragon. When Balin sees her frown, he pats her lap and tells her not to worry.

She tries to listen, but the pressure is very high. This is what she was brought for. Her entire purpose is coming to a head, and in the end, she’s still not sure she’s much of a burglar. Sting is heavy in her pocket, but won’t do much good against a dragon. She winds up pulling her new blue coat tighter around herself, synched over her brown khakis with a small belt. The fur lining is much warmer than
her other clothes, and that’s something. She sits in a little shell, leaning against the back of the boat, and she asks Balin, “Tell me more of Erebor.”
On the Doorstep

Chapter Notes

A/N: This is probably one of the shortest chapters... still not sure what to do with Smaug, hm... human Smaug, yes/no...?

In two days, they go up the Long Lake and into the Running River, into the desolate valley of torn rocks and dead grass and rubble everywhere they look. The trees smattered about seem sickly, the ground covered in ash and ruins. They can always see the mountain now that they’re past the fog of Lake-town, but it isn’t as enticing as it looked from a distance. Now it’s an impassive, imposing slate of devastation that casts everything in shadow.

On the third day, two women meet them with ponies and more supplies, but neither will stay even for one night. With the great reminder of the dragon always on the horizon, it’s less easy to believe that flimsy songs will come true, and they leave very skittishly and as soon as they can.

Thorin tells stories of how these lands used to be plush and green. Bilbo can’t see it, and soon enough, he stops telling them of it; it’s too depressing, and Balin and Dwalin look particularly worn down with the memories. Fíli, Kíli, and Ori, all too young to have known it, look around with more curiosity than the others. A few of the company are old enough to have seen Erebor but never made the journey, and they carry a similar sadness of having missed a great chance. Even without that air, it’s a solemn journey. They move in stealth, with no songs or laughter, creeping ever closer to the loom of the Lonely Mountain.

They make their camp on the western side of the southern spur of the mountain, at the peak of a slope called Ravenhill. Thorin explains that there used to be a watch post nearby, but they dare not go to it yet. They’re now at their destination, or at least, its front yard, and at the very start, this might’ve seemed the end of the journey. But they still don’t know where the door to the final step lies, and though Thorin, Dwalin, and Balin spend much time discussing it, no one has any guesses. The map doesn’t tell them nearly enough, and so they have to search.

In the morning, Bilbo gets up while Bifur is still sleeping. Spending the night with hir is the easiest, because xe cuddles the same as though they’re back along that first road to Bree, and it’s a welcome reprieve from the other’s gloom. But Balin ushers her out of Bifur’s snoring embrace, murmuring, “Come, Bilbo. We need the sharpest eyes.”

She finds Fíli and Kíli waiting at the edge of camp, Thorin standing ahead of them with the map, as always, in his hands. “You four will go scout out the Front Gate,” he tells them in a level tone. He falls so easily into the role of a leader, delegating, “See what you can from as far as you can, and come back as soon as possible. Dwalin, Dori, Nori, and I are going up the slope, Glóin, Óin, and Bifur down around the base, while Bombur and Bofur watch the supplies. We’ll regroup tonight.”

Balin nods at this, and Bilbo yawns. It isn’t quite as cold as it was on the lake, but she’s grateful for the comfort of her new coat all the same, and she twists her fingers around the plush sleeves. She already has Sting tucked into the thigh-length pocket of her khakis below, her ring tucked into one of the jacket’s pockets. She’s ready to go as she is and turns to follow Balin when he leaves.

Thorin stops her with a hand on her shoulder to say, “Be careful.”
Bilbo gives him a weak smile and promises, “I will.” Of course she will. She didn’t come all this way to die on a simple survey. The lands around here are so quiet that she suspects she’ll hear danger long before it reaches her, anyway, and if the dragon hasn’t been seen in so long, she doubts it’ll come swooping out now over the little footfalls of three dwarves and a hobbit still so very far away.

It’s easy to be brave when she’s sleep addled. Her, Balin, Fíli, and Kíli wander down the slope of Ravenhill, trying to be quiet but in truth seeming to lumber about compared to the otherwise silent desert. With no other signs of life around, they seem particularly out of place, and Bilbo sobers quickly. The eerie silence sounds like it doesn’t want to be broken, and even Fíli and Kíli, for once in their lives, are quiet.

Across the rocky plain, they come, before long, to the ruins of a city. The river, snaking out from the gate to the east, swerves west along the north end of the wreckage and trickles south towards them, back to the Long Lake. Bilbo knows at once where they are, but Balin sighs all the same, “And this is what is left of Dale.” It’s a sorry sight indeed.

They make their way a little closer, until they can make out the shattered stone houses and toppled towers, the paved streets caked with dust. There’s no greenery left, no animals in the makeshift shelter, not even insects in the air. Bilbo tries to look to the mountain instead, just because the ruins are such a sad sight. When she peers hard through the distance, she can see the unnatural shapes of pillars carved out of the mountain’s side, and she knows at once it’s the gates of Erebor. Like Dale, it’s in a ruin, probably too littered with debris to let them inside short of very loud and arduous digging.

But worse than that is the dark smoke that comes coiling out through the cracks in the rocks, wafting along the water. This steam and the shallow surface are the only things that move, and Bilbo stops in her tracks, muttering, “There really is a dragon there.” There’s no other explanation for the smoke, and the thought chills her to the bone. Even though she’s heard all the stories, a hobbit has nothing to compare a dragon to, and it never felt real.

The smoke makes quick work of that comforting illusion. The others stop beside her, and Balin says, “We can’t be sure of that.” His face is very stoic.


“We can’t do any good here.” He turns, and Bilbo and Fíli and Kíli follow. Bilbo’s glad to turn away from Dale, and especially from the smoke, and she slips her hand into Fíli’s on the way up the hill. He squeezes it for comfort, and Kíli comes around her other side to intertwine their fingers, while Balin leads the way.

They spend several long days looking over the western reach of the mountain. Thorin, always with his map in hand, sends them this way and that, but it isn’t so easy, and little good comes of their efforts. They thought to bring enough food to last them to the end of the season, near as they are, and the river gives them water. They can last. Times have been far tougher. But there’s a sense of desperation in them now, because this should’ve been the easy part. They’ve come all this way to Erebor, and they can’t get in, can’t even find where to go in, and once or twice Bilbo catches Glóin and Nori grumbling to each other that there might not even be another door. They always hush when they see Thorin coming; he’d have their heads for such talk.

Bilbo tries to keep her spirits up. She doesn’t at all mind having a camp set up to come back to every night, and looking at the map over Thorin’s shoulder makes it all seem like a grand puzzle, one they can figure out with just a bit more thought. Puzzles are far more hobbit-friendly than much of their other trials.
One day, Fíli and Kíli go out to climb another chunk of the upward slope, and Bilbo, on a whim, guides them around an empty ledge that they’d dismissed yesterday as a dead end. This time, they go all the way around the bend, and find a few chunks in the wall that can be climbed up to another slanted shelf. This they move slowly along, hugging the wall in single file, until it comes out on a narrow path. The way feels something like a cave, except that there’s no roof, and the walls are unusually square. At the end of the path, they find a perfectly smooth slate in the mountainside, and they have to take a step back to examine it properly.

Bilbo knows at once that this is it. Fíli says quietly, “If this isn’t the perfect place for a door, I don’t know what is.”

Kíli steps forward first. He walks right up the wall and presses his hands against it. There are no seams that Bilbo can see, not even a crack, but Kíli runs his palms along it anyway. Fíli and Bilbo join him, looking for some sort of imprint.

They find nothing, yet Bilbo knows this is it; the angles simply couldn’t be natural. The three of them beat on it when light touches don’t work, trying wildly to kick and push it open. It doesn’t budge, and finally Kíli takes out one of his arrows and starts scratching away at little flecks of built up dirt and ash, muttering, “There must be a keyhole somewhere.” Fíli pulls out a dagger to join him, but Bilbo doesn’t think it very likely to work, so she simple sits back on a rock and stares at it, thinking.

They move the camp to the doorstep. Every single dwarf tries their utmost to get through, but for all their banging and cursing and prying, they can’t find a way to get in. As the hours tick away, Bilbo spends more effort trying to comfort Thorin than trying to open the door, because the door just won’t open, and Thorin’s frustration is ever mounting higher. Sometimes, it looks like he’s going to bundle the map around his key and throw it right over the edge of the mountain.

They spend a lot of time looking at that map together, Bilbo nestled up to Thorin’s side and leaning on his shoulder, or curled in his lap while they tuck themselves away in a corner, the other dwarves hard at work. Neither of them can read the runes on it, and the memory of Elrond’s translation is far away and fuzzy in Bilbo’s mind. But Thorin often mutters snippets under his breath. Bilbo’s sure there must be some clue somewhere, it’s just that none of them can see it.

Ori is the one to remind them of the prophecy, though he never heard Elrond’s words himself. The songs from Lake-town bore illusions to it, and Ori says, “We’ll simply have to wait until Durin’s Day. The door will reveal itself to us by then, so perhaps all we can do is wait.”

It feels like all they do is wait, and it’s very nerve-wracking.

One day, Thorin announces, “Tomorrow begins the last week of autumn.”

“And winter after that,” Balin sighs, sounding very heavy. Bilbo shudders just thinking about it getting cold, and she subconsciously pulls her coat tighter around herself.

“And next year it happens all again,” Dwalin grumbles, kicking aimlessly at the ground. “And our beards will grow down to our feet and we’ll never get in. At this point, we may as well just go in through the Front Gate and hope we aren’t eaten at once.”

Fortunately, no one seems to agree. Even if they did clear the rubble there, they’d surely wake the dragon to do it. After so long waiting and seeing nothing, most of them have decided that, if there is a dragon, it’s at rest, and none are keen to change that.

“Remember when we started out?” Dori mumbles wistfully, looking up at the darkening sky, turning
purple and red around the silhouette of the mountain. “And we had all of us and the wizard, and Bilbo’s nice tea.”

Bilbo, currently at Thorin’s side against the wall, tells him, “Thank you.” And then, as she goes through it, she chuckles, “I had just finished my seed-cake recipe, I believe, though I’m sure not all of you got to taste them; I was quite unprepared for so many people.”

“Didn’t you know we were coming?” Ori asks, looking mildly surprised.

“Goodness no!” Bilbo starts, wondering how she never clarified that before. Perhaps they had too many other adventures to discuss, but the start of it all was as noteworthy as any other detail. “Gandalf simply came by one day to say hello, and I told him I didn’t want any adventures, and then come Wednesday, Dwalin shows up at my door all the same!”

Dwalin looks at her, clearly troubled. “But there was the mark on your door, and you invited me in for tea.”

“Only to be polite,” Bilbo explains, and then she blushes, because of course, that wasn’t truly it, and she squirms a bit in place and admits, “Well, and... I might’ve been a tad... ah... excited... to have such a big, handsome stranger at my door like that. I’d never seen another man like you, mind. And I was in my nightgown, if I recall, so when you looked down at me and came in anyway, I thought perhaps... ah...” Dwalin’s bushy eyebrows lift up his forehead, and Bilbo shakes her head. “Oh, but that wasn’t what you were there for, as I discovered soon enough. I was quite miffed when Balin showed up right behind you.”

“Sorry I killed the mood,” Balin chuckles.

Bilbo hurries to say, “No, no! I was quite taken with you too, as polite as you were and wise as you seemed, and now, of course, you mean a great deal to me, just as much as Dwalin.”

“Thank you, Bilbo.” Balin grins warmly at her, and though Bilbo doesn’t have clear enough memories of the time, she’s sure it was quite as lovely then, too.

“We were next,” Fíli jumps in.

Grinning, Kíli asks, “What did you think of us?”

That makes Bilbo blush even more profusely. Bringing her knees together, she mumbles, “I, um... well, frankly, I thought you were the two most beautiful people I’d ever seen. Goodness, I was almost wet on the spot.” Both of the brothers look exceedingly pleased, and Bilbo lifts one hand to cover her face, “Oh, and I remember having to squeeze between the two of you at some point, to get to the kitchen or door, and that was, ah—” She shakes her head and doesn’t finish.

Bombur chortles, “What a naughty thing you were. And here we’ve been told how very prim and proper hobbits are!”

“Oh, I was very prim and proper,” Bilbo insists. “I truly was. But I couldn’t help but have my fantasies here and there, and when you all showed up at once, well... I didn’t know what to think! I certainly didn’t expect to be considered a burglar, and since it was late at night and I was underdressed and you all kept saying you were ‘at my service,’ of course I thought... well, I suppose it is a bit silly, now that I look back... but I thought perhaps Gandalf had asked me to join to be some sort of consort. It was quite disconcerting at first, to think I might have to please so many dwarves at once, little virgin me!”

A few of the dwarves grin, others shaking their heads, and some looking very interested. When she
looks up at Thorin, he’s turned his attention from the map to her. She doesn’t tell him that his arrival was what really tipped the scale, what made her wet on the spot and want him from that first moment. She doesn’t intend to keep going at all, except that Thorin asks gently, “And what then?” So Bilbo, smoothing out her coat across her lap, thinks of her usual fantasies, like being bent over her kitchen table or having them touch her while she cleaned the dishes, and now rubbing Bombur’s belly and feeding him, then getting spanked across their laps.

Instead, she says, “Oh, and you did that horrid song...”

“Sorry,” Bofur laughs, not looking particularly sorry at all. “We were never really going to break your things, I hope you know.”

“I know now! But at the time, I was quite worried for my mother’s dishes. And while you sang that song, you took me on your knee, and you...” Bilbo pauses to lick her lips, wondering how to phrase it, while Bofur looks at her intently. “You, um... well, you tapped your foot along with the beat, and it kept bouncing me up, and of course having my body slam down on your thigh each time was quite arousing, especially with so many others around me while my breasts were jiggling and I was already so very wet, so of course I nearly came without either of us meaning to, you know, I think I did—”

“You should’ve said something!” Bofur says, shaking his head and grinning happily. “I could’ve made it a lot better if I’d known!”

“And how improper it would’ve been! But then, let me see...” and of course, Bilbo remembers the other song. They still sing it, every now and again, low and quiet with that somber tone, and it’s magical, as sad as it is. “And when we sat around the fire, you took up all my chairs, and I had to sit at Thorin’s feet. I didn’t mind then, nor do I mind now, ever kneeling before my king.” She looks up at Thorin to smile, noting the interest in his eyes, before she goes on a bit timidly, “And then, I heard Thorin singing it again at night, faintly through my walls...” And that was what really tipped the scale, made her long for him, and of course she had to go on this mad quest. “By the time Nori snuck into your room, I was quite grateful for it.”

“Nori snuck into your room?” Thorin interrupts. She finds him first looking surprised, then frowning, and across the circle, Nori shifts awkwardly.

“Oh, he was good to me,” Bilbo hurries to stay, her blush increasing as she remembers the way he first knelt between her legs.

“Of course I was,” Nori adds before grumbling, “and we had quite a bit of fun, too, before you sent Fíli and Kíli after me.”

Here, Fíli and Kíli look pleased with themselves, until Thorin gives them a glare, and then they look awkwardly elsewhere. It must’ve been obvious on their faces what they got for their troubles. Looking equal parts impressed and envious, Glóin muses, “So three of you got a taste on that first day, hm? Well, we certainly started this journey out on the right note!”


“You might get your chance yet,” Bofur throws in, gesturing a hand at Bilbo. “Our little hobbit looks pretty hot and bothered. I think all these memories are getting to her.”

They really are. Bilbo nods, looking first at Bofur, then Nori, who doesn’t miss the chance. He stands up with a cheery, “Well, then,” and walks towards the middle of the camp.
As soon as he extends a hand to Bilbo, Bilbo’s getting to her feet. It’s exciting, thinking about her
dwarves in her nice comfy hobbit hole, but it’s even nicer to have them now, when she’s grown used
to them and her own body. She isn’t so ashamed of her feelings anymore, and it’s too easy to stand
in the middle of them, right on display, when she knows just what Nori wants.

She comes to Nori at a quick trot, lifting up on her toes as soon as she can to peck his mouth. He
kisses her back, even as his hands snake down her body, pulling at her belt. Even that, she doesn’t
mind. They’ve all seen her naked, and suddenly her clothes seem a nuisance, cumbersome, in the
way of Nori taking, of the other dwarves getting their fill. He has the belt off in a heartbeat,
tossing it aside, and he goes for her coat just as fast. She lets him brush it over her shoulders, pull it
clean off and drop it, breaking the kiss only to wrench her blouse over her head. He moves fast, like
he always does, but her own fantasies have left her hot, and she’s ready. He unsnaps her bra with
ease, and a second later, her breasts are spilling out, jiggling with the quick movement of him
manipulating her body. He pauses only once to squeeze them, and she gaps, but he’s moving on
again already. He pushes at her trousers and her panties, stuffing them down her thighs. She can hear
the chuckles of some of the other dwarves in the background, but she doesn’t mind the hurried show,
and she certainly doesn’t mind being left naked afterwards, standing before all of them with nothing
at all to cover herself. She can feel the other dwarves’ eyes on every angle of her body, every curve
and crevice, every bit of her exposed. Her skin flushes quickly in the cool air, but she has the feeling
that Nori will warm her up soon enough.

Nori steps back to let his hungry eyes roam over her, and he mutters with a wide grin, “You were
wrong to think you couldn’t please so many dwarves, Bilbo. You’ve been a perfect consort, after
all.”

Sometimes, Bilbo thinks she’s too lucky for it, and it’s more like she got her own personal harem.
But for now she plays out the fantasy, and she hunches her shoulders together coyly, looking up
through her lashes to ask, “And how can this consort please you, master dwarf?” Nori’s mustache
crenklels up with his pleasure.

But he doesn’t grab her, not yet. Instead, he settles himself back on the ground, sitting, then lying,
still fully clothed. With his head nestled against the hard rock, he waves her closer, purring, “Come
put that pretty pussy of yours in my face, Bilbo.”

A thrilling spark jolts up Bilbo’s spine—these dwarves really are too good to her. Already, she thinks
she’s going to get more of the benefit than him, but she doesn’t dare protest. Instead, she comes over
to him, hesitantly throwing one leg over his body. He pats her ankle and tells her, “Turn around—I
want some of that ass in the mix.” Bilbo shivers and nods, moving around to face his feet. The rest is
a bit awkward, having never done this before—usually, when the others climb under her, they
position themselves. Now Bilbo has to do it, with all their eyes on her. She lowers slowly to her
knees, her hands coming onto the ground, and she drops her rear, gradually as she can manage,
worried she’ll crush him, until she feels the round tip of his nose slipping through her cheeks.

His tongue lashes out, swiping over her slit, and Bilbo yelps, straightening up. Somehow, she wasn’t
quite ready for the sensation, yet he does it again, lapping quickly over her, and his arms reach
around her thighs to pull her down. Her legs only hold her up so much—she’s sure her weight must
be a problem, but Nori doesn’t at all seem to mind. His mustache and beard tickle her flushed skin,
his tongue doing the real work, his lips opening around hers and his nose rubbing into her. Her hands
automatically come back up to cover her mouth and try to hold onto her breasts, because he keeps
making her buck suddenly, and without a bra to hold them down, they bounce heavily in the open
air. They’re starting to feel unduly full again, and she makes a mental note to beg them to milk her
after, but for now she can’t make coherent noises. Nori’s tongue attacks her wildly, worming up
inside her. Then his hands slide down her ass and claw at her cheeks, spreading them wider, and she
squirms and grinds herself into his face, only able to not hump him completely because he’s holding her back.

Several of her dwarves are touching themselves. She’s facing Ori and Bombur, and while Bombur’s massaging himself through his trousers, Ori’s rolled up his sweater and pushed down his trousers, and when Bilbo tilts her head right, she can see his thick fingers disappearing into his pussy. She licks her lips looking at it, wanting more, because Nori’s so good with his mouth, but Bilbo has too many dwarves to waste any of her holes. She doesn’t even realize she’s kneading her breasts until Glóin orders her, “Squeeze those tits together, lass.” Bilbo obeys immediately, arching forward and holding her breasts tight with her arms and wrists, bent at the elbows, her fingers curled into her palms and held out of the way. Nori slaps one cheek of her ass as though to draw her attention back, and she gasps, only to receive another slap.

He’s hard through his trousers. When she looks down, it’s all she can see, straining up at her through the fabric, and it seems suddenly unfair that she should get his wicked tongue and he shouldn’t get anything. She reaches for his belt, unclipping it and pushing it away, then parting his coat, and his trousers are easy to push out of the way. She isn’t surprised to find no underwear beneath—as soon as she’s pushed his trousers down, his hard cock springs up to meet her. Bilbo runs her hands around the base, digging her fingers through the brown hair and cupping his heavy balls, but it’s not enough. Óin urges her on, “What’re you waiting for? Put it in your mouth!”

It’s crude, but of course she listens. Bilbo parts her lips and runs her tongue right up Nori’s shaft, spurred along by the way he suckles appreciatively on her clit; she can feel his moan. She stifles her own by stuffing her head down onto his tip, having to stretch her jaw to take his girth. It’s a strange angle to suck dick at, but having Nori eat her out at the same time makes it more than worth it. Bilbo pushes herself down very slowly, because each lick of Nori’s tongue makes her shudder and hesitate, enjoying her own pleasure. She’s gotten to the point where she can almost take her dwarves all the way down her throat. But she doesn’t manage now, distracted as she is, and she only gets three quarters before having to stop. She spends a few seconds whimpering around his length, writhing her hips against Nori’s eager face. His tongue fucks her faster for her efforts, and she tries to pay the favour back, sucking and starting to bob on and off while he licks her. She can’t imagine why she hasn’t done this before; it’s a wonderful position. It lets her feel the knotted ropes of his beard against her stomach, her breasts digging into his waist, her middle warm against the hump of his. Bilbo’s so busy enjoying her new treat that she forgets to look at the other dwarves, until she feels a pat on her rear, and she pulls off to look behind her.

As Dwalin’s blunt fingertips rub over Bilbo’s asshole, she shoves her mouth back onto Nori’s cock, mostly just to keep her noises in check. It’s confusing on her body, having both Nori and Dwalin to buck into, and her hips wind up in quick, staccato thrusts against whoever’s touching her at the time, while her head bobs up and down again along Nori’s length, having to suck noisily to keep up with all the precum he’s spilling. Obviously, he’s enjoying Bofur’s efforts, but Bilbo can’t see anything
more than Bofur’s wrist. Her view’s blocked, so she just lets her eyes fall closed, concentrating on the sensations, the stench of all these dwarves and her own arousal, the scrape of Nori’s clothes and his wet tongue and Dwalin’s fingers. The first finger pops inside, but her cry is muffled. He pushes in and out of her with relative ease; it’s easy to relax one set of muscles when the rest of her is begging to be filled.

Dwalin gets her open soon enough. He feeds her two, then three fingers, until he’s stretching her wide and kneading her tender brim. She’d pull off and beg him to fuck her, but she doesn’t have the strength in her shaking arms to lift herself off. She’s grateful when he withdraws, the spongy head of his cock pressing against her entrance a moment later.

Dwalin shoves inside, and Bilbo screams around Nori’s cock. She’s overcome immediately, the girth of Dwalin too much to take with the taste of Nori in her mouth and Nori’s tongue hungrily fucking her channel. She’s trembling atop him, her pussy already wracked with spasms and spilling copious amounts of her juices into Nori’s ready mouth, her own lips spilling out the corners with stray drops of seed, and then Nori jerks up suddenly, and she nearly chokes, sure that Bofur’s inside, and Nori moans into her pussy. Dwalin pulls half out, slams in again, and it tosses her forward, scraping her along Nori’s mouth, and Dwalin takes her a third time, and Bilbo loses it, coming immediately. Her orgasm crashes in to take her over, wipe her mind blank and make her skin burn, and she’s dizzy with the pleasure, swaying on elbows and knees. She’s gagging on Nori’s dick and has to struggle to breathe, and Nori just keeps licking her through it, keeps her twitching and aroused and filling his throat with more of her juices, her walls trembling around his tongue. She can’t stop. Dwalin starts to fuck her steadily, his hips not once pausing in her orgasm, and it carries her through into the rhythm. She’s right back to desperately horny, spent but eager for another. She has the distinct feeling that was only the first of many orgasms her dwarves are going to draw out of her tonight.

When she does blink her eyes hazily open, she sees Fíli and Kíli coming over to them, and Bilbo has to wonder just how many cocks she can fit in her at once. It becomes her personal mission in life to get Nori off as fast as possible, because she certain can’t take thirteen at once, but she can let them take turns. And if she is going to get into that mountain tomorrow and get eaten by a dragon, she’s at least going to have one last round with her dwarves tonight. Preferably more than once each.

By the time Fíli and Kíli reach her, she’s just finished swallowing Nori’s first load, and the brothers set down on either side of her to give her her second and third drinks of the night.

The satiated peace doesn’t last long enough.

Even in the light of Durin’s Day, they find no way inside.

The dwarves are frantic, and some go off to look other places for hidden doors, while Thorin sits in their camp in the flat passageway, glaring at his map and muttering to himself. Bilbo sits right next to the smooth wall, feeling strangely like something’s going to happen. Mostly, she wishes Gandalf would come back—he’d know what to do. But instead, she spends the entire day sitting, pacing, and lying flat on her back beneath where she’s sure the door should be.

She’s sitting again and pondering by the time the sun is setting, leaving the sky an ominous red. Thorin never moved all day, and some of the others are now sleeping, Bombur snoring as though nothing is wrong at all.

Balin is the last to get back. The look on his face is heartbreaking. Clearly, none of them found their miracle. And all are too crushed to keep looking, because the day is over and the prophecy’s come and gone, and what did they go on this journey for if not for the ancient words of some tattered old map?
Bilbo is very nearly done with it all and ready to sleep herself, or at least try and comfort Thorin, impossible though it may seem, when she hears a quiet cracking sound. She looks up and across the way, and on the other side of the passage, a fat thrush is knocking a pebble against the stone. Its coat is nearly black, with its freckled underside a bright yellow, and Bilbo stares at it while it rattles its find, as though trying to split its rock apart.

It stirs a memory. Elrond’s voice repeats in her mind, and Bilbo yelps so loud that Ori, just a little ways away in mid-walk, nearly topples over in surprise. Scrambling off her rock, Bilbo shouts, “Thorin!” The other dwarves all look over, but Thorin is the one with the key, and he’s the one she races for. She can hear the thrush finish, flapping its wings and dropping its pebble, but she doesn’t stop. She runs to Thorin’s side and bends to grab his sleeve, pulling him up by it. He moves too slowly, dazed and looking at her with concern, but she tugs him so hard that he does rise to his feet.

He lets her drag him towards the door, and no sooner have they reached it than the final ray of light slips through the clouds, cutting right down where the thrush once stood.

A tiny chunk of rock splinters out of the stone, slipping down the slab and leaving behind an empty little hole.

Bilbo doesn’t have to say any more. She can hear Thorin’s armour rattling as he searches wildly for the key, yanking it out a second later and practically jamming it into the hole. He twists it, and all the dwarves that stand behind Bilbo hold their breath.

Long, straight cracks creep around the wall. Thorin throws himself at it, Dwalin rushing past him to join, then Dori and Balin both. They push with all their might, and the stone gives way.

A great, cutout door swings slowly open, showing down into the gaping maw below.
There are stairs first, then a tunnel below, all swamped in utter darkness. For a while, the dwarves simply stare at the blackness of it, not daring to take a step inside. Of course, this is what it’s all been about, and Bilbo knows that it falls on her to go. This is the job she was brought along for, and yet none of them say it.

She has to be the one to quietly announce, “I’d better get started.”

Thorin looks torn, thoroughly uncomfortable, and the other dwarves look worried and concerned. Bifur squeezes through them, reaching for Bilbo’s hand, and xe squeezes Bilbo’s smaller fingers as though xe won’t let go. Bilbo wishes it were so easy.

But she shakes her head and says, “It must be me. Gandalf explained it all to us. The dragon will know the scent of a dwarf but not a hobbit, and besides, I have my ring.”

“You’ll come right back,” Bofur says, half reassuring and half an order. “There’s no sense being too brave and taking on the dragon by yourself.” Bilbo almost laughs, because of course she would never dream of such a thing.

“If there is no Smaug, and the mountain is truly empty, then it will be a good day indeed,” Thorin tells her. “But if you should find him sleeping, you must come back all the quicker.”

Bilbo softly promises, “I will.” A ripple of resignation runs through the crowd; they’ve known this all along.

She steps forward to hug Thorin anyway. He wraps his sturdy arms around her and squeezes, and it reminds her of that first time in the eagle’s eyrie that all the pretenses fell away. As soon as she’s pulling free, Fíli and Kíli are on her, and then Óin, followed by Ori and Dori, and when Nori hugs her, he squeezes her rear hard enough to make her gasp and Dwalin to pull him away. Dwalin claps her on the shoulder, and Glóin pats her back. Bifur takes her hand back, and Bofur lifts the other one to kiss, even though he insists, “You’ll come right back.”

She repeats, “I’ll come right back,” and smiles as bravely as she can. In truth, their worrying is only making her worry all the harder, and she’s almost happy to extricate herself from their sad looks.

As she steps beside the entrance, Balin follows her. She opens her mouth to protest, but he lifts a hand and says, “I’ve always been the primary lookout. I’ll just come a little ways down the passage with you and listen and watch, just in case we all need to come running.”

She wants to tell them not to come running under any circumstance, because it won’t do any good for them all to be eaten, but she knows by now when there’s no point arguing. So she sighs and says, “Thank you.”

Together, they step through the door.
That first passage is as dark inside as it was out, and for a long way, Bilbo and Balin have to feel along the wall. The stone is smooth, purposely cleared, but she can’t see the colour or pattern. They’re both deathly quiet, until they come to the very end, and a very, very faint glow slicks around the corners. Before Bilbo turns the bend, she stops, knowing that she must leave Balin here.

He hugs her first. Without a word, he gathers her up in his arms, kisses her forehead, and whispers low in her ear, “You can’t know how much we all adore you, Bilbo.”

She does know. Clinging fiercely to his neck, she murmurs, “I love you all, too.” And that won’t stop, and she truly doesn’t believe this is the end. As his grip gradually relaxes, she kisses his cheek and promises, “I’ll return soon.”

It’s still difficult to leave him. He never steps into the light, and she doesn’t let herself look back. She turns the corner and into another dark passage, only dimly glowing from the very end. The light is mostly golden but a little red, and she wonders at first if it’s a fire. There’s a thin scent in the air that pulls her closer, reminding her distantly of embers and something else she can’t quite put her finger on.

The corridors get more elaborate as she goes on, and Bilbo finds herself alone in vast, towering halls, devoid of all life and occasionally piled with rubble. It’s as haunting as Dale was, but less destroyed, just painfully empty, for all its grand size. Occasionally, she passes furniture, barely visible and almost all made of stone or metal. It’s been a long time since she’s seen tables and chairs the right size for her, but these are not for men or elves; she can picture her dwarves comfortably seated, and it makes her long for the future.

The light and smell grow stronger the deeper she goes. The odor’s intoxicating now, thick and pungent and making her head a little dizzy, making her throat a little dry and her mouth oddly water, her lids growing heavy. She feels very warm, and the heat licks at her with each new step, twisting along her arms and up her thighs. Finally, she turns a corner, and it opens into stairs that weave down into an enormous cavern, the floor of which is entirely buried in gold. But that isn’t even the half of it. The real treasure, the sight that draws her eyes and won’t let go, is the dragon.

A huge, mammoth beast is twisted about in the coins, parts of it submerged and others peaking out like hills or mountains, heavily scaled like glistening armour. It’s Smaug himself that glows, his crimson hue tinted gold around the edges, shimmering yellow and breathing a dark haze of smoke that settles over everything. Smaug’s head is luxuriously stretched along a particularly high mound of treasure, his snout steeped in jewels and trinkets, his magnificent array of horns thrust out into the air like some demonic crown. The sockets of his eyes are closed, but his nostrils move with each breath, the sound of it not quite snoring, but enough for Bilbo to count the heavy breaths. Spikes line the dragon’s back, coiling all the way down its tail, right into the gnarled point that Bilbo thinks could wrap several times around her home in Bag End without ever running out. Even more impressive are Smaug’s leathery wings, casually folded amidst the splendor but nonetheless magnificent. The entire thing is breathtaking, staggeringly jaw-dropping, and all Bilbo can do for a little while is stare.

In a way, she’s almost sickly glad that the dragon exists; she knows that she’ll never have a sight like this again in all her life. And then she almost feels sad, because they must deal with Smaug somehow, and it seems a great sin to kill such an amazing creature.

Fortunately, she didn’t come to kill. She’s only a burglar, and though nothing Bilbo can bring her dwarves will rival the sight of this, she must move all the same. She creeps silently down the twisted stairs, trying to watch her step but always drawn back to the dragon. The pungent smell wafts into her the closer she gets, and now it makes her think of incense, and she can’t help but wonder if it’s some sort of aphrodisiac; it makes her knees weak and her feet want to follow. It’s a mad feeling, but
At the bottom of the stairs, Bilbo plucks a single goblet off the nearest pile of gold. It’s heavier in her hands than it looks but will have to do. She doesn’t dare rifle through the treasure and doesn’t dare move closer. With the cup firmly in one hand, Bilbo heads back up the steps, trying very hard not to be drawn back to looking.

When Bilbo makes it back to Balin, he’s so happy to see her that he picks her right up. Held half over his shoulder with his arms beneath her rear, Bilbo kisses his forehead and pets back his white hair, smiling almost as wide as he is. She knew she’d come back, but he clearly wasn’t so sure. He tells her, “You’re a sight for sore eyes, lass,” and she threads her fingers through his beard and tilts up his chin, lightly kissing his lips.

Balin carries her back through the mountain and up along the steps, where all the other dwarves look just as relieved. They gather her up in a sort of group hug that branches off into a few others, because there’s never enough room for all at once. When they’re finished touching her, as if to make sure she’s real, she pushes Thorin down to sit and falls into his lap. She hands the cup to Dwalin, who eyes it before passing it around, while she explains to Thorin, “Smaug is still very much there, and I’m sure he’s alive, but he seems to be asleep.”

“Even so,” Bombur says, “it was very impressive of you to go all the way down and fetch this.” Now holding the cup, he runs his finger along the brim and admires the workmanship, before Nori plucks it away.

“What’s more impressive, and better still, is that you made it back to us,” Thorin says, which makes Bilbo chuckle lightly, because it’s such a very small thing in the grand scheme of what they must do. Glóin is the one to really say it. He sits down across from Thorin, who’s now lightly rubbing Bilbo’s back while she perches on his thighs with her knees tucked under her. The dragon smoke is still coiled in her stomach, and it makes her want to mewl and nuzzle into him and beg to drink from his cock, but the weight of their mission holds her sober. “But what are we going to do about the dragon?”

That always seemed to Bilbo a weak part in their plans. Dori asks drearily, “I don’t suppose he’ll just keep sleeping?”

Ori, who’s something of a scholar, shakes his head. “If I know anything about dragon-lore, it’s just how important their hoards are to them. The minute Smaug realizes something’s gone, the mountain will come down.”

“And if we start making a ruckus sorting through the piles, that’ll do it,” Dwalin grumbles, stroking his beard in thought. “Drat that wizard for ever leaving us.”

“I’m sure if Gandalf could’ve stopped a dragon, he would’ve come this far with us,” Bilbo says sensibly, although she can’t help but wonder if Dwalin’s complaint has any truth in it. Even if Gandalf couldn’t have slew the dragon, having a wizard around would be far more comforting than the fourteen of them, small and mortal as they are.

Dwalin shrugs, and with it, the mountain shakes.

The earth around them trembles, stones and pebbles clattering against the passage walls, which seem to buckle, like they’re going to come down at any moment. Bilbo’s eyes are drawn up by a tremendous cloud of black smoke, and her stomach clenches, worrying: she shouldn’t have taken
Thorin grabs her around the middle. He springs to his feet, taking her with him, and before she can even find her own footing, he’s reaching for Fíli and Kíli to shove them towards the door, shouting over the din of the quake, “Everyone into the tunnel!” They all scramble up, grabbing at what little supplies are about them. Bilbo’s only grateful they’ve long since sent the ponies free, not having the provisions to look after them as well. Hopefully, they got away, and even more hopefully, she and the dwarves will, too.

They make it into the passageway just in time. Dwalin and Dori rush to help Thorin close the door, and through the open crack, Bilbo sees the gleaming red gem that is Smaug the dragon go streaking through the sky. He’s come out of the mountain, by which route she doesn’t know, and even when the quake stops, Smaug’s screech is terrifying. He snorts fire into the air, and the dwarves shut off the view, bringing the door to just a tiny crack that lets in the sunlight. The glow at the other end is gone.

They slump back down to join the others, breathing heavy. Panic is on all their faces, and Bilbo wants to apologize but can’t seem to make her mouth work just yet.

They weren’t prepared for this. They look helplessly about one another, while the sounds of Smaug’s roars circle the mountain. Suddenly, the lingering scent in the tunnel doesn’t feel nearly so alluring.

Balin is the first to speak. He begins, “There is a story from Lake-town—”

“This is no time for stories,” Glóin hisses, but Thorin sends him a glare that shuts him up.

“There is a story,” Balin continues, “that Girion, Lord of Dale, shot the beast.”

“And missed or failed, it doesn’t matter which,” Thorin says bitterly. “Yes, we’ve heard it.”

“I know you have,” Balin says gently. “But there were stories that his black arrow loosened a scale.”

Thorin snorts, “That’s only a myth.”

But Bofur asks, “Why didn’t you lot mention this before?”

“Because it doesn’t matter,” Thorin answers. “What good does it do us? You expect us to creep up on old Smaug and stab him right in the fictitious weak scale?”

Listening intently but vaguely horrified at the prospect, Bilbo murmurs, “Even with a magic ring, I don’t think I could do that.”

To which Thorin hurriedly shakes his head and says, “Of course not, Bilbo. I didn’t mean it to be you. And it wouldn’t work for any of us. We don’t even know if it’s true. And if it was, how would we know where it was?”

“But we have no better ideas on how to slay Smaug,” Ori says timidly. Which is very true, and it makes the dwarves sit in quiet for a few moments.

The quiet isn’t really quiet, because Smaug is still outside, and long through the night, they can hear him raging. They keep hidden in the tunnel, hoping that he won’t spy the door, and too nervous to eat their meager rations. During most of this, Bilbo sits with Bifur, mainly so she can be distraction-free, and sets to thinking.
There’s nothing for it. By the time daybreak slithers in through the crack of the door, Bilbo’s waking up from a several hour nap with absolutely no new ideas. Bombur, somehow, manages to go on sleeping, but the rest of them squint at the light of the sun and go on mopping or brooding respectively, until Fili asks, “What’s that?”

Looking over, Bilbo spies the same vague glow as yesterday. It occurs to her that she hasn’t heard Smaug outside for sometime, and she tells Fili, “That’s Smaug.” Kili whistles, as though impressed that a beast could shine so powerfully.

This only enables the plan Bilbo knew she would have to follow. She sits up and out of her place next to Bifur, brushing herself off and announcing, “I’ll just have to go down again.”

Immediately, Thorin’s head snaps around, and he asks sternly, “What?”

“I’ll simply have to go and look for a weak spot. Don’t worry, I’ll put on my ring. I appreciate that you want to keep me safe, but there’s just nothing else we can do.”

“It’s too dangerous,” Thorin insists, gesturing for her to sit back down. “It was one thing when we were sure he was gone or sleeping, but now that we know he’s awake, it’s out of the question.”

“And what exactly do you propose we do?” Bilbo asks. As frightening as it was to see the dragon, a part of her is still bizarrely drawn back, and of course, she’s getting tired of sitting in a dark stone passageway, and she didn’t come all this way to do nothing. The dwarves look at her, and she says before they can offer, “And no, none of you can come. The entire point is for me to go look for this mysterious scale and come right back without Smaug ever knowing. Yes, I’ll come rushing back at the first sign of trouble. If anyone has a better plan, let’s hear it.”

No one has a better plan. There simply isn’t one, and after much fussing, Bilbo makes her way back down the tunnel, acutely aware of all the eyes on her back.

Bilbo dons her ring the second she creeps around the corner, but it’s still a nerve-wracking trip. Before there was the fear of the unknown, but now she knows just how dangerous it is. The thought of her dwarves pushes her on, their happiness more valuable to her than the promised treasure could ever be. They need her to do this, and that thought overcomes most of the fear.

The glow guides her, the wafting scent and the downward curve of the floor. She scales one staircase after another, going slower the deeper she goes, more for the heady feeling the smoke in the air gives her than the worry itself. The fog seems to ebb the worry away just as much, and by the time she comes out into the gold, she’s feeling oddly brave, foolhardy or at least too comfortable. The dragon lies below, nestled in the gold on his belly, his claws spread in the coins. His long muzzle is at rest, his golden eyes half closed, but they lift as Bilbo takes the steps down to the covered floor.

She’ll have to be very careful, she knows, not to scatter trinkets wherever she steps. She spends a long time on that last stair, unprepared to take the final plunge into danger. The dragon isn’t quite looking at her, but he is very much awake, and seeing him alive is an exhilarating feeling, the view just as magnificent as before. She spends too long just looking at him, absorbing the rich shimmer of his scales and the slight ruffle of his wings when he moves, the occasional flick of his tail. His posture is leisurely, relaxed, not at all poised to kill, but of course he’s still menacing, so very huge as he is, with all his many horns and spikes. His tail alone could crush her, one swipe of his palm do her in. And then there’s the fire, which she knows he can breathe and makes her shiver just to think of—how incredibly powerful he is, and she’s come down here all on her own, with just a tiny ring to protect her.
She has to will herself to think of Thorin. She thinks of Thorin on an elaborate throne, and Fíli and Kíli running happily through these halls, Glóin and Nori rifling through the treasure and Bofur and Bifur playing catch with coins. She pretends she has Dwalin’s fearlessness, and she extends one foot, ready to step into the hoard.

“I can smell you.”

The voice is booming, deep and purred, lavish and all-consuming; it wraps around her and leaves her breathless, makes her nearly stumble back in fright and want. Smaug opens his mouth, a slithering tongue tracing out along his sharp teeth. He still doesn’t look directly at her, but he does mewl so very hotly, “Come out of the shadows.”

A part of Bilbo leaps to obey. Her fingers lift towards the ring, ready to peel it off, and her common sense only just catches her in time. She had no idea the dragon could speak, let alone in any language she could understand, but his words are clear and perfect, authoritative and alluring. It’s difficult to drop her hands back to her sides, but she does it, trying very hard not to breathe too loudly.

Smaug slowly lowers his head back to the gold as though it doesn’t matter. Then his muzzle turns, and his golden eyes blink, their radiance nearly turning her to stone; she feels holy unworthy for this. He seems to look at her, or at least where she is, and one puff of fire would incinerate her on the spot before she could ever run far enough away. Yet he only drawls conversationally, “Are you here to steal more treasure? Help yourself, there is plenty more to spare.”

Bilbo can’t afford to let him do that. She squeaks, stammers, “N-no, thank you,” and clears her throat to hurriedly explain, “I came to view your magnificence, O Smaug the Tremendous!” She has to shout for it to in any way match him, though it still isn’t nearly so steady. She never thought in all her life that she would speak to a dragon, and now she’s wholly unprepared. She distinctly wishes she’d brought the goblet back.

Smaug snorts. It sends a few coins scampering away down the hill, his nostrils flaring for that brief moment. “That hardly seems fair.”

Pausing, Bilbo doesn’t understand. “I... I’m sorry...”

“No, no, I shouldn’t mind admirers.” His claws wave, as though this is all perfectly normal. “It just doesn’t seem quite right that you can see me, and I cannot see you. Of course, I could simply fill my nest with flames, and then I suspect I would find your body soon enough, and see just what sort of creature dares to break into another’s home and steal from them, with the audacity to return for more.”

This, of course, seems rather rich for Smaug to claim, having stolen Erebor from the dwarves, but naturally Bilbo’s disinclined to say that, almost as much so as being burned alive. Not having the time to come up with an excuse, Bilbo gulps and calls out the truth, “I dare not come out, Smaug the Mighty, for you are so very grand, and I am... so very small. I’m frightened.” Terribly so. Smaug seems to ponder this, although Bilbo said it with utter sincerity.

After a few tense moments, he muses, “Yes. I can hear you shaking. ...Very well. We shall have a deal then, voice from the shadows. I will take on another form, one more... suitable for what you must be, and you will come forward.” Before Bilbo can even answer, Smaug’s pushing up on his legs, standing in the gold, tossing his head back and roaring, and Bilbo has to clasp her hands quickly over her ears to stop from being deafened. The entire hall seems to shake around her, and she stares in awe, then has to look away, as the glow around him becomes blinding. Something miraculous is going on, she knows it, but she’s merely mortal and can’t handle the power of it. She watches instead along the walls, as the light flares like a star, only to settle slowly down again,
retracting even darker than before.

When Bilbo dares to lower her hands and look back to where Smaug once stood, her mouth falls open.

Smaug is no longer a dragon at all.

In his place, a man stands in the center of the treasure. He’s proportioned quite like the men of Dale, although that is where the similarity ends. His skin is a deep, brassy sort of brown, tinged red in certain places, scales lining his cheeks and down the back of his arms and legs, smattered below his collarbone. He has huge, leather wings bursting from his back, outstretched and not unlike those of his dragon form, like his tail, slithering down to curl around his foot, the pointed end looping back between his feet. His hair is a dark brown-black, only a tad longer than hers and quaffed attractively, parted around the different crimson spikes that jut out like his old horns. His eyes are much the same, and they call to Bilbo across their distance, his one hand extending.

He’s completely naked. Already overcome with his beauty, Bilbo wills herself not to look between his legs. She definitely isn’t worthy. She shouldn’t have come down here alone—she feels as though she needs a chaperone to stop her from throwing herself at this man’s feet.

He’s a monster, she has to remind herself. He took this world from the dwarves, and he terrorized Dale. All the destruction around this mountain is because of Smaug. Smaug gestures with his long fingers and says again, a fierce demand, “Come to me.”

Bilbo does. Her feet move of their own accord, sinking down into the gold below, and her fingers subconsciously pluck the ring from her hand. She can feel the world winking back into life around her. As she wades towards him, his thin lips quirk into a grin, barely revealing the sharpness of his teeth inside. He purrs to her, more soothing now that she’s obeying, “I am magnificent in both my forms, aren’t I?”

“Yes,” Bilbo nearly moans, nodding, entranced. It takes too long to get to him. She stumbles over one hill after another, each step closer revealing more details—the hard lines of his stomach muscles, the little pink nubs of his nipples, the lack of hair anywhere but his head, yet the chiseled texture of scales. His limbs, fingers, and lips are very long, his cheekbones high and his face devastatingly handsome, those yellow eyes sucking her right in. Finally, she’s standing right before him, unsure of what to do. He’s much taller than her, so she has to stand with her head thrown back, peering up at him through dilated eyes and heavy lashes. His fingers, tipped in clawed nails, brushes over her cheek.

Bilbo shivers. Smaug casually notes, “You stole my cup.”

Bilbo opens her mouth. She shakes her head, wanting to deny it, but there doesn’t seem much point, and she winds up licking her lips and mumbling shakily, “I’m sorry...”

His thumb is tracing the side of her face now, and she doesn’t dare move. His skin is incredibly hot. His fingertips push back into her hair, and she half expects them to fist there and force her to her knees. Instead, Smaug simply purrs, “You have nice manners for a thief and a liar.” When his hand falls away, she winces, missing it.

He shifts one foot to the side of hers, and he steps that little bit closer; her breasts are almost touching his chest, brushing over his stomach with each of her heavy breaths, his wings casting an eerie shadow over her. “Now... who are you, little one?” he asks, his voice like honey in her ear. “I’ve never smelled your kind before, and I must admit I find it quite... pleasant...”
“Ah... B... Bilbo,” she murmurs, having to pause in between. It’s difficult just to talk to him, and when she tries to pull back, she’s made uncomfortably aware of her own body. She’s starting to sweat under the smoldering heat, the valley between her legs growing moist for other reasons. It’s a struggle just to explain, “I’m a hobbit. I’m... Bilbo Baggins, ah... a...” She has to wrack her brain; she has no titles that could rival that of a dragon, she’s so unimportant next to him, but she somehow still manages to say, “I am Ring-winner, and Luckwearer. Ah... Barrel-rider...”

She stop when he chuckles, then purrs, “Is that the name of the last man you were with?”

Bilbo blushes nearly as red as his scales. She shakes her head and has to look away; his gaze reads her too easily. His eyes seem to pierce below her skin. The heavy wool of her jacket is too stifling for this heat, but she isn’t wearing any shirt below, so she keeps her hands tightly at her sides. Smaug takes one step to the side, his eyes still on her, trailing along her body as he walks a slow circle. She tries to stand at attention, rigid, aware she’s being judged. Behind her, he muses, “I can smell dwarf all over you. You reek of them.” She should’ve known that, and she winces while he’s still behind her, hopefully out of sight of her reaction; she knows that dragons and dwarves aren’t friends. Yet when he comes back to her front, he looks no more ready to eat her than before. “And... let me guess. They offered you treasure for this.” She doesn’t even have to react. He snorts and looks away, like he knew it, of course. “They’ll keep it for themselves.”

Bilbo’s mouth opens. She doesn’t believe that, not for a second, but Smaug says it so easily, and he’s turning, strolling back to the very tip of the golden hill. It’s still his body that gives the light, reflected off billions of shined surfaces.

“They send you down here like this,” his voice goes on, “when they think of me as some murderous brute. I almost feel sorry for you, falling pray to their grubby fantasies. They send you like some sacrificial lamb to satiate my hunger, to aide them before they steal back from me all these things they took from the earth. How do you know they won’t simply keep it all again, and keep your body, if you survive? They couldn’t have believed you, small and delicate as you are, could ever hope to defeat me. You’re merely the stone they cast in the lake to see if anything moves. And if they should fetch you out again, you’ll merely be one more plaything for them to lock up in their greedy hold.”

Stunned, it’s all Bilbo can do to shake her head. She never, not for one moment, thought they meant to sacrifice her or keep her hostage afterwards. They don’t speak much of her leaving, back to the Shire when the journey’s over, but that’s only because none of them want to be separated. She knows that. Yet Smaug’s words are so incredibly flippant, so simple and matter-of-fact, like he’s seen it hundreds of times before. Bilbo says as much for herself as him, “They wouldn’t do that.”

“And yet... they gave you to me.” He turns back to look at her, a broad smirk on his handsome face, his eyes otherwise bored. Something tightens in Bilbo’s stomach.

She says, as strongly as she can, “I gave myself.”

“You do?” He doesn’t look surprised. In fact, his eyes flare with interest, his appraisal of her obviously coming out positive. He walks back to her, one long, brown-red leg after another. When he’s standing right before her again, he tells her quietly, “It’s been a long time since I had someone worth exerting my magic for.”

And then he cups her chin, and he bends down to kiss her.

Bilbo melts immediately. His lips are burning, soft and sweet and a little spicy, vaguely tasting like cinnamon and ash. His hand is harder, his skin calloused and both textured and smooth. His mouth is much bigger than hers, and Bilbo whimpers, though she wouldn’t dare pull away, wouldn’t want to if she could, and when a long, thin tongue snakes over the seam of her plush lips, she opens right
away. His tongue pours into her, lashing quickly over her walls and ensnaring her own; he wraps around her tongue and pulls it forward: a wild, bizarrely arousing trick that has her fidgeting in place. His teeth, pointed but dulled, scrape along her bottom lip, and the saliva that spills into her mouth is thick and nearly boiling. She feels like he’s pouring some strange venom down her throat, an aphrodisiac that makes her lose all her senses. When he pulls away, she isn’t ready, and she mewls and leans after him, too short and impotent.

He licks his lips in a quick flash, wrinkling his nose with clear delight and hissing, “Yesss. I find you very interesting, Bilbo. ...And where are you from...?”

She doesn’t think she should tell him, just in case. But her mouth betrays her sluggish brain, and she answers, “The Shire.”

His smirk increases at the ends. He dips to press his hard nose against hers, and he murmurs, “I should like to claim a hobbit from the Shire.” As he speaks, his long fingers run along her neck. Her skin tingles everywhere he touches, and then the ends of his smallest fingers are ducking into the white fluff trim of her coat. His hands fist in it, and he draws the fabric slowly back, pulling it down her shoulders. Bilbo can’t bring herself to stop him.

He kisses her again, quick and fierce, bent far down to reach her mouth, even though she arches her body as high up into him as she can. His hands keep moving, drawing down her sleeves, until her breasts spill out the middle, beaded with sweat in between and heaving with her efforts. There is no bra today, not having needed it with how tightly she’s wrapped her coat and how soft the insides are. The coat stops to pool around her waist where the belt resides, but Smaug has it undone in a heartbeat, and then Bilbo’s coat slips right off her body and onto the floor.

He dips one claw into the front of her trousers, pulling them away from her body, and Bilbo has to break the kiss to gasp. Smaug’s hand withdraws, smoothing instead across her stomach. He feels the round hump of her belly and purrs close to her ear, “I wonder if you could bear my drakelings...” Bilbo’s head falls back, and she moans. Being full of little baby lizards shouldn’t make her as horny as it does, but the thought of being bred by a dragon is simply intoxicating. The fact that he would even consider her, even in passing such as this, feels like more honour than she deserves, even as horrendous and filthy as it is. His tongue licks along the shell of Bilbo’s ear, and her knees feel weak.

He presses one hand against her shoulder. One little push is all it takes to send her toppling backwards. She lands on her rear in the makeshift cot of her coat, the hard imprint of the coins stabbing bluntly up against her flesh. Smaug descends on her, his face ducking towards hers, and Bilbo cowers away on instinct, bending back until her skull hits the slope, and she’s lying, flat on her back, beneath him.

His claw snags in her trousers, and she hears a sick ripping sound, the fabric pulling taut against her. He slices all down one leg so easily, the tip not quite reaching her skin. After, he cuts the second leg open, then pulls the shreds of her clothes away. All that’s left are her panties, and Smaug settles above her to stare down at them, his long legs folded to either side of hers and his rear just past her knees. His tail loops around her foot, running slickly through the tuft of hair on it. Eyeing her panties, now completely soaked through and clinging to her lips, Smaug asks, “Do you really give yourself to me, little Bilbo?”

Something about the way he says her name makes her moan. She can’t help but look at his cock, now that it’s jutting out parallel to her stomach, long and twisted, steadily thicker near the base and nearly pointed at the tip. The shaft is lined with red veins, the skin itself spongy and dark-pink, with a pair of tight, hairless balls beneath, bigger than any of her dwarves, though they seem less so compared to the sheer size of his cock. Just looking at them makes her desperately want them in her
mouth, or for them to empty their load all over her, and of course she has to nod. She can’t miss the chance to be fucked by a dragon.

Smaug’s grin twitches, but not hugely wider, as though he knew she would agree. She half expects him to spear her with his cock right through her panties, but instead he slinks down her body, back onto hands and knees like a feral animal.

She lifts up on her elbows and watches in awe as Smaug grabs the front of her panties in his teeth, then drags them down her thighs. Bilbo groans, her hips automatically lifting, and it makes the ride easier. He smoothly pulls her panties right off her legs with his mouth, then sits back up to take them in his hand, musing, “Another treasure for my collection.” He drops them into the gold before returning his gaze to her body.

He runs one hand up her leg, rubbing over the mound beneath her stomach, the ends of his fingers curling around her lips and rolling in little circles to play with the juices that readily dribble out of them. Bilbo has to grit her teeth together to stop from moaning herself hoarse. He feels her for a few minutes, simply mapping her body, before wondering aloud, “Now... how am I going to get myself inside this little body of yours, hm? I’m afraid this form is as small as my magic can take me, but I didn’t realize that you would be quite so very tiny...” His tail reaches up her leg as he talks, coiling around her, searing her skin just short of pain, but not overly tight. “I suppose I could worm my tail inside you, or settle for my fingers, but I must admit, primal though it is, that I feel a rather strong urge to bury my seed inside you...”

“Try,” Bilbo gasps, the tip of his tail now rubbing her inner thighs in time with the movement of his teasing fingers, “Oh, please, try...”

Smaug chuckles fondly, and he rewards her with a little flick against her clit, but his fingers go no deeper than that. She keeps trying to open herself to invite him in, but she doesn’t have enough control to maintain anything for very long. She thinks about telling him how it was with Thorin at first, how big it was and how it hurt her, but she adjusted, and now she takes fat dwarf cocks all the time, and surely she could adjust the same way to Smaug’s, but it doesn’t feel wise to mention dwarves right now, so instead she merely whines and rocks her hips into him, until he indulges her by slipping one finger inside. Gasping in delight, Bilbo tries to buck into him, but Smaug quickly holds her stomach down and muses, “Careful, little one. You forget my claws. I am skilled with them, yes, but I can’t help it if you hurt yourself on them. Despite what those nasty dwarves might’ve told you, I have no interest in hurting an innocent, especially not a potential mate...”

It’s torture, but Bilbo tries to be still. If he weren’t holding her firmly in place, she probably would be bucking harder, but under his stern grip, she takes that one finger without any pain. It goes impossibly far inside her, deep and agile, moving swiftly but surely, caressing all the right spots. Before she knows it, a second finger is pushing inside, and Bilbo’s coaxed open, her own copious juices easing the way. She’s ridiculously wet, the air itself urging her on, the scent of him enchanting. His two fingers scissor her for a few broad strokes, and then she thinks he’s going to add a third.

Instead, he slips back down and opens his large mouth, his long tongue pushing between them. Bilbo instantly cries out, her head digging back into her coat and dislodging the coins below. He wriggles his tongue expertly around her walls, and it reaches nearly as far as his fingers do. She can feel it curling up, and as it withdraws, she forces herself to look down again, only to see him scoop a glob of her liquids into his mouth. He smacks his tongue loudly as he swallows, dipping immediately back in for more.

Bilbo could come from this alone. She doesn’t want to, but she can already feel her stomach tightening, her muscles coiling to a peak, and she has to force herself to think of the least sexy things
she can, like Gollum and the Sackville-Bagginses, but the image of Smaug’s lithe and muscled body comes back every time. He isn’t quiet, and even his wings make noise as they flap in their extension, lifting in the air and seeming to twitch along with his mouth. Bilbo’s hands curl uselessly at her sides, even though she wants to grab his hair—it looks so soft—or grab onto his horns and hold him down. She doesn’t dare. When his tongue finally leaves her for good, she thinks she’s going to scream.

His fingers leave, too, and Bilbo feels huge, even though she hasn’t taken him yet—his ministrations have gently bid her to her limits, her body willingly opened and ready. He presses the tip of his tongue lewdly against her clit and runs it up through the fuzz above her lips, while Bilbo writhers in place and makes needy begging noises. He makes it all the way up to her navel, dips inside and stops to kiss her stomach, while she fights not to hump his chest.

He looks up at her with burning eyes and a cruel smirk. He must know that he’s captured her, has her wrapped so easily around one claw, ready to give him anything he asks. Before he moves back above her, he parts her little legs around his body, hiking her rear right up his thighs, so she’s lifted off the ground, her gaping hole held just before his cock. He lets the head of it rest against her brim and watches with amusement as her entrance dilates, wanting to suck him inside, unable to handle even the smallest bit of stimulation. The new angle makes her breasts weigh heavily down towards her face, her spine arched at an awkwardly angle. She lifts her hands tentatively, not knowing what to do with them, and whines in a pitiful plead, “Smaug?”

He ducks to kiss her cheek, which brings him down between her arms. Then he guides them carefully around his neck, bending his own spine to let her hold onto him, his broad shoulders being too wide for her tiny arms. The tips of her fingers brush through his hair, and Smaug’s teeth scrape along her jaw. Into her pointed ear, he purrs, “Beg me for it.”

“Please,” Bilbo moans without even thinking; her mind is filled with him, his power and his splendor, the most magnificent creature she’s ever seen. She wants to feel him so badly. “Smaug, please, I need you, I need y-your cock, I can’t... ah, I can’t stand to not have it in me...” She tries to shove herself up, but he grabs her waist and holds her so easily, and she whimpers. “Please, Smaug, I’ll do anything—anything, just fuck me, oh... I’ve never even seen a cock so great as yours, and I-I want it, I want it so much... no, I need it, please...”

He stops her to kiss her harshly, his tongue shoving inside her, and this time it uncoils to its full extent, filling her mouth to the brim. It’s all she can do not to choke while he snakes around in it, forcing her own saliva to dribble out the corners of her lips. By the time it draws back, she’s gasping for air, tears nearly in her eyes from the stretch he placed on her jaw. He crudely licks the drool off her chin and hisses, “Tell me that you would be mine.”

Something in her screams that that isn’t right, but right now she can’t think of why, and the blood pounding in her veins drowns out the other protests. She needs this. She gasps, “Yours, I’ll be yours, all yours, to do with as you like...”

Smaug chuckles, nips at her chin and murmurs, “What a pretty mate you would make.”

And then he shoves his cock inside her, and Bilbo arches and screams. He stabs right past her puckered brim, forcing it open mid-blink, shoving deeper and deeper in one smooth, steady thrust that nothing can seem to stop. Her walls fluctuate wildly around him, her juices squelching along the sides, trying to accommodate him—it isn’t just that he’s enormous, it’s that he’s so fiery hot and hard, and she feels like little more than a sheath for him, a tool for a god’s pleasure. There isn’t any pain, not exactly, but it could just be that her head’s too ruined to tell the difference anymore—her vision blurs, washing into white and gold. His hands draw her up at the same time, pulling her rear tightly into his body, making sure that he’s as deep inside her as possible. She’s never been so full in
her entire life. She doesn’t think she’s going to be able to walk after this. Or do anything. Her grip around his neck becomes so tight it’s nearly bruising. She doesn’t even realize she’s still screaming until her voice breaks, and then the echoes of it off the high walls scattered into her ears.

“Yesss,” Smaug hisses, one hand staying around her waist to secure her and the other dancing up her side, grabbing fiercely into her hair and holding her head to face him. “I will leave my mark on you, fill you so deeply with my seed that it will drown out that filthy dwarf stench, and every creature in the land will know immediately that you belong to me.” Bilbo can’t do anything to answer. He only stays in her for a moment, then begins to slip out, and it seems to take a torturous forever, until it’s only the tip left and he’s driving back inside. She shuts her eyes, but some unknown force opens them a second later; his are drilling into her, so intense that she can’t look away. He’s so dazzlingly beautiful, in every way. She can feel the magic coursing inside her with each thrust, and they begin to come at a brutal pace, merciless and overwhelming. If he weren’t holding her, she’d be sliding up and down the hill each time. Instead, he grabs her hips and throws her into every thrust, impaling her over and over.

Bilbo’s completely lost. He could say anything to her right now, and it would sound like pure sex. Her entire body is Trembling, and she’s completely slick with sweat, the ends of her breasts pinned against his chest and the rest of them jostled with every little movement. He’s arched too far away from her to pin them down, so while her perked nipples rub against his scales, the sides bounce between their bodies. He hisses more words against the side of her face, but they seem to be slipping out of any language she can understand, and her head’s too clouded to take in all the words. She waits, instead, until he comes back around to kiss her, sometimes letting her share in even kisses, their tongues intertwining and lips slipping against one another, and other times he fills her up with his tongue, gags her on it and lets her tremble all the harder. If Bilbo could, she would stay in this mountain forever, letting this amazing beast claim her every moment.

But she’s too weak. He feels so, so good, and she’s already got tears slipping out the corner of her eyes; it’s all too intense for her to take. He makes one more thrust, pounding into her so hard that she shrieks at the top of her lungs, and her orgasm rips through her all at once, an unstoppable tornado that burns out all her nerves. She loses herself in that blissful inferno, seeing stars and going numb. She’s utter ecstasy, and a minute later her dizzy head is thinning.

Bilbo passes out.

Later, the golden glow stirs her retinas.

When she wakes, there’s something slick and sticky all over her. She’s naked but warm, and there’s something draped over her, bony in parts and web-like in others, she blinks her eyes open and sleepily looks at the makeshift blanket of Smaug’s wing.

He’s curled around her. One of his legs is thrust between hers, his head propped up on one hand, the other draped lazily over Bilbo’s shoulder. It takes her a moment to remember everything that happened, and then she blushes in embarrassment: she actually came so hard she fainted.

He grins at her all the same. It isn’t a menacing smile, not really, or perhaps it’s just the post-coital bliss that still has a hold over her. She feels heavy and satiated, but at least a little clearer than before. Her body is sore in several places, her legs in particular feeling pushed too wide apart, and she can feel her still-stretched hole leaking copiously down her thighs. She realizes belatedly that the splashes of liquid all over her body must be his cum; it’s like she’s bathed in it. She supposes, given his real size, she shouldn’t be surprised, but it’s still staggering to have it clinging to almost every part of her, splattered all the way up her neck and along the edges of her cheeks. She’s just sad that she missed seeing it, although she hopes that time won’t be the last.
“I rather enjoyed that,” Smaug sighs, and his hand slips across her to rifle through her mostly-clean but sweat-matted hair. “...Even though you do still reek of dwarf.”

And then _that_ all comes crashing back to her. Even though the air is still full of Smaug’s smoke, and he’s still gorgeous, she remembers _her dwarves_, and she’s glad, in a way, that they can’t be scrubbed off of her so easily.

It takes her a little while to find her voice. She screamed her throat raw during the sex, and she’s still somewhat incoherent, swamped as she is. Finally, she manages to say, knowing it isn’t wise but needing to try, “My dwarves... my dwarves are lovely.”

_Your dwarves?_ Smaug snorts. Bilbo flushes deeper; she hadn’t even consciously realized she’d been calling them that, but it’s nonetheless true. His hand slips off of her, making her mewl and miss it, but then he rolls properly onto his side, his chest bared to her.

And, no longer so distracted by the urge to bed him, Bilbo realizes that his chest isn’t _quite_ so even as she thought.

There’s a smattering of scales dipping down from his shoulder, over his breast where a hobbit would have their heart. One of those scales, tiny though it is in this form, is shuffled ever so slightly askew, a peek of black lying dormant underneath.

Bilbo has to force her eyes away. Fortunately, Smaug hasn’t followed her gaze. He’s looking past her, _through_ her, as though lost deep in thought. It takes him a few seconds to ask, “How can I explain it to you? I must admit, I am curious to see this ‘Shire’ of yours, where sweet things are grown, naïve of the corruption of the world.”

Bilbo can’t help but quiver at that, worrying that she’s given a dragon a taste for the Shire—she couldn’t stand it if he burned down her home, and it would be so easy for him; hobbits wouldn’t fight back like dwarves and goblins. Smaug doesn’t notice this either, and merely goes on, “Dwarves are not what you think they are. Perhaps you have met one or two that have said kind things to you, but at their core, all dwarves are alike. They’re corrupt, greedy things. They would tell you that it is in a dragon’s very nature to kill, to breathe fire and bring ruin, but they don’t ever mention the nests the dragons are protecting. Dwarves find themselves mountains already lived in by creatures of old, and they swarm these homes like an infestation, tunneling and chipping away and degrading the earth, robbing it of all its riches and melting them down to mold into crude, lesser shapes. They mutilate the very land they claim to protect, and yet, when the creatures that were born in these very places return to find their homes decimated and their treasures defaced, they’re cast out with so many arrows and swords. I understand that the dwarves and men I found upon my doorstep were very small, with short sight and little empathy, but what could I do if not defend myself, my home? Should I have let them remain at my feet, shooting black steel at me whenever I dared to close my eyes? I am old, and I am more long-lived than anything you have ever known. There are few of us, and we are precious, all hunted fiercely, and we would perish if mortal creatures had their way. ...Does this help you to understand?”

Bilbo’s listening with an ever-sinking heart. She doesn’t understand, and can’t ever, but she hears the sadness in his voice and it makes her chest ache. She shifts uncomfortably and shakes her head, mumbling, “I didn’t know...”

“I doubt you knew, either, that I was born in this mountain. I am sure the dwarves that you are with did not know any more than you, as they didn’t want to know. They didn’t listen. The dwarves come flinging death, and they ask no questions in its wake. Now you see, perhaps, why I do not like dwarves.”
She does. It hurts to hear his explanation, because it stirs sympathy in her, and she doesn’t want to think that there’s anything wrong with her dwarves. She’s sure, at least, that they have all good intentions, but that doesn’t make it right. Suddenly, her daydreams about seeing Thorin on a throne aren’t nearly so tantalizing. She looks at Smaug properly, in his eyes, and she murmurs, “I’m sorry.”

He dons a small smile, hollow though it is. His hand reaches out to her again, fingers grazing down her arms and stirring the fine hairs there. Under his breathe, he purrs, “So soft...”

Bilbo shivers, even harder when his claws trace shapes in the cum that paints her. She doesn’t want to become entangled in him again; she doesn’t know if she could break away. She tries to pull herself together and keep on topic, suggesting, “Perhaps... perhaps there is some way you can share the gold? There’s so much here...”

She half expects Smaug to glare at her, if not roar and sink his sharp teeth into her flesh. Instead, he merely muses, now looking at her chest as his fingers scoop seed in-between her breasts, “And would we share you as well?”

Bilbo takes a deep breath and nods. Dangerous though he is, even if he’s lying, she can’t refuse another chance with Smaug. He’s too addictive. She licks her lips and practically moans, “Yes.” Maybe some of the others, as well, if they could get past their differences.

The thought of Thorin pinned beneath Smaug’s body is more than Bilbo can take. It makes her squirm, picturing her handsome king naked, speared open on Smaug’s long fingers or cock, his dark hair splayed out in the coins and Smaug’s great wings spread in the air. Bilbo can think of several dwarves who might be brave enough to sleep with a dragon, if they only knew the truth of this one, but Thorin is the one Bilbo would most like to understand. She still wants him to have his home back. And if Smaug could come to appreciate him...

But Smaug lets out a ragged sigh, withdraws his hand and says, “It is unlikely.” Bilbo frowns, the fantasies still playing out in her mind. She almost thinks of suggesting, should he share Erebor, that he might be able to have two princes as well as her—don’t dragons typically kidnap princesses? But of course, she can’t promise that Fíli and Kíli, no matter what they learn, would ever submit themselves to a dragon’s pleasure.

This time, when Smaug’s hand withdraws, the rest of him does as well. He lifts to his feet, standing tall above her. Frowning down at her, he says, “I will allow you to return to your friends—I don’t wish to be too tempted to keep you here forever.”

As he turns to walk down the other side of the slope, Bilbo asks, “Where are you going?”

“To transform,” he calls over his shoulder. “You had best get going, little one, lest I crush you under my true might.”

So Bilbo, still feeling an utter mess, wraps her coat around her. It sticks to her with his seed, but she doesn’t imagine she has time, or the means here, to clean up. The rest of her clothes are in shambles, so Bilbo gets up as she is. It’s difficult to stand, and even more difficult to walk, as used as she feels. But she rushes for the exit all the same, not wanting to test her luck.

When Bilbo first turns the corner, the dwarves scramble to their feet, looking overwhelmingly relieved. Then they see more of her, and it slips into horror.

Bilbo’s still stumbling. Dwalin rushes forward to scoop her up in his great arms, and she goes easily, letting him carry her back to the others, where he sits beside Thorin with her nestled in his lap. She
knows how indecent she must look, with her coat hanging open and her thighs coated like rivers, the rest of her splattered everywhere. She knows she must stink of it, and though it smells perfectly wonderful to her, she’s not sure the others would agree. Thorin reaches to gently cup her cheek, and she notices that her vision’s still blurry; she has to force her eyes all the way open. He asks her in a heartfelt whisper, “My Bilbo, what did he do to you?”

She can only shake her head at first. Then she licks her lips and mumbles, “No... no, he did nothing I didn’t want.” Thorin still looks worried, though now a little hurt. She can see the betrayal in him, and there’s nothing she can say to soothe it; she was sent to look and she slept with her lover’s enemy. She says impotently, “I’m sorry.”

“How?” Bofur blurs from across the group, and Bilbo looks over at him, startled, then blushing furiously.

“Oh, no, he... he had another form... he made himself into the shape of a man, and...” The rest is obvious. She pulls her coat tighter around her, cold now that her body had grown used to the steam inside the mountain, and the sweat all over her is cooling. She isn’t looking forward to the next part, but she knows she has to say, “But I... I don’t want to kill him now. I’m sorry. But now that I know he’s sentient and isn’t some crazed tyrant—”

“He captured our home,” Thorin hisses abruptly, cutting her off. He jerks his hand away, the fire all over his face, and it hurts her to see it, but it doesn’t make him right.

“I know. I know he’s done terrible things. But he told me his own stories... he says the dwarves were corrupt—”

“And you believed him?” Thorin snarls.

Bilbo can’t say anything back. She did believe him, though she can’t explain why, but she can’t have Thorin angry at her. So she merely curls into herself, watching him sadly, until he sighs, shakes his head and mutters bitterly, “I’m sorry.” For his tone, perhaps, but he meant it. She can see just how frustrated he is.

A small cracking noise draws their attention to the door, wedged open just enough to let in the sun. A thrush, perhaps the same one from earlier, is peering through. It’s got another pebble in its beak, and Bilbo ignores it, turning her attention back to Thorin. She half expects Dwalin to shove her out of his lap out of loyalty, but of course, he doesn’t.

“Did you see it?” Balin asks. Bilbo’s eyebrows knit together, not understanding, until he clarifies, “A loose scale.”

Bilbo fights with herself. She doesn’t want to kill Smaug. She truly doesn’t.

But she can’t lie to Balin, and she answers quietly, “He has a weak spot on his chest, over his heart.”

“He took so much from us,” Thorin mutters, though now he looks more agonized than angry. “You don’t know, Bilbo. He drove us out into the arms of the orcs. He’s responsible for the death of my father, of my grandfather, of so many of our loved ones... it isn’t just that he took our home and our treasure.” With a deeper hiss, he adds, “And the Arkenstone...”

Bilbo had never heard of such a thing. She knew the other things, but not this, and Dwalin shifts uncomfortably below her, while an awe comes over Balin’s face. Bilbo asks timidly, “The... the Arkenstone?”

“A great, white gem,” Thorin nearly groans, the reverence clear in his voice. “It is a jewel more
precious than any other, worth more than all the others in this world combined. It shines like silver in
the firelight, like water in the sun, like snow under the stars, like rain upon the moon. It has the
power to unite all dwarves. If we had it out from under him, we would have every king in the land
willing to serve and march against him. But instead, that foul lizard sits on my treasure.” He growls
this last bit, so fiercely that Bilbo almost winces. She rarely sees Thorin talk so fervently, both with
admiration and hatred in his voice. It almost scares her.

But it ebbs away just as quick, and what’s left is a broken, battered king with nothing left. And it
makes Bilbo wonder how she could’ve ever, even for a moment, let Smaug turn her thoughts against
him.

Even as soiled as she is, Bilbo opens her arms and slips over into Thorin’s lap, reaching her arms
around his neck. She whispers, “I’m sorry,” in his ear, and he holds her tenderly back.

Then the mountain shakes again, and several dwarves fall over with shouted grunts, Thorin throwing
himself around her like he’ll protect her from any debris. Bilbo looks to the door just in time to see
the thrush flitter back out the crack, the red figured of Smaug flying off through the distance.
A/N: I’m moving the watch-post to the gate like the movie. Otherwise, this totally all happened.

When the tremors subside, the door’s been sealed shut. When the sounds of Smaug are far away, the dwarves push at it with all their might, Dwalin, Dori, Glóin, and Thorin, all pressed against it at once, but even when all the others join behind them, even Bilbo, their combined strength is no match for the mountain. It remains stubbornly shut, and the lot of them are left in the pitch black with no notion of what to do.

Bilbo suggests going back down, but of course they all say no, and Thorin snatches her up around the middle, holding her close throughout their talks despite the mess all over her. Given that she’s lost all sight, the touch of him is comforting. At one point, Balin creeps down the end of the corridor, searching for that illusive, pale glow, but it isn’t there. The mountain is dark and, they think, empty.

Surely if he returned, they would feel it. They tell themselves that, but of course, there’s no way to really know, and Thorin doesn’t want to risk them all going down at once. But no one wants to split up, and there is no sense staying. They spend a night there anyway, bickering and thinking and mostly trying not to use up all the rations.

That one night stretches into more, until the stench and thirst is too much to take. They’ve heard nothing of Smaug for long enough, and finally, Thorin announces gravely, “We will go down into Erebor.” Dori makes a halfhearted argument, but in the end, they all gather up their things.

Glóin and Óin find their tinderboxes. It takes Bilbo a few minutes for her eyes to adjust, after having been in the dark so long. They set off together down the corridor, trying to be deathly quiet but ultimately far too loud.

There’s no sign of Smaug all the way down, and though they light torches as soon as they can find them, they still see no clues. Bilbo keeps expecting to turn and find his huge tail slithering past open doors, but the halls of Erebor are silent, save for the footfalls of dwarves.

Thorin leads the pack with Bilbo at his side. He stops, every now and then, to look about, and Bilbo can see the hurt and longing in his eyes, the shattered memory in things so simple as a fallen chair or an open desk. Dwalin mutters and his breath every so often, and when Bilbo turns to look at Balin, she sees tears in his eyes. The gloom is everywhere and the fright is palpable, but the dwarves are home nonetheless, and Bilbo feels very foolish and guilty for ever thinking, however briefly, that they should’ve left the mountain to Smaug. Signs of squandered life are everywhere, and the only thing Bilbo is grateful for is that there are no bodies, as though rats and goblins and time itself have eaten all the bones.

Even without the glow to guide him, Thorin’s feet take him the same way Bilbo’s did, and they go even further down, nearer to the room where Bilbo knows the great hoard lies. Just before it, she tugs on his coat to stop him, and the others move to a halt, lifting up their torches to peer at her face.
“Let me go ahead,” she says, and before they can all fight her on it, she lifts a hand and tells them sternly, “It will do no good to get us all eaten, and I can promise you he won’t kill me right away. In any case, I think we know he’s gone, but it’s best to be sure.”

Begrudgingly, they stay where they are, and as Bilbo turns and passes Thorin, he says, “Bilbo.” She stops to look back at him, but whatever else he was going to say dies on his tongue, and he just shakes his head and sighs. She smiles reassuringly at him, slips on her ring, and disappears from view.

She doesn’t take a torch, but by now her eyes are growing very used to the darkness, and the light of the dwarves’ fire still whispers beyond the corner. Bilbo walks down the wide steps to the treasure room at a stealthy crawl, careful of each step. The stairs are just a little too large for her taste, but far better than the elves’ and Dale ones which she’s had to contend with more often. At the bottom, her feet sink into the treasure, and she wades a little way inside, waiting for Smaug to arise from the gold and purr for her to come closer.

Nothing happens. Step after step, she walks noisily through the coins, scattering them about, until finally she has the courage to call, “Smaug! Smaug! Are you there?”

But only her own voice echoes back to her.

Finally, she takes off her ring and yells, “I’ve come to talk! To negotiate, and to... to try again!”

There’s still nothing. The air is thinner, too, or perhaps she’s just grown used to it. It isn’t the same living furnace it was before, and it doesn’t pulse with continued breath. He’s gone; she’s almost sure of it.

She turns and slips back down the hill she’s come up, her arms out to keep her balance, her feet scattering trinkets left and right. At the bottom, before she takes another step forward, a jewel falls out beside her foot.

A spark of light shimmers in Bilbo’s eye, and she looks down at a pallid, white gemstone, flecked like lightning in the middle, smooth and radiant. Bilbo knows at once that this is the Arkenstone, both from Thorin’s descriptions and the fact that it can’t be anything else. No two gems could exist like this in the world. It’s tantalizingly beautiful, and before she even knows what she’s doing, Bilbo kneels down to pick it up. It’s cold in her hand like any other stone, a little heavy but not overtly so, and Bilbo knows, without a doubt, that this is the most expensive thing she’s ever held, or seen, or known. This one jewel could probably buy her all of the Shire itself, and perhaps a small plot in Rivendell to boot.

She slips it into her pocket. The pull it exerts on her reminds her vaguely of the ring: her two most valuable possessions. Then she shakes her head and reminds herself that this can’t be hers; even though she is owed a fourteenth of the treasure, surely, it was never meant to include this.

She’ll give it to Thorin right away. She tells herself this very firmly, and makes her way quickly back to the steps, this time scaling them without any worry over the sound. She’s panting lightly by the time she rounds the bend, but she smiles all the same to see them. She says, “It’s empty.”

“Except for the gold,” Nori corrects hopefully, and when Bilbo nods, his face nearly splits with his grin. He asks Thorin, “What’re we waiting for?”

Thorin still moves cautiously. But he does turn for the way Bilbo came, and as he walks towards it, Bilbo falls into line beside him. Their torches, held at the top of the stairs, illuminate the wide cavern below, the towering columns and the rivers and mountains of treasure. The golden surface glitters up
at them, and Bilbo hears several dwarves behind her losing their breath. Then Fíli and Kíli burst out from the back, jogging down the stairs two at a time.

Thorin yells, “Careful,” then goes rigid as it echoes back to him.

The others wait, still looking around, although even in this large a place, a dragon would have a difficult time hiding, especially one so magnificent that glowed. Nevertheless, they don’t start making their way down until Nori rushes after Fíli and Kíli, Bofur hot on his heels and announcing, “Wait for me!”

Glóin quickly follows, Óin right behind him, then Ori with Dori chasing after him, and Bifur followed by Bombur. Thorin, Dwalin, Balin and Bilbo go slower, and she doesn’t have to look to know that Thorin has his sword at the ready. What good that would do against a dragon, Bilbo has no idea, but she’s willing to throw herself over Thorin at any moment and hope that Smaug wouldn’t be willing to kill her, not just yet.

The treasure runs a ripple of excitement all through them. Even with the threat of a dragon over their heads, this is what they came for, and this is what the dwarves focus on, all of their hardships flittering away in the glow of the gold. The all take up different spots to dig their way through the masses of valuables, some collecting jewels, others raw coins, others things like goblets and statues and jewelry. Thorin takes a few steps away from Bilbo, gazing around with a look of agonized victory, and then he storms right back to her.

He picks her up into the air and kisses her, sweet and adoring. It makes her feel like a queen, and she wraps her arms around his neck, returning the kiss as fervently as she can.

As he sets her down again, she thinks of giving him the Arkenstone. But she’s held still, dazed by the look on his face, the overwhelming happiness and the heartbreak; he’s home. She gives him a few a moments to soak that in, hoping he’ll grab her and throw her down and make love to her in the gold. He looks just about to when Dori comes up beside them, asking Bilbo, “Isn’t this your dagger?” He holds out Sting, the hilt still wrapped in some of the shreds of her khakis.

Blushing, Bilbo takes it from him. She can’t believe she forgot her sword, but then, the more she thinks of it, it couldn’t have been helped. Smaug was simply too consuming, and the important thing is that she has it back. She pecks Dori on the cheek for noticing, and he fondly pats her back.

Unfortunately, it’s given Thorin a chance to wander away from her, and he calls to the lot of them, “Take your own prizes as you will, but find me the Arkenstone!”

Bilbo doesn’t get the chance to talk to Thorin again right away. He settles into his own search, and before Bilbo’s more than halfway to him, Fíli and Kíli tackle her down, kissing her all over and humping her sides, mindless of the caked-on dragon seed that’s crusted on her. Kíli moans in her ear and Fíli huskily asks her what it was like, being claimed by such a powerful beast. She can barely describe it, because while she talks, his hand runs up her thigh, while Kíli’s slips beneath her coat to fondle her breasts. She rubs them through their trousers while she tells them what he looked like in his human form, and Fíli moans that he should’ve been the one to go down and be offered: a prince for the Arkenstone. Thorin would’ve never allowed such a thing, of course, but it’s a fantasy Bilbo doesn’t at all mind entertaining in the heat of the moment, and Kíli hisses that he’s a dragon and surely could’ve found a way to fuck them both at once.

They come quickly against her palms, and then they just keep going, kissing over her and rubbing coins along each other’s bodies, hidden over the hump of a hill from the rest of the dwarves and draping strings of pearls and diamonds along each other’s necks and arms. Bilbo blissfully watches,
then tells herself that she can’t give in to the same heady rapture that’s taken over them. This mountain isn’t safe, no matter how easily distracted dwarves seem to be by gold. Bilbo extricates herself, even aroused as she is, but barely makes it to the top of the hill before Dwalin scoops her up for a languid kiss.

Dwalin lays her down in the gold and fucks her, not even preparing her first, and it’s a good thing that Fíli and Kíli did their work to finger her open and get her wet. Dwalin braces himself over her with his thick arms, his cloak long since removed and his sleeves bunched up his muscles. There’s a haze over his eyes that could be from her or the gold, or maybe both, but he’s good to her all the same. His dick is one of the largest and always one of the hardest to take, but after Smaug, it doesn’t seem so much a monster. It’s still a very tight fit, and she still has to tell him to be gentler in a few places, but she comes first all the same, moaning his name beneath her breath. He digs his face into her shoulder as he comes, biting his teeth into her neck and filling her up.

When he’s done, he kisses her, strokes her body and tells her she’s beautiful, then returns to rifling through treasure, while Bilbo lies where she is to catch her breath. Bofur finds her before she can get up, and he’s got a long baton in his hands that he jokes about stuffing inside her. He tells her all sorts of things he’s found and rubs a large emerald around her open hole, only to bring it to her lips afterwards, and she licks away the remnants of Dwalin’s seed. Bofur is wrapping her breasts in pearl chains when Nori wanders over to them, grabbing right for Bilbo’s hips.

He lies down in the gold while she rides him, her hands steadying herself on his shoulders while coins press into his hair. Bofur rubs gold between them, and though Bilbo is more in love with her dwarves than any of that, Nori looks like he’s never felt anything so amazing in his life. He comes faster than usual and squirms happily in the gold after, while Bofur stands up and jerks himself off on her face, Bilbo too spent to do much work beyond letting it paint her. She only climbs off of Nori just in time before he throws a bunch of coins in the air, laughing like he’s swimming in a river. She doesn’t bother to get up after that, either, even when she notices some of the dwarves leaving the hall. She almost calls after them, but she trusts them and knows they won’t leave her and winds up relaxing where she is, wondering vaguely if they can find a good water source in here; she’s getting thirsty. Then Bombur wanders up to her, and Bilbo spreads her legs without even having to be asked, her arms reaching up for him.

Bombur rolls her onto her stomach, lifting her up on all fours, and he hikes her coat up over her waist so he can slip into her from behind. By now she doesn’t need any preparation at all, even though his cock is particularly fat. He ruts into her over and over, with his meaty hands around her waist, and Bilbo looks down at all the treasure below, then down the slope of the little hill, to where Bofur is whispering in Ori’s ear, likely asking to stuff some of those trinkets he promised Bilbo inside Ori’s pussy.

Bilbo takes longer to come this time. She’s become quite adept in multiple orgasms, but it’s been a trying day, and there’s still enough smoke in the air to keep her brain from fully functioning. Bombur has a particular way of rolling his warm flesh against her in slow, tantalizing brushes that keeps her right at the edge. His thrusts seem designed specifically for her pleasure, and finally she has to start squeezing her vagina around him, trying to milk him out before he has her passing out again from pleasure. After a bit of pressure, Bombur buckles, groaning loudly as his seed spills into her overused channel, sloshing back out between her legs to mix with all the other loads. Bilbo collapses onto her arms, although Bombur keeps her ass held up in the air.

Bombur’s just sliding out when two large boots land in front of Bilbo’s face, and she has to blink dizzyly at them a few times before she recognizes them. Her gaze lifts to Thorin. If she had the strength, she’d lift up to nuzzle into his crotch, but instead she only smiles up at him, her hips
dropping the second Bombur lets go.

“Come with me,” Thorin tells her, and it sounds like a royal decree, something to be obeyed. The tone is what makes Bilbo push up on her shaky arms, except that she’s too hot to stand, and she peels off her coat first. She bundles it up in her arms, remembering the Arkenstone stuffed inside only at the last minute. Sting’s hilt also protrudes, the sheath not fully fitting in the pocket. She’ll have to find a new belt to stick it in. For now, she takes Thorin’s hand as he offers it.

He pulls her to her feet, and she stumbles, naked but too satiated to care. He loops an arm around her sweaty back and leads her across the treasure, and Bilbo murmurs, “Did you find a bath?”

“No,” Thorin chuckles. “But I know where the wells are, and we’ll clean up soon enough. I think we’ve all grown entirely too used to the stink of each other, and our water pouches were running low.” He offers her the one clipped to his belt as he talks, and Bilbo takes a few greedy sips before handing it back. Food is another matter, and she hopes they can come up with something better than rats and ancient stores, but she’s had worse on this journey. It makes her laugh to think that she once worried over seed cakes and whether or not being seen by dwarves in her nightgown was too improper.

Thorin leads her right across the hall and off into a tall chamber, where he lifts a torch propped against the outside, using it to light their way across. They walk all the way down the end of the corridor and turn into another, and Bilbo asks, “Where are we going?”

“I have something special for you,” Thorin promises. Bilbo looks at him sideways, unsure what it could be. She can’t help but wonder if it’s only a euphemism for himself; perhaps he’s going to his old rooms, to take her in his ancient bed, although she imagines living quarters would be tucked away and far dustier and more full of cobwebs than these places close to Smaug’s rule.

When they reach their destination, Bilbo knows immediately that it’s an armory. Weapons line the walls, shields and helms are mounted and propped against the floor, lying on tables, as though they’ve recently been picked through, and Bilbo realizes this must’ve been where the others went. Most of it all looks too big and heavy for a hobbit, but Thorin doesn’t go to the weapons. First, he mounts the torch in the holder by the door, and then he walks to the nearest table.

He returns to her holding up a shirt made of metal mesh, woven together so intricately and thin that it’s hard to believe such a thing could be armour, yet nothing else is in this room. As Thorin holds it towards her, Bilbo places her own bundled coat at her feet and reaches to run her fingers along the shirt. It’s surprisingly smooth in her hands, the silver glittering in the firelight. When she plucks at it, it’s incredibly light. Thorin drops it into her arms, and Bilbo holds it in reverence, knowing this is something special.

“Mithril,” he tells her, “silver-steel. It’s impenetrable, but made by the elves and light enough for a hobbit, and, I should hope, fit you rather nicely.” Bilbo is still staring at the gift when he takes it from her again, lifting it above her head.

Understanding, Bilbo raises her arms, and Thorin slips the shirt over her. It’s cool against her bare skin, tingling along as it moves, and she feels too soiled for such luxury, but Thorin, evidently, doesn’t think so. He straightens it out afterwards, smoothing it over her breasts while her perked nipples press against it in little indents. Thorin tweaks these lightly, brushing his thumbs over them, and Bilbo’s breath hitches, her eyes lifting up to his.

He fits his hand around her cheek. She has the sudden urge to strip him and play dress up with all the different mail, but now isn’t the time. They haven’t yet reclaimed this place, even though it feels that way now. Bilbo can’t help but think that if Smaug were here to see this look in Thorin’s eyes, he
wouldn’t feel so unkindly towards dwarves.

When Thorin kisses her, it’s tender, soft and gentle, just a little press of the lips. Then he pushes a little harder, his tongue pushing out, and then he’s roving along her lips and the inside of her mouth, and his arm slips around her waist, jostling the mithril. Another kiss and he pushes her back. She stumbles across the barren floor, first one step, then another, until he’s knocking her down. There’s a pile of coins in the corner that he lowers her into, descending over her. As he looks at her, lying flush in all his gold, Bilbo mumbles, “I was hoping you would make love to me in your treasure.”

Thorin continues to eye her for a moment, then corrects, “Our treasure.” He kisses her again, now pressing her head back into the hill. Her legs automatically spread around him, bidding him down.

Kissing Thorin is just as wonderful every time as it was that first. She always enjoys running her fingers through his hair, feeling his broad shoulders over hers and the strength of him, the weight of all his muscles and compact limbs. The only trouble is that he wears so very many clothes, and she’s sure it must be far too hot for him, but he seems too intent on her to care. In between kisses, she pushes at his shoulders, trying to brush the fur away, and he lets her strip him down, lets her clear the cloak off, until it’s just his blue tunic below. She fumbles with his belt, drawing it open. He grinds into her, his hard crotch pushing into her hand, and he hisses against her face, “I was a fool, Bilbo Baggins, to worry what any others might think.” Bilbo mews in response, though she doesn’t understand. She slowly tugs his belt away and works on his trousers, one torturous button at a time, while he rolls over and shifts over, his many blunt edges no longer digging into her so painfully; the mithril protects her back. Thorin shudders and runs his teeth along her jaw, purring deep in his throne, “You will be my queen.”

“I can’t,” Bilbo mumbles. She knows that, has always known it, even before she understood much of dwarves. She grabs him by the chin and draws him back, kissing him as she pulls out his cock, pumping it in her sweat-slicked hand. It’s thick and rock-hard, hot and throbbing, and it makes her melt at the touch alone, like she always does. Words are too difficult. When the stop kissing him, she pushes her face against his, trying to guide him to look down. He takes the hint and positions his cock at her stretched hole, rubbing it once around her lips.

While he teases her, he growls, “Damn whatever consequences. I am the king under the mountain, and I will have the wife I want.” Wife. Bilbo can barely comprehend it. He pushes the head of his cock inside, and Bilbo gasps, arching up into him and grabbing at his shoulders, his neck, his hair, then looping her arms under so her hands can claw down his back, wishing she were feeling raw skin and the flex of his shoulder blades. “You have been invaluable to me,” Thorin practically snarls, as though he would run his sword through anyone who dared to keep Bilbo from him. As he sinks his cock inside her, he insists, “You have been loyal to me to the very end. You have pleased me, pleased all of my men, even fed my company, proven yourself time and again, even when I should’ve been the one to prove myself to you. Never mind even how right you feel in my arms; I don’t think I could find another of your quality in all this world.”

Bilbo’s blushing all over her body, burning from his praise even more than his touch. When his cock withdraws from her, she whines, clenches and doesn’t want it to go, and he bites into her shoulder until she releases him, moaning the second he’s pushing back inside. The thrusts he gives her are slow and luxurious, rubbing along her walls. She’s so over-stimulated, and every little touch makes her shiver all over, but she still takes more so happily. She can only moan a broken, “Thorin.” She has so much praise she could give him: how brave he is, how powerful, what a wonderful leader he is and how great a king he’ll be, how perfect he makes her feel, and how her heart clenches whenever she looks at him. But her mouth can’t seem to work, and all she can do is pant against the crook of his neck while he takes her.
“I don’t care what the other dwarf lords would say,” Thorin goes on, though his voice is growing strained. His arms wrap tight around her body, holding her close to the point of bruising, so that every thrust is as deep as it can be. “I never thought I would feel this way towards another. I was always so focused on my task, so consumed with hatred and revenge, and then you come into my life, and now, I will have it all.” She almost doesn’t want to kiss him anymore, because his words mean too much to her to stop, but she can’t stand to be apart. She devours his mouth as eagerly as he takes her body. It’s a frenzy of hands roaming everywhere and tongues dipping in and out of mouths and their chests rubbing into one another, her breasts dragging heavy across him. Her legs wrap around his hips, her heels digging into his back, and all Bilbo is boils down to this one moment of kissing, feeling, tasting Thorin Oakenshield.

She comes with a muffled cry, her body clenching wildly around him and her fingers fisting so tight in his hair that her nails almost draw blood from her palms. His thick tongue fills her open mouth, and she gasps around him, trembles and shakes as he continues to thrust into her, even as her juices bubble up around him. A few thrusts later, he roars into her shoulder and bursts inside her. His hips keep grinding it in, his arms still holding on. Bilbo’s become limp and useless, simply lying with him as her blanket, his praise still ringing in her ears.

Even when he’s finished, he doesn’t pull out. He stays atop her, the two of them curled up in that lone corner of the forgotten armory, until eventually he thumbs her cheek and kisses her nose and murmurs, “Would you be my queen?”

She’s too happy to do anything but nod.

She nuzzles into him and holds on, content to lie like this for as long as she can. He stays with her, in the most comfortable silence Bilbo’s ever known.

Then she thinks about parading him about the Shire as her husband, and it makes her laugh—he gives her a confused but fond grin and helps her to her feet.

One by one, Thorin outfits each dwarf in armour and weapons befitting over their new station: dwarves of Erebor, guard of the king. They find a well, but do little more than drink and scrub at themselves, because, as much as Bilbo would like to fill up a tub and sink into the water, the dwarves are eager to return to their gold. They rifle through it far longer than she cares for, but long after she’s curled up for a rest, the others go on digging in treasure. She wakes up when Glóin wrenches a white-stone necklace out from underneath her.

Finally, she finds Thorin, tugs at him and insists that they wrap this up; Smaug could be back at any moment, and they’ve spent far too long living idly. A hardness comes over Thorin’s face, and he rounds up the others, though they all look as reluctant to leave the treasure room as him.

“This gold isn’t won yet,” she reminds them, and they begrudgingly nod, though the movement makes two coins topple out of Nori’s neckline; he’s stuffed his clothes full of it.

“We must find somewhere to make camp for the night where he can’t find us,” Thorin says, and it reminds Bilbo that, while she’s rested, they’ve all gone countless hours simply playing with treasure.

Balin suggests, “We should make for the watch-post above the Front Gate. From there, we can see when Smaug returns and make our defense.”

Thorin seems to agree with this, because he waves his hand and bids them, “Follow me. It’s a long walk, but I’ll never forget my way around this palace for as long as I live.” Bilbo, who’s since settled back into her coat, wraps it tighter around her. Halfway across the treasure room, Thorin calls, “We
will send parties to search for the Arkenstone tomorrow.” There’s an edge to his voice of promise, of fire, and Bilbo’s hand brushes over the pocket that hides the Arkenstone. Something holds her back, though she struggles with herself, wanting to make him happy. She’d forgotten it until now, but the feral way Thorin looks over his shoulder makes it very clearly that he never forgot for a moment.

Bilbo almost calls out to say she has it, but then Óin falls into stride beside her, and asks conversationally, “Have you picked out anything for your share yet, Bilbo?”

A little caught of guard, she truthfully says, “No, not really.” Although she thinks she might enjoy one of the circlets she saw lying about, something like a tiara, or what the elves of Rivendell wear. She muses mostly over things she could wear, decorations she could drape across her chest and up her arms, mainly because she thinks Thorin might like to see her that way, painted up in all the treasure. She looks down at the gold as she walks, the ghost of the torches that Glóin and Bifur are carrying following them over different mounds of treasure. Then she thinks to ask Óin, “And you?”

He points to his ear, and she notices that something’s wrapped around it, shimmering like silver and gold and inlaid with jewels. It arches behind the shell and opens in the middle, reminding her faintly of a miniature version of the trumpet he used to have. “It’s far from perfect,” he chuckles. “These are the sort of things you want custom made by a professional, but it should do a great deal better than no trumpet at all.”

She smiles at him and says, “I hope you can get a custom one soon.”

“Once Erebor is ours again, we’ll have the best dwarves in the land clamouring to come,” he says whimsically. “There is nothing a dwarf of Erebor couldn’t make.” And then his gaze shifts away from her, and she gets the distinct feeling he’s very far away, in times of old and hopes for the future.

They reach the corridor at the end and turn away from the gold, down another passage.

It’s a long, long walk to the front door, and Dwalin gives Bilbo a ride for a little bit of it, then, when Bilbo slips down, Ori hops up onto him, and Dwalin grunts but carries him a few paces all the same. Bilbo takes another ride on Dori, and they stop once for Bombur to catch his breath. They’re used to too much walking on their journey, but not with quite so many stairs, especially not on as little food as they have.

When they turn a chamber that a boiling river streams through, Thorin calls over the roar of it, “This is the birth of the Running River.” It swirls into a narrow channel, diverted down a carved path, with a wide, stone-paved road running along it. They follow this road until they see the shallow light of the outside. At first, it’s so bright against the darkness that Bilbo thinks it must be sun, and they’ve all lost track of time in the mountain, but as her eyes adjust, she realizes that it’s only moon and starlight.

They round a corner past the river, to see huge arches reaching up towards the sky. Debris litters the floor, massive, cut-away boulders lining where the gate would be. Thorin guides them around to another staircase instead, and they wind their way up to the very top.

There, they can peer down, at the water cutting out of the mountain and the stone shelf of the gates below, the little bridge and the barren land, straight to the ruins of Dale. For a long while, they stare out across the land, and Balin has to turn away first, because he’s tearing up again.

They settle into the watchtower to sleep, hidden by shaped pillars and the overhang of the cavern’s ceiling, so that unless they step up and lean between the stones, no one from below or above should be able to see them. The dwarves break off into different clusters, Thorin, Balin, and Dwalin tightest of all, reminiscing on the days of old.
Bilbo settles in with Ori, because she’s exhausted and needs someone gentle. They lie down in blankets brought up from the stores below the tower, forming a little nest to curl inside. Bilbo wonders briefly what’s happened to Smaug, and a few times she hears the dwarves wondering this very thing aloud, but then Ori runs his hands along the curve of her breasts, and Bilbo is brought back to the moment. Ori has the cutest smile, and for a few minutes, Bilbo just watches him through tired eyes while he fondles her chest. Then he bends forward to kiss her, and she giggles at the tickle of his mustache. It’s smaller than the other’s, but it tingles nonetheless.

She thinks of telling him of Smaug; he’s something of a scholar and should, at least, have an academic interest in new things, and he isn’t from the Lonely Mountain to feel quite so robbed. But he seems so very happy, like all of them, and she doesn’t want to bring worry down with mentions of their doom.

So she only kisses him back, her hands running down his side and over his hip, where she squeezes just a little. Ori returns the favour, though for the most part, they only grind together a little and trace languid patterns on each other’s skin, kissing here and there while the others begin to snore.

Finally, Bilbo and Ori settle into one another, nestled close like cats, until sleep claims their worlds.
A/N: None of the original chapter was from Bilbo’s POV, which I’m sticking to, so this one’s entirely fabricated. (Basically, Bard’s off defeating Smaug, moving the town, accidentally usurping the Master, and sending for Thranduil’s aid.)

Even before Bilbo opens her eyes, she knows it’s Ori she’s snuggled up to, because she recognizes the smell of him and the scratch of his woolen clothes beneath them. One of her legs is stuck between his heavier thighs, her round stomach nudging his, his arms beneath his head like a pillow and hers folded between them.

Her shoulder is shaken again, just lightly, and Bilbo squirms and opens her eyes, wincing instantly at the fierce colour of dawn. She’s shaken harder, and she looks over her shoulder to see Bifur kneeling beside her. Holding her attention, xe points up to the sky.

At first, Bilbo doesn’t understand, and then she wipes the sleep away from the corners of her eyes and is taken aback: the sky is filled with birds.

They’re swirling above, knotting together, some branching off north, past the mountain, and their wild cawing rustles down to them, making Bilbo wonder how she missed it before. By now, Ori’s waking up beside her, murmuring, “What the...?”

Some of the dwarves are already peering over the edge of their keep, and Bilbo slips out of the blankets to join them. Bifur steps aside where Bilbo comes out, and they go together to the cut out stones that line the top of the watchtower. The dwarves are spread out, two or three to the spaces between the square tips. Bilbo has to lift up on her toes to look.

Down the turn of the river, the birds are rushing away, and from her other side, Bofur mutters, “They’re coming from Lake-town.” Bifur makes a noncommittal grunt, and Bilbo squints into the distance. It feels like the birds are having a massive conference, chattering noisily to one another. Bilbo faintly wishes Beorn were around; perhaps he would be able to interpret what’s going on.

But Beorn is far away, and Bilbo’s left to sink back to her feet. She calls along the line, “I suppose no one knows what’s happening?”

“It will have to do with Smaug, no doubt,” Thorin growls, his voice twisting unpleasantly around the dragon’s name. As he steps back from the wall, Bilbo does a double take.

He’s made a change since yesterday. His old tunic has been replaced with mail, his arms wrapped in heavy gauntlets, his shoulders bearing fur only over the peak of armour. He always wore a bit of armour, but now it’s all over him, shining polished silver and gold, the robes below inlaid with elaborate designs. He looks particularly regal, more a king than ever.

When he returns her gaze, his eyes roam quickly over her naked body, then turn back to the sky.

The dwarves brace themselves for Smaug, but he never comes.
They all want to look at the gold, except for Bilbo, who wants a bath. Finally, Dori gives in, supposing he could use one, and Ori says it feels like his cycle’s coming back and he’d like a bath while he can. Dwalin agrees to show them the way, and Thorin orders Balin, Fili, and Kíli to stay on lookout, despite their protests. The rest of them leave to visit the treasure again.

Dwalin brings them to a well room with tubs lined along the back wall, separated with thick, distorted glass partitions. They light all the torches along the other side, and it makes the glass dance across the ceiling and walls like a kaleidoscope. It doesn’t seem worth the effort to fill up four tubs, as the water must be pumped up and carted in buckets, so they only fill two. The water’s pleasantly warm, but even if it wasn’t, the torches and stuffy air would do the trick. As they undress, Bilbo expects that she’ll wind up sharing a tub with either Dori or Ori, so they aren’t stuck together, but Ori asks his brother, “Are you coming with me?”

“There’s no need for that,” Dori says lightly, though a hint of a blush is in his cheeks. “You’re not a child anymore.”

“Nori still bathes with me.”

Dori rolls his eyes and scolds, “Nori does a lot of things he shouldn’t do. I’ll go with Bilbo.”

Dwalin interjects, “Sounds good to me.” For a brief flash, Dori looks hesitant, protective as usual, but then it settles away; they all know Dwalin is a good dwarf. Although he does turn to Bilbo afterwards, winking and saying, “I’ll catch you next time.”

Bilbo says, “Alright,” and settles into their order, mostly glad they’ve saved her the trouble of having to choose.

It’s lovely to have a proper place to bathe again—they’ve been so few and far between on this journey. But this is also probably the dirtiest she’s ever been, and both her and Dori are so spotted and smudged with dirt that parts of them look permanently stained grey. Bilbo has other things clinging to her, but she already knows the first bath won’t make her anywhere near as clean as she used to be: this mess might take several days to scrub away.

Behind the partition, Bilbo can see Dwalin’s bigger shadow slipping into the tub and hear the splash of the water rising up around the sides. Ori’s shadow settles into his lap, while Dori steps into their own tub. It’s thankfully low—the ones in Lake-town were much too high for Bilbo’s taste—and a bit wide, enough that even Bombur would fit rather comfortably inside. Once Dori’s in, Bilbo heads to his end to do the same as Ori, but Dori gestures to the other side instead and suggests, “It might be more comfortable if we each take our own side.” Bilbo doesn’t see the difference, but she does so all the same.

When her foot first steps into the water, she can see the cloud of dirt that swarms away from it. It’s already murky from Dori, but it gets worse the more Bilbo steps inside. It’s still wonderfully pleasant to sit back and lean against the metal brim, warm to the touch. She can feel her skin wanting to sweat again, and she chuckles, “We’re going to need several baths each to really get clean.”

“I suspect that’s true,” Dori answers whimsically. While Bilbo relaxes, her legs bent and nestled inside his, feet right up against his inner thighs, Dori reaches one arm into the water. She realizes quickly why he wanted them to sit like this; it lets him draw her foot out. She grins at him, not surprised. He spends a few minutes dutifully scrubbing off the dirt, then rubbing her skin beyond that, kneading her sole and heel and arch, and Bilbo lets out a little moan and rests her head back against the brim. Her feet have seen too much abuse of late, but Dori massages all the tension away.

And then he kisses her heel, and she squirms a bit and tries not to giggle at the tickling sensation.
when he trails little pecks right up to her toes. His other hand wraps around it, fingers twisting through the tufts of hair on top. When he sucks her big toe into his mouth, Bilbo shifts her other foot to press against his crotch, feeling along the hardening line of his cock below the surface. With a bit of maneuvering, she manages to push it up, her toes rubbing at the underside while her heel gently presses into his heavy balls. Dori moans appreciatively around his mouthful, his tongue rewarding her with teasing little licks.

For a few lovely, languid moments, Dori sucks her and her foot kneads his crotch. Then one of his feet pulls out of the water, the grey hair all slicked down and his toes bizarrely well manicured for a dwarf. He pushes it forward against her chest, between her breasts, and Bilbo brings her hands up to squeeze them around it.

From the other side of the glass wall, Bilbo hears a gasp, quickly muffled, then a strained, cut off moan. The water is splashing at an even, slow pace, and when she rolls her head aside, she finds Dwalin and Ori’s shadows melded into one. She can only assume that Ori is riding Dwalin, or at least that they’re rutting against one another—there’s definitely something going on. But it doesn’t seem polite to fixate on that when she has Dori with her, so she forces her attention back to his mouth and hands.

His foot traces around her breasts, pushing in and rubbing little circles, and then it starts to trail down her body, until his toes are twisting against her pussy. Bilbo can’t stop herself from pushing her hips against him, even as she mumbles, “And here we came to get clean...”

“We’ll have to find ourselves some soap before too long,” Dori chuckles. “And I wouldn’t say no to a nice scrub brush. But until then...” He trails off, and Bilbo nods. Until then, this will do.

Bilbo does, peripherally, try to scrub herself clean all the same. While she rocks her hips slowly into Dori’s foot, her own wedged against his hard cock while he ruts back, she scoops water over her breasts and rakes her nails through the dirt and crusted cum. The foggy water grows worse, and a part of her is grateful that all they have is a little firelight, to keep everything at a hazy glow. She scrubs off her arms, her shoulders, her neck, but leaves her face—she can do that directly from the well, and cleaner. She’s done the same with her hair, though it inevitably gets wet around the ends anyway, slicking down at her neck and straightening out some of her curls. Dori, normally so tidy, doesn’t bother to do the same; he’s busy worshiping her foot. Doubtless, the dwarves will have to all take turns coming back here, and he’ll probably go again with one of those. Without her along, there should be less distractions, although she knows that several of the dwarves like to play with each other. Then she wonders idly if they can take these partitions down.

After a long time of making Bilbo thrum with delight, Dori relinquishes his hold on her foot. He pushes it down into the water, lined against her other one, and he brackets them around his cock. She follows his lead, tilting them to cup his shaft, and he does the rest of the work, rutting his hips shallowly into them and holding them tightly together. It’s a shame that she can’t see it all, but at least she can feel it all, and his foot doesn’t leave her pussy.

She hears Ori come loudly before anyone else, moaning right through whatever is muffling his mouth, and Dwalin soon follows with a grunt, the water splashing quicker, then not at all. She can hear the two panting, and Dori follows a moment later, looking vaguely ashamed and gritting his teeth together to keep his noises back. Bilbo lifts one of her feet to feel the tip of his cock as it spills into the water, dissolving around her.

He takes a minute to relax and enjoy his release. Then he moves across the tub, wading over between her legs. His foot has to move for him to get into the right position to be so close to her, and his hand drops to cup her pussy instead. He kneads her a few times, his mouth coming to kiss hers,
until she moans and finishes, just a shallow, leisurely thing. She feels particularly lavish afterwards, slipping back into the still-warm water with his hot body around her, in the firelight and the dazzling reflections of the glass and the sanctity of the Dwarven kingdom. Sometimes, she still misses Bag End, but she could definitely get used to these tubs.

Eventually, they have to clamber up, their fingers having wrinkled and the water finally cooling down. They have to empty the tubs again into the drains, all four of them naked and covered in sweat from the steam and their actions. They find towels in cubbyholes that Dwalin shakes over one of the partitions, while the rest stand far away from where the dust wafts out at the sides. They’re a bit stiff but useable, with folded bathrobes beside them.

Old as they are, Bilbo enjoys the feeling of the robes, and she decides to keep hers on, gathering her possessions into a bundle in her arms to take back to the watch post. The others all want to return to the gold, which makes Bilbo wonder aloud, “But aren’t you getting a little tired of it? It’s not as if you can do anything with it now.”

But they look at her like they can’t for the life of them puzzle out what she means, so she only sighs and says, “I’ll catch up.” She’s a little surprised when none of them offer to walk her back.

Not wanting to be a bother, Bilbo wanders back to the lookout alone, holding a bundled up Arkenstone and Sting in her arms and the ring safely tucked in her new pocket.

Again, the dwarves do nothing all day but rifle through treasure. Bilbo comes to sit with them, but this time no one comes to talk to her. Nori has a bag of pure coins he’s collecting, which seems the oddest to Bilbo of all—what’s the point of it? She understands, somewhat, Glóin and Balin looking over figurines made of gold, but all the coins look the same, and it isn’t as if he can take it anywhere to spend at the moment. When they get their turn to come down, Fíli and Kíli find elaborate harps and sing a few songs with each other, but these quickly die when they find royal-looking batons to play-fight with instead.

Thorin is absolutely restless. Initially, she doesn’t know why, but when she does finally make it to him before he’s stormed off somewhere else, she hears him muttering about the Arkenstone under his breath. He looks so busy that at first, she doesn’t want to bother him, and she plucks herself down not far away, hoping he’ll notice her and talk to her like usual. It’s gotten to the point where she feels like she can’t just say she found it; she’ll have to explain why it took her so long to give it to him, which she can’t entirely explain. While she’s waiting for him to calm himself down, she idly sifts through the treasure beneath her.

She finds a few little clips that it takes her a minute to decipher the purpose of, though they look familiar. Then she realizes that they’re hair clips, the sort that dwarves clamp around the ends of their braids. She looks at Thorin again, wanting to ask that they have a nice talk, where she could sit in his lap and twist new braids into his hair. He’s moving away again, so she has to hurry to her feet.

She comes up to him, but as soon as she says, “Thorin, I—”

He hisses, “Not now.” Shocked, Bilbo takes a step back, and Thorin glances at her, shaking his head and muttering, “Sorry, I just—I have to find it. The Arkenstone of Thror—where is it?”

Bilbo doesn’t have the answer right away. He’s wandered off before she’s recovered, and she’s left standing there, extremely irked. It isn’t like Thorin to snap like that. He’s always been a bit of a brooder, but not to his people, and not to her. She eyes his back with concern, but doesn’t go after him.
Coming up behind her, Bofur’s voice says, “I’ve heard stories about that stone.” Bilbo glances at him, to find Bofur’s normally cheery face frowning. He’s replaced the fang that normally hangs from his left ear with a new golden, ruby-encrusted earring, but his hat is still the same, like the rest of his clothes. He continues, “It turned Thorin’s grandfather mad.”

Bilbo frowns back at him. She’s never heard such stories, but then, she wouldn’t have expected her dwarves to say anything bad about Thorin’s family. But stories are only that, and Bilbo doesn’t want to believe anything ill of him or something that he wants.

Yet a small part of her can’t help but whisper that this is exactly what Smaug warned her off.

Then Bofur shrugs his shoulders and says, “It probably isn’t true, of course; he has every right to act so strangely, finally home after all we’ve been through.” Bofur waves his hand like he’s sure it’s all nothing, and then he spots something to his left and wanders abruptly off, dropping down to rifle through the gold again.

And Bilbo is left horribly reluctant to give Thorin the Arkenstone he so desires, just in case. Thorin seems to be driving himself mad without it, but something in Bilbo, some primal instinct, tells her not to give it to him. At least, not yet. She’ll hold onto it just a little longer.

When Balin gathers Fíli and Kíli to go back to watch, Bilbo opts to go with them, because the gold is starting to make her sick.

Though they’ve agreed to all sleep along the safety of the watchtower, the dwarves spend entirely too long with the treasure. She occupies herself by staring out across the land, taking in the sight of Dale below and the fading strip of the river. She’s still watching when her dwarves return, but she stays a little longer at her post anyway, mostly because she doesn’t want to turn around and look Thorin in the eye, knowing that she holds his precious gemstone.

When the sky is completely black except for the tiny pinpricks of stars, Bilbo thinks she sees something in the distance. A smudge of red and gold seems to pierce through the darkness, lifting from the earth, then faltering, dropping and rising a few times, like a bird with an injured wing. Finally, it fades from sight, limping through the blackness and remnants of clouds, far away from the mountain.

Bilbo finally retreats. She sleeps with Bifur, mainly because xe’s the only one not still whispering of gold.

She has a dream. She’s someone else, somewhere else, looking up through a fog at the clear circle of a sky, coming ever closer to her, until she breaches and realizes she’s crawled out of water. She limps onto land, shakes herself dry, and in the strange manner of dreams, finds herself in the air with her arms spread and the wind whipping past her. It feels cold against her cheeks, and she can’t tell if she’s dry again because dreams are simply like that or because the wind’s blown her clean.

She flies for a long, long time, always high as possible, hidden amongst the clouds, not wanting to bother with the piteous or fearful nattering of birds. She searches far below, until she finds this one place that she’s been told of, that she’s never seen but knows, and the next minute, she feels silly, because she spiraling down above the Shire, and of course she knows her home.

She sets down in the forest outside Hobbiton, dropping to the earth as lightly as she can manage with her limbs as sore as they are—she realizes belatedly that she’s hurt, and breath is an agonizing crawl. There’s something in her chest, and she looks down with horror at the black protrusion of an arrow.
Bilbo’s hands try to wrap around it, try to pull it out, but she finds that her fingers have become claws and aren’t as dexterous as she’d like. Finally, she twists her head around and snatches it up in her teeth, yanking it out like a venomous splinter.

She hisses in pain, feeling it even though it can’t be real. Dawn is threatening to come, but she needs this moment to catch her breath. She’s crushed too many trees, and they’re poking at her—when did she become so huge?

She shrinks. She slithers into something smaller, much smaller, though the ground still looks farther down than she remembers. She crawls, one arm, then one knee, then her palm against the grass again, until she can stumble to her feet. She walks, bare and bruised and coughing up water from the lake, still lodged in her lungs. This is her home, but she doesn’t seem to know her way around her, and she feels dizzily overwhelmed; where does she go next?

She whispers to herself: home. Bag End. Her home upon the hill. She misses it more than she’ll say, even though she loves her dwarves, she truly does, even as another part of her remembers, how can you love dwarves?

To the hill she goes. She winds along the street, mindful of windows and stray spots of light that would expose her to the world. She wonders vaguely if this is how Gandalf feels, with his long legs and old bones, and a part of her chuckles, we are not alike.

Up she goes, and through her gate. Her flowers aren’t doing so well—if she’d had the time before she left, she would’ve made arrangements. Her door isn’t locked, because hobbits rarely do such things. She twists the handle and pushes her round door open and, strangely, she has to duck when she steps inside.

She shuts the door behind herself and wanders curiously through her halls.

Nothing is quite right. It’s dreadfully small, the ceiling far too low, and finally, she curls down on the rug before the fireplace. She breathes, and the dried wood there ignites, sparking cinders that haven’t burned since the dwarves sat there and sang.

She shuts her eyes and sleeps again.
The birds continue to swarm overhead. In the evening, Bilbo sits with her back to the mountain. She nibbles on old, dried preserves that taste awful but, Balin and Óin assure her, won’t kill them. Bombur has a permanent frown on his face over it, and Fíli or Kíli have once or twice suggested sending back to Lake-town for more supplies, but these suggestions are immediately crushed; all the other dwarves, and Thorin most of all, have chosen the gold over other amenities.

Frankly, Bilbo’s quickly growing sick of it, but there seems to be nothing she can say to change their mind.

She’s alone in the corner, wrapped up in a bathrobe and trying to enjoy the sun, when a thrush comes to land on one of the stone rises. It squawks wildly at them, and Bilbo is tempted to give it her gratitude, on the off chance it’s the same one from earlier that helped them find the way into the mountain. Of course, if it hadn’t done that, they might’ve all been back in Lake-town without the worry of treasure by now, so her thanks never makes it past her lips.

The thrush goes on chirping for several minutes, until Bilbo gets the distinct impression that it’s trying to talk to them. A little ways down the walkway, Balin sighs and says, “I wish I could follow the speech of such birds, but I’m afraid it’s too quick and difficult.”

Thorin, who’s returned to them mainly just to look over the edge of his kingdom with increasing paranoia, bends his head back to stare at the flock of birds, muttering, “There’s definitely something going on. If only it were a raven.”

Blinking in surprise, Bilbo looks over at him and repeats, “A raven?” She can’t see how it would make any difference. But Thorin is preoccupied and doesn’t answer her.

It’s Balin that says, “Ravens have long been friends of dwarves. They live many years, and their memories are long. They often pass their wisdom onto their children. The hill we came up on is called Ravenhill because an old pair of them use to live there, above the guard chamber, though I doubt there are any left of that ancient breed.”

Sitting against the wall behind Thorin, Dwalin grunts, “I remember old Carc.” Balin nods solemnly, which makes Bilbo wonder if that was one of the ravens’ names. She hadn’t thought of birds having names before, at least, not ones she understood. But the way the thrush chirps at them makes her believe their stories; it acts very much like a person trying to have a conversation with some poor fool that doesn’t know the language.

Finally, the thrush gives a loud call and seems to give up. It hops around and flies off, back up into the midst of its friends. Bilbo has to wonder if it understood them, not that they said anything of
much value.

By the time the thrush returns, Bilbo’s finished her food, although the term is very loose. Her stomach is in a perpetual state of unrest, and she constantly has to remind herself of what it was like in Mirkwood to think of this as not so bad. At least they have something to eat at all, although she suspects they might end up with only gold soon enough, and it no longer seems so farfetched to think of her dwarves trying to ingest coins.

This time, when the thrush sets down on the ledge, a large, decrepit old raven settles next to it. The raven is balding around the top of its head, and its messy wings seem unequipped for flying, restlessly tucking back against its sides as it settles on the stone.

“Hail Thorin,” it announces suddenly, in plain speech and a rasping, piercing sort of voice, “son of Thrain, and Balin and Dwalin, sons of Fundin.” At this, several of the dwarves scramble up to look at the raven, and Thorin steps closer, peering down as though in recognition. “You do not know me, but my father, Carc, was well known to your people. I am Roäc, the chief of the great ravens of the Mountain, and I remember all my father told me.”

As Roäc pauses, his feathers ruffling nearly off his flesh in the breeze, loose as they are, Thorin dips his head respectfully. The thrush seems to fidget in the jumpy nature of birds, and Roäc continues, “I come bearing news, some of which is good and some of which you may not like. Smaug, first and foremost, is no more.”

The dwarves instantly begin to talk, some repeating dumbly, “Dead?” and others making cries of delight. Glóin curses, “We’ve lived in fear for nothing!” Something about this news doesn’t sit right with Bilbo. It makes her sad, in a way, to hear that harm’s come to Smaug, even though she knows that this may be best for her dwarves, yet she also feels, strangely and inexplicably, that it isn’t quite true. But it’s only an intangible intuition, so she holds her tongue.

It takes some time for Thorin to quiet the dwarves, but when he does, Roäc goes on, “The thrush, who can be trusted, saw the dragon fall into the lake. He was shot by Bard, a man of Lake-town. If you will take my advice, you will listen to him, who is from the line of Girion, rather than the Master of Lake-town himself.”

“Why should I listen to any of them?” Thorin asks, and if birds could frown, Bilbo thinks Roäc would be doing so.

His tone becomes grave. “This is the part you will not wish to hear, but it is so all the same. The birds are not the only creatures to gather; word has spread of the dragon’s passing, and many now march towards your door. The elves have an interest in Thror’s treasure, and they have answered Lake-town’s call for aid. Already King Thranduil of the elves has reached Bard the Bowman, and their alliance is strong. Though I am told that the people of Lake-town had left their homes when the fire came, the city is now destroyed, and they and the elves march to Dale. Many of Lake-town blame your company for their misfortunate. Much of Dale was plundered by Smaug, and they would have their share of his hoard.”

This is all rather a lot of news to come at once, and when Roäc finishes, Bilbo looks about, ready to sit down and discuss these new developments. Kíli’s ears have perked at the mention of the elves, and Bilbo wouldn’t mind seeing both Thranduil and Bard again. But Thorin’s expression has gone stony, and he answers in grim warning, “I give you our thanks for this news, Roäc, son of Carc. But none of our gold shall thieves take or the violent carry off while we are alive. If you would earn our thanks still more, I would beg you to send word to my cousin Dáin of the Iron Hills, and to any others that you could reach, and bid them to hasten.”
Roäc shuffles on his perch. “I will not say if this counsel be good or bad, but I will do what can be done.” With that, he hops back to the edge, spreads his wings, dips beyond and soars into the sky, the thrush following quickly after.

What’s left is an uncomfortable silence. To Bilbo, Thorin’s response is inexcusable. She’s glad to hear that Bard was able to protect the people of Lake-town, but if all their homes were burned, that was because they woke the dragon. There’s more than enough gold inside the mountain to rebuild Lake-town many times over, but Thorin acts as though he won’t give them a single coin. She knew he would give nothing to the elves, but his attitude towards the Lake-town people is more than troubling.

What’s worse, none of the dwarves object to him. She especially expects Balin to kindly nudge Thorin down the road of compassion, but Balin is as silent as the rest of them. They stew in this news, and she sits back down, retreating into her own revelations.

With Smaug gone, the journey seems very nearly at an end. That was always what they planned—to come to the mountain and fetch the gold, and now she’s done it; she should, as per this arrangement, take her share and return to the Shire. It was her plan from the start, though she put it out of her mind the more she grew attached to the dwarves, and that was always fine when they were still on their quest and it seemed an endless thing. But now she’s at the crossroads, and she doesn’t want to leave them.

Yet Thorin gives her pause. He’s acting strange, very strange, and she doesn’t like the changes. She agreed to be his queen, and she wanted that so much, but she has no wish to be the wife of the greedy tyrants Smaug described.

She tells herself that she’ll put off the decision a little longer. She can’t pack up and leave now, however odd her dwarves are acting; it’s an intolerable thought. She couldn’t bring herself to leave even if she wanted to. She can’t imagine never seeing the Shire again either, but she can at least wait until things are settled, until Thorin sits comfortably on his throne and they know the kingdom will thrive. She looks at Thorin, but he’s staring gravely out above his doorstep, and a small, agonized part of her wonders if the offer even still stands.

Then he turns sharply on his heel and hisses, “We will have sight of them long before they arrive. We must search the gold while we still can.”

Bilbo groans. The others get to their feet, but she doesn’t think she can stand going back to the treasure, not again. Still, she can see that the others are itching to go, and she clambers up.

She weaves through them, mindless of Balin assigning Óin to stay with him on watch. At Thorin’s side, Bilbo slips her smaller hand into his, irked by how long it takes for him to peer down at her.

She flattens into his side when she talks, wrapping all the way around his arm and leaning her cheek against his shoulder, her body heat cooling at the press of his cold armour. “Could we sit together first?” Bilbo mewls, trying to make it sound enticing instead of like whining, which is more how she feels. “Or perhaps we could take a hot bath together?”

He doesn’t even pretend to consider it. Thorin extricates his arm and uses his hand to grab a chunk of her hair—she’s still held fiercely at his side, but in that one heartbeat, it’s because of his volition instead of hers. He shoves his mouth against hers, nips her bottom lip and uses her gasp to stuff his tongue inside, and he kisses her so harshly that she’s physically bent back. When he lets go, she’s panting, and he hisses, “Another time, when I have the Arkenstone to press between your breasts.”

Bilbo tugs her head away, and it hurts, but he relinquishes his grip. Once, that might’ve been a
pleasant thought, but now she only asks, “Would you look at it or me?”

Bilbo expects anger in response, but a smirk merely twists across Thorin’s lips. He tells her, “I wouldn’t have to choose; I am a king and I will have all my treasure.” When he ducks in to kiss her again, she turns her head away. He presses into her cheek, hardly seeming to notice. Pulling back from her, he turns to the others and calls, “The lot of you, back to the search!” And they scamper off in a hurry.

As Thorin follows, Bilbo glances back at her bundled coat and the Arkenstone inside.

Roäc brings them news every day, and they know they have time before anyone else reaches the mountain. The dwarves mostly use this time to clear the Front Gate, or at least, clear it enough to stick arrows through, and position tools so that the rubble could be cleared entirely if they so chose. But they seem bent on walling themselves up inside, and Thorin reissues armour and talks of battle, and it all makes Bilbo pine for Bag End in a way she hasn’t for a long time.

The news Thorin likes to hear the least is that of Bard and Thranduil themselves, for it seems their personal alliance grows stronger every day. It soon becomes clear that if they want to deal with the people of Lake-town, perhaps even repay a fraction of their promise, they will have to give to the elves as well. Together, Bilbo’s told they’ll make a formidable force, although Bilbo doesn’t think there should be any talk of armies at all—there’s more than enough gold to go around and no reason to fight.

Sometimes, Bilbo’s thoughts stray to them, to men whose hearts aren’t yet corrupted by the gold, and she wonders what it must be like in their camps. Those of Lake-town have a fair claim, as far as Bilbo’s concerned, and though the Elf King had them imprisoned, she wouldn’t be surprised to find he had his own claims as true as Bard’s. Silently, she thinks the two leaders might make a good pair, pragmatic but fair as they are. Each seemed rather lonely in their own ways to her, and the thought of them finding solace in each other’s arms does bring her a smile in an otherwise joyless existence.

The only trouble is that they make Thorin tense and angrier. Kíli never dares ask if a certain elf marches in their army, and though the dwarves mostly seem to share Thorin’s gold consumption, the gap between them grows ever farther apart. Thorin takes to sitting in the old throne, battered and split though it is, while the others break their backs hauling stones and searching tirelessly for that one illusive gem. He demands it every day.

He touches Bilbo far and few between, the other dwarves likewise, but they no longer dare to be near her too long in his presence. He’s become strangely possessive with her, prone to bitter mutterings, and he doesn’t speak any more of his promise to make her a queen. Bilbo doesn’t ask. Some days, she thinks it’s best to stay in the watch post and far away from him, but others, she just can’t stand to be apart, and she drags herself to him, even though she knows that something’s terribly wrong.

She’s worried for him. More than angry, she’s concerned. He fucks her harder, brutal, never quite hurting her on purpose, but everything seems so rough with the way their connection’s waned. Sometimes, when she looks into his haggard face, she feels like she doesn’t know who he is anymore, and she has to fight back tears.

One day, he leaves her with the bruises of his teeth and finger marks all over body, finishing inside her and leaving her lying in the gold. There’s little to straighten out when he’s finished, because he never removed any of his clothes, only tore hers off. When he walks away, he doesn’t look back.

And Bilbo is left trembling, wondering what happened to the love of her life and how she’s ever
going to fix it. She doesn’t bother to get up until Nori and Dori, still searching the gold, come to the particular hill she’s been left in. Neither of them so much as look at her, and Bilbo sits to put her robe back on, then stumbles to her feet.

She hobbles out of the treasure room—she can’t bear to look at the gold when she doesn’t have to. She passes Ori on her way, and she asks him, “Where’s Balin?” Because Balin has long been the gentlest, and Bilbo could really use a hug.

Ori says, “One of the libraries, I think,” without any real show of interest. He used to always talk of finding the great libraries of Erebor, pulling out its thick volumes and blowing the dust off scrolls, but now he’s been reduced to searching endless coins, like all of them.

So Bilbo makes her way to the nearest library room on her own, only barely knowing the way from the one or two other times she’s gone with Balin to avoid the pain of seeing Thorin’s deterioration.

Seeing Balin isn’t much better. When she pushes through the heavy oak doors, she sees him right away: the one spot of white in a sea of grey. The dust and cobwebs have washed everything darker, but his beard is as clear as it always is, and she automatically moves towards it.

It isn’t until she’s almost there that he turns around, rolling out an old scroll across a desk covered in books, and she sees that his eyes are watery.

He tries to smile when he spots her, his eyes crinkling up with the effort, and she can hear him sniff and try to will it all away. She doesn’t normally think of him as old, however he talks about himself, but now he’s slumped and wilting and looks so very weary, withered away. She comes around the table and up to his side, and she puts a tentative hand on his arm.

She’d meant to comfort him, but his smile is short lived. As his eyes roam over her, the sadness overtakes him again. He lifts his fingers to brush her cheek and asks, “Bilbo, what’s happened? You’re bruised...”

She’d forgotten that, and she glances at her shoulder, where a red ring is left from the dig of Thorin’s teeth. She quickly tugs her robe over it, mumbling, “Oh, it’s... it’s just Thorin. He was very... rough.” And she feels like such a traitor for saying it as she does; she never wants to say anything bad about him. But she knows that her defeated tone is what’s making Balin frown harder than ever, and she sighs, “It isn’t so bad as it sounds. He did nothing against my will.”

“It is bad,” Balin corrects, “if you come away from it feeling hurt.” And it looks like he wants to add more, but he can’t seem to bring himself to say anything ill of Thorin any more than she can. They both know he isn’t well, which doesn’t make it right, but makes it complicated.

She shrugs her shoulders and admits quietly, “I keep going back, because I can’t stand to not have him at all.”

In this moment, at least, Balin seems to understand. The hunger for gold isn’t in his eyes, and he turns to hold her, his arms wrapping snuggly around her body. His beard drapes over her shoulder, her arms clinging to his sides. It’s good to feel soft fabric again and not hard armour; he’s in civilian garb, and he feels familiar in her arms.

She still pulls away to admit, “I love him so much, Balin.” They all do. Balin nods, he understands, and her voice is strained, but she tries to explain, “But I... I don’t understand what’s happening. Sometimes I can see the old Thorin in there, but other times... it’s like a different man is wearing his skin.” And he’s all of the bad things she’s heard about dwarves and none of the good.
Balin’s next sigh is very heavy. He half turns to the table, his arm brushing over it, though the writing there is very old, and Bilbo can’t understand it. “It’s dragon sickness,” Balin says quietly. “It’s as if a fever has taken him over, a fanatic obsession with gold and great treasures. I’ve watched it happen before to his grandfather...” Balin’s voice breaks off, like he can’t bring himself to say anymore.

He hangs his head and closes his eyes, and Bilbo’s heart hurts for him; it’s so hard to see this happen to someone she loves, let alone to see it twice in his lifetime. The thought that Thorin could be destroyed by the same madness that took his grandfather is heartbreaking.

And for a moment, Bilbo just lives with that. She looks down at her feet, feeling very small and helpless, while Balin bends over the table, seeming more to be trying not to cry than truly reading. She knows what she has to ask next, even though it relies on Balin’s confidence, on him to be sane and rational.

She licks her lips and hesitantly asks, “Would it help if he had the Arkenstone?”

Balin looks at her. There’s recognition in his eyes. He searches her, and she’s sure that he knows she has it, or at least that she knows where it is. But he doesn’t ask her. He only shakes his head slowly and says, “That is a very important stone, Bilbo. It’s the pinnacle of all this treasure, and it would be the crown to Thorin’s rule, uniting him before all the other dwarves. It would mean more to him than you could know.” His next breath is ragged, and after a short, difficult pause, he answers, “But would it cure him? ...No. I fear it would only make it worse.”

Bilbo’s lived with that same fear. She doesn’t nod, because she doesn’t dare betray that she has it. She only silently resolves to keep it from Thorin as long as she can. She loves him enough for that.

She leans her head on Balin’s shoulder again, needing comfort more than she can say. He turns to hold her, but it isn’t nearly enough.

Until Thorin is the way he was, she doesn’t think anything can be.

She’s in the bath when Dwalin comes to fetch her, saying simply, “Thorin’s summoned you.” Her first instinct is to ask why he doesn’t come get her himself, but Dwalin looks sharply away, and she knows he doesn’t want to have to question his king’s actions. Of all of them, Dwalin is the most fiercely loyal, and she can’t tell anymore how much he’s affected by the same sickness Thorin has.

It’s easiest just to listen. Bilbo wraps herself in a fresh robe and follows Dwalin out the door in an uncomfortable silence. The halls of Erebor feel even more vast and lonely of late, made worse when she’s left alone at the end of the long path that leads to the throne. She watches Dwalin’s back as he goes back down the steps, then sucks in a breath and moves forward.

Quiet as she usually is, her footsteps seem to echo in the wide chamber, the dead eyes of Dwarven statues following her every move. Even from a distance, Thorin seems to glow in his perch, the polished surfaces of his armour glimmering in the pale light. Bilbo feels wholly unequipped to meet such a king in only a robe, but she has nothing better. She used to feel like she belonged right alongside her dwarves, but now, as she approaches Thorin’s regal air, she feels so very far beneath him.

She stops several steps from him, but he lifts an arm and waves her closer. This time, she doesn’t stop until her legs are against his knees, and he reaches out to tug her up against him, the chiseled edges of his boots pressing into her bare skin. He plucks the thin tie from her waist and yanks it out, tossing it aside. The robe slips open, falling around the sides of her breasts.
Thorin growls, “Take it off.” Bilbo has to look away from him, because his eyes aren’t meeting hers.

But she does as she’s told. She doesn’t have it in her to refuse him, not yet, and there is a sliver of want every time she’s asked to be exposed to him. The power dynamic is both frightening and bizarrely alluring. She slowly pulls the robe from her shoulders, until she has it over her arm and she can drop it to the side. She hasn’t bothered to wear a bra or panties for a longtime, and now she’s glad of it; he looks like he might cut anything else away if she had more left. Instead, he settles back in his seat to look at her, while she stands still for him. Cold and trying not to tremble, she keeps her arms steady at her sides, even though she has the vague urge to cover herself up.

He asks, “Would you still kneel for your king?” The tone is strong, but the words betray some semblance of understanding: still. Perhaps he knows that things have changed. The question gives her a way out, but Bilbo doesn’t even think to reach for her robe again.

She answers by way of sinking slowly to her knees. The stone is hard and uncomfortable, and he quickly parts his legs around her, bracing her between. He bends over her to peer down at her body. Bofur used to whisper in her ear of scenarios like this, but it isn’t how she always pictured it.

Only Thorin’s fingers are bare: the rest of his hands covered by the gauntlets. He lets one set trail along her face, smoothing over her cheeks and tracing down her nose, pressing into her lips and tilting her by the chin, more like examining a work of art than a lover. Bilbo lets herself be posed nonetheless, until his fingers slip back into her hair. They fist there and tug her up. With a grunt and a muffled wince, she rises to her feet, barely stable before he tugs her forward. She topples into his lap, and he pulls her knees quickly up, her thighs split around his stomach. In all his metal, he’s colder than the stone.

She wants to kiss him anyway. She lets her hands rest on his shoulders, eyes moving over the braids draped alongside his neck. She’d still like to give him new ones, though she knows this isn’t the time.

One of Thorin’s hands rests along her waist, just over the hump of her ass, and the other digs into the pocket of his robes. He draws out a tangle of jewelry, strings of gold and crystals and precious stones. He tugs one necklace free to wrap around her throat, the other hand lifting to help fasten it. An elaborate necklace slithers out next, a collection of ornate chains that form a patterned collar, with loops that drape down to dip between her breasts. He puts several more strings around her neck on top of it, then begins to clasp circlets around her arms, first her biceps, some dipping down to her elbows, then thick metal pieces around her wrists that remind her faintly of unbound manacles, however expensive they look. He fits pears in her hair and clips circlets around her waist, letting them dip across her bellybutton to match the neckpiece and stop just short of her vagina. One particular chain has a clip on either end, studded with tiny, blunt teeth, and instead of clipping them together, he clamps them around her pebbled nipples, already perked in the cold air. It pinches, stings, and he adjusts them, pressing them deeper and squishing the hard clamps into her breasts, while Bilbo bites her lip and tries to keep from squirming too much. A part of her is glad to have his attention—it’s so hard to keep nowadays. His eyes are full of lust as he plays with her nipples, until he seems content with their placement, and he tugs once on the string that connects them.

Bilbo’s breath hitches, but she doesn’t complain. The pile of gold is gone from his lap, now snaked all around her body, and she hopes it’s over and now they can touch.

But when she opens her mouth, wanting to be kissed, Thorin simply chuckles, “Not yet, little one.” His hand massages her hip, and he purrs, “I’ll fill you up soon enough.”

He pulls another piece from his pocket. It’s just a stone this time, a large, oval-shaped thing, crystalline white, reminiscent of the Arkenstone, but of course, not nearly so magnificent. Back in the
Shire, the crystal in his hands would’ve taken Bilbo’s breath away. But now she’s grown used to treasure, and her eyes barely stray over it before she comes back to him.

He pecks her forehead and hisses, “Grow wet for me, Bilbo.”

He moves the jewel to press between her legs, hard and cold against the lips of her pussy. Bilbo isn’t as surprised as she thinks she should be, but it makes her shiver nonetheless; she wants to fill herself up with dwarves, not stone. Yet she wants to make him happy, and she finds her body responding, however slowly. He rubs it gently against her, and it’s good to know he can still be soft when he wants to. She threads her fingers in his hair and leans her face on his shoulder, remembering all the times before this that he took her and it was so wonderful.

Memories, more than anything, open her body up to him. He rubs at her and tugs the chain between her breasts, and that makes her squirm and have to stifle little moans. The smell of him is still the same, and his voice makes little soothing noises, coaxing her to obey. She tries.

He could’ve had her soaking wet by now with a few kisses alone. Instead, it takes several minutes of little ministrations and her replaying his touch from other times behind her closed eyes. Eventually, she’s loose and wet enough for him to start pushing the jewel inside her. The sides of it are smooth, but it’s still too unforgiving. It isn’t pleasant, but she grabs onto his cloak and thinks of good things, like sitting in Bofur’s lap with him whispering this very thing into her ear. A final, too-rough pat lodges the bulk of it inside her, and her body jerks as her mouth cries out.

Thorin stops. He pets her hair, and he whispers, “Good girl. That’s my Bilbo... you’re one of my most treasured possessions.”

Bilbo has to bite back a sob. She pulls away from his shoulder, her fingers sliding down to fist in the robes over his chest, holding on. She mumbles bitterly, “You’ve changed.”

He frowns, pushes a lock of honey hair behind her ear, and asks, “How so?” It’s clear that he truly doesn’t see it. It’s only more evidence that this is dragon sickness, that this should all seem right to him. He’s told her so many times that he doesn’t own her, not in any way beyond a mutual possession of the heart.

It makes her timid to explain, “You’ve never called me a possession before.”

Thorin’s frown increases. He runs the back of his hand along her face, and she can’t stop herself from leaning into it. “You don’t wish to be so?” She licks her dry lips.

She should nod. But she shakes her head and mutters, “No, I... I’ll be it.” She’ll be anything for him. She can’t stop herself from whining, “But I’m worried about you.”

Finally, he smiles. He draws her chin up and kisses her lips, and for a moment, it’s almost like it used to be. He’s gentle and kind, and his power is only as grand as it’s ever been. His other hand traces down her body in reverence, skimming gold and jewels and coming to rest along her thigh, petting through the little hairs and dipping between her legs. His kiss remains steady, even when Bilbo becomes a needy mess, pushing up into him and mewling, wanting just this, riding him in his throne, like she’s always wanted.

She thinks he’s going to remove the gemstone inside her and fill her with his fingers instead. She wants just that, but when she rolls her hips into him, he gently pushes her away.

He breaks the kiss and nudges her knees, until she slides of her own accord off his lap, and he guides her back to the floor.
She kneels again at his feet. He spreads his legs and purrs, “It’s time to drink from your king’s cock.” Bilbo shivers but nods, wanting anything of him she can get.

He unfastens his own belt and pulls himself out. She’s become useless, truly an accessory. All she does is wait until he’s ready, until he moves his hands away and settles back, his hard cock jutting out with all the interest she had to work to muster. It’s become a foreign beast, though she recognizes the shape, the colour, the arch of it. She briefly wonders what he would do if she asked to dress him up like he did to her—if she could strip all his too-heavy clothes away, and wrap beaded chains around his cock.

She’ll have to take it as it is. She opens her mouth and moves forward to lick him, half expecting him to taste like someone else and so strangely relieved when it’s just him. She lowers her eyes and fixates instead on his stomach, while her tongue maps out the ruddy skin and pulsing veins of his shaft. She laps at him over and over, until the tip is starting to bead with precum, and her mouth needs more.

She wraps her lips around him and slides as far down as she can, taking his girth along her tongue. She suckles on the tip, tasting the stray drops of his seed. Her body can’t help but react, and she clenches around the stone inside her, which gets her nowhere; it’s too stiff and uncomfortable. She shifts her hips but keeps going on him, half expecting him to shove her down to the base. She’s never made it so far. He’s too huge, and her mouth’s too small, and even when she takes him down her throat, she can’t get much more than three quarters down. He doesn’t touch her, doesn’t move, doesn’t say anything at all. In the eerie quiet of the grand hall, his ragged breathing and the wet squelching sounds of her lips sliding down his cock are the only noises.

It goes on like this for a long time, far past Bilbo’s jaw becoming sore and her knees becoming stiff, her pussy trembling in an effort not to expel the strange item he’s lodged inside her. She services him anyway, until his palm pushes her forehead back, and she slides off of him. Her mouth stays hanging up, tongue hanging out, precum and spit dribbling down her chin. Her jaw’s too stiff to close right away, so she leaves it and only closes her eyes when he comes across her face. She catches much of his load on her tongue, but the rest splatters across her cheeks and nose, painting her forehead and her hair and running down her neck, pooling between her breasts. Even without their connection and the fire their sex once had, he comes a large amount, and Bilbo wears it all, not daring to shut her mouth until he’s finished. Only then does she tilt her head back and swallow all that he’s give her, while he lets his spent cock nudge absently against her cheek.

In the aftermath, all he says is, “Clean me off.” So Bilbo does, ducking forward to lick any stray flecks of seed away. She runs her tongue all over him and wipes him dry on her hands and arms, tucking him back into his trousers afterwards. He does the rest, re-clipping his belt and adjusting his armour.

He makes no move to get her off. Bilbo’s left to rest against his leg, sitting in nothing but his cum and gold, the legacy of Thorin Oakenshield.

She sits with him, even through her hunger and need for a washroom, until Balin comes to fetch them to return to the watch post. They stop along the way for supplies, and Thorin only takes the jewel out when she needs to piss. He looks ready to stuff it back inside her afterwards, but she winces before he does, and he seems to think better of it and leaves it on a shelf.

As they reach the Front Gate, Bilbo looks down at the chain still strung between her nipples. She wants non-dwarves to talk to; this isn’t right, and surely there must be some way to make them see that.

But she doesn’t know what that is, so she takes the invitation to sleep against Thorin’s side all the
When Bilbo’s roused from slumber by Balin’s call, she isn’t surprised to be curled up in Thorin’s lap. She’s spent the last few nights with him, because he’s bid her to. She doesn’t want to start a fight so don’t bother to protest, even though some of the other dwarves look upset, affected in their own ways but not as much as him. There are no good options anymore, and even Balin isn’t as rational as he once was.

She doesn’t let Thorin clamp her nipples anymore, because it makes her too sore; instead, she remembers where she placed them and thinks if she can ever cure him, she’ll wear them again when he’ll wear them back. But she does allow him to dress her in his other trinkets, and she stays by his side when he asks her to—she keeps worrying he’ll forget her all together.

Balin doesn’t bother with the other dwarves, just comes to Thorin’s side, Dwalin right next to him and stirring just as fast. Balin’s arm extends beyond the wall, and he mutters almost fearfully, “The armies have reached Dale.”

Thorin bellows, “Get up!” at the others, and one by one, the dwarves rouse. They reach for their weapons, tugging on armour they’ve shed before sleep. Thorin goes to the edge to peer down between the stones, and Bilbo stays where she is, not bother to do so much as dress. The makeshift cot they’ve set up for Thorin is cold, but she’s wrapped herself in blankets.

While they wait the people of Lake-town and the elves to come to them, the dwarves lapse into another of their songs. Only it’s more of a chant, with lyrics of banding together and slaying foes, and the merriment is all too blood thirsty, like something she might’ve heard in the goblin’s town. It’s all too warlike for Bilbo’s taste, so she holds her hands over her ears and thinks of the first time she heard Thorin humming beyond her bedroom wall.

Around midday, the representatives come to meet them. Bilbo wraps herself up in a robe and squeezes next to Thorin, looking down at the solemn faces of two women in crude, battered armour and a familiar man in a bargeman’s clothes. She recognizes Bard and would call hello, only she doesn’t think he can see her well enough from his angle; she can’t reach very far over the stone. He looks well, considering the stories she’s heard from Roäc of Lake-town burning and the slaying of Smaug, but Thorin doesn’t at all seem as pleased as her to see this. He announces loudly, “Who are you to come armed for war to the gates of Thorin, son of Thrain, King under the Mountain?”

“You know me, Thorin,” Bard calls back, both a puzzled and weary look on his face. “We met in Lake-town, where I gave my misgivings for your quest, and your friend warned me to ready the town. For this I thank you; we were ready, and it spared the lives that the dragon would’ve cost us.”

This, Bilbo thinks, is a reference to her, and it makes her blush to be credited, because she didn’t really do much at all. But she is pleased to hear that Bard managed to move his people in time, even if their loss must still be great. “To be quite honest, we did not expect you to have escaped as well.”

“Yet here we are,” Thorin interrupts before quickly snarling, “And if we were dead? You would’ve plundered the dwarves’ treasure?”

Even from this distance, Bilbo can see Bard’s frown. He’s never struck her as a particularly cheery man, and Thorin’s growl would worsen anyone’s mood. “On the contrary, I’m pleased to see you survived. I hope all your company is well. And I would also hope that we may talk. Of course part of that treasure belongs to the dwarves, and we never had any intention of stealing it all. But some of that that wealth was stolen from Dale, and surely my hand in defeating Smaug is worth something.”
Of course, this all sounds perfectly fair to Bilbo. There’s enough treasure for plenty of peoples to share. But by now, she isn’t surprised that Thorin waves it all away. “That gold belongs to the dwarves. By your own account, you only lost the little hobble on a frigid lake. We lost our entire kingdom and our families, and the gold is ours for it. We will give nothing away.”

Bard pauses. In his silence, Bilbo mutters bitterly, “That hobble was their home.” But Thorin ignores her.

With more patience than Bilbo thinks she could ever show, Bard asks, “How is that just?”

“It doesn’t matter!” Thorin booms, slamming his fist down on the stone hard enough that Bilbo jerks away, startled. “I will not discuss these matters with armed men at my gate, and certainly not those who would parlay with elves!”

“The Elf King is my friend,” Bard shoots back, a sudden fire sparking in his eyes. “He came to our aid after the destruction you brought on us. Just as we helped you in your time of need, which we were promised compensation for, King Thranduil helped us. He is a good man, and you would be as foolish to deny him council as you would be to deny mine!”

Thorin suddenly turns around, moving so quick that Bilbo doesn’t realize what’s happening until Thorin’s poised over the edge with Kíli’s bow. To Bilbo’s horror, he shoots an arrow down at Bard’s feet. It narrowly misses Bard himself, and though Bard doesn’t wince, Bilbo does. Thorin shouts, “You would be a fool to remain on the step of my mountain!”

There is no point in arguing. Bard stands his ground for a few seconds, then turns and marches off down the path, his people falling in behind him. Thorin shoves the bow back into Kíli’s arms and turns to glare at the wall, while Bilbo stares at him, recognizing nothing of this strange tyrant before her.

She knew this couldn’t go well. But the extremes of it still shocks her, and what’s worse, most of the dwarves look as though they agree with him. Bombur lets out a withered sigh, doubtless missing the food trade with Lake-town could’ve brought, and Fíli and Kíli do exchange sad looks. But the rest of them look bolstered by Thorin’s speech.

“We must stay at the ready,” Thorin grumbles, voice loud enough to reach all of them. “But I must have that stone. Fíli and Kíli, you will go look for it.” The brothers actually look relieved to be dismissed, and they hurry off for the staircase.

Bilbo doesn’t have the will to talk to him and tell him how absurd and cruel he’s being. She knows it wouldn’t go well. So she only asks, “May I go with them as well?” Once upon a time, asking would’ve been a mere courtesy, a remnant of her Shire manners.

He looks at her, and for a moment, she thinks of the old Thorin, telling her she’s free to do as she likes. He lets out a breath.

Then he storms towards her, and she stumbles back. He pins her against the stone, bending to kiss her with too much teeth and tongue, his hands pushing her robe over her shoulders. He only breaks away to hiss, “I would prefer you stay here.”

Thorin used to never take her in front of the others. Now, they all look away, even Bofur and Nori averting their eyes, while Thorin wedges his thigh between hers and rubs his large hands over her body. He tilts her head up and then to the side, growling into her ear, “I would fuck you right here.”

She mumbles, “No.”
Thorin instantly jerks away as though burned, and Bilbo’s left to stumble for balance in the absence of his weight holding her up. She tugs her robe back into place, and he looks at her like he doesn’t know her at all. He opens his mouth, only to close it and try again, hissing, “You’ve never said no to me before.”

She doesn’t say it again. She doesn’t say anything, because she’s afraid if she does, she’ll apologize and run back to him.

Instead, she looks away, until he growls, “Go,” and turns his back to her.

She wants to run, but her pace is slow and strained as she makes her way to the stairwell, Fíli and Kíli long gone. At the top, she turns back to him and swallows. All the others are beyond him, still avoiding their eyes.

Bilbo calls, “I love you,” too softly for anyone but Thorin to hear. He looks back at her, and for a brief second, she thinks she sees the old Thorin in his eyes.

But then it’s gone again, and she heads off alone.
They learn from Roäc that Dáin is two days away, and this only urges Thorin on. The old raven suggests that they make peace, for the weather is growing harsher and they'll need supplies from outside of the mountain if they’re to survive, but Thorin only hisses that the cold will bite the elves and people below all the harder, and they’ll have to surrender soon enough. Bilbo doesn’t know how much longer she can go on like this.

It’s cold enough that most take to sleeping inside, always at the ready, Thorin himself hardly seeming to sleep at all and spending his nights wading through his treasure. Bilbo lies alone on the cot he’s had made up in one of the smaller rooms close to the Front Gate. She stares at the stone wall beyond the flicker of her candle, wondering what will happen when the final straw is drawn. Sooner or later, he’ll learn that she has the Arkenstone. What he’ll do then, she can’t guess anymore. She’d like to think that he’d never hurt her, but the truth is that she doesn’t know. Eventually, she slips out of Thorin’s cot, knowing he isn’t coming. She knows what she has to do, and there isn’t any sense putting it off. She slips on her coat over Thorin’s trinkets, and she creeps out her door.

The stairs to the watch post aren’t far, and she winds up them to find Bombur on duty, looking thoroughly unhappy. It’s terribly cold, and he doesn’t even smile when he looks at her, just exchanges a grim nod.

She sucks in her breath and inwardly asks for forgiveness; what she’s about to do isn’t right on a person-to-person level, though she tells herself that it’s ultimately just. She can’t stand to have her dwarves go to war for no good reason; they’ve come through too much to lose each other now. Her lies will be out of love.

She comes to sit by Bombur’s side, and she tells him, “I can’t sleep.”

“Neither can I, up here in this icy wind,” he grumbles, shivering. He reaches to put an arm around her, but she gently stops it and lays it back over his stomach. He looks disappointed, and she offers a friendly smile.

“I think I may as well take watch. You can go back inside; there’s no need for both of us to suffer.”

Bombur looks down at her in surprise, and at first, he frowns, conflicted, but she kisses his cheek and assures him, “It’s alright. Really. I don’t mind. I’ll come and wake you before your turn is over.” She still has to pet his belly a bit, trying her utmost not to shiver and to look as though she doesn’t mind the wind at all, and finally, he nods and sighs.

“You’re a miracle, Bilbo. Truly. I’m very grateful.” As he pushes up to his feet, he looks fondly down at her, a light through the fever of gold. It’s moments like this where she remembers why she loves them, and it’s hard to keep the guilt off her face. She watches him leave, and then she waits a few moments, just in case, sitting in a tight little ball, alone on the walkway.

Then she begins to strip Thorin’s trinkets away. It’ll be embarrassing enough to face sane leaders without the trappings of a madman all over her. She feels lighter when they’re all in a golden pile beside her, though the Arkenstone is still heavy in her pocket. She’s left Sting behind, because she wants to make it very clear that while she’s always on the side of her dwarves, she comes in peace.

When she’s sure that Bombur isn’t coming back, Bilbo slips on her ring and heads for the stairs, ready to slip through the cracks in the Front Gate that a dwarf never could.
It’s a long way down the mountain, and the rocky path is particularly uncomfortable after so long in
the smooth hall of Erebor. She can feel the sharp stones bruising the bottom of her feet, the air is
exceptionally cold, and she knows she must be quick if she hopes to get back without getting caught.
It’s an unpleasant trip, but it’s made better when she eventually draws close enough to see who the
sentinels on the counter watch are.

Legolas and Tauriel stand a little distance apart from each other, bows at the ready, warily watching
the mountain. Tauriel’s eyes stray once or twice to the path Bilbo walks, and she can’t help but
wonder if, even through the darkness and distance, Tauriel can see the occasional pebble that Bilbo’s
feet overturns. When she comes to the shallowest part of the river that she needs to cross, she takes
off her ring, because there is no point in being invisible if the splashing gives her away. Even as she
picks her way across the wet stones to the other side, she can hear bows being draw, but she looks
down at where she’s stepping anyway, careful not to fall.

As she climbs the damp bank on the other side, Tauriel and Legolas lower their bows, coming to her
from either side. She can only count herself lucky to not be perceived as a threat, despite her earlier
deception. She knows she owes them both an apology, but the first thing out of her mouth is, “I need
to see Bard and King Thranduil; I must be back before they realize I’m gone.”

Legolas lifts an eyebrow, but he doesn’t question her. They must’ve guessed by now that she was
more loyal to the dwarves than she claimed, and Tauriel only asks, “Was all your company so lucky
to survive the dragon?” There’s a hitch of worry in her voice, accompanied by genuine pleasure to
see Bilbo alive and the usual Elven aloofness.

Bilbo, knowing exactly what Tauriel means to ask, nods and confirms, “All of us.” Relief washes
over Tauriel’s attractive features. Bilbo tacks on a, “Sorry,” and turns to Legolas to include him too.
“I truly am. I was far more attached to the dwarves than I claimed, and though I needed to free them,
I wish I could’ve done so without deceiving you.”

Neither of them looks particularly upset with her. Though Legolas is frowning, he tells her softly,
“You owe no apology.” Then he turns and steps towards the ruins of Dale, adding, “I will take you
to my father and Bard.”

Bilbo moves to follow him. Her adrenaline is racing high: the thought of being caught away from the
mountain isn’t a pleasant one, and as much as she told the dwarves she was cut out to be a burglar,
stealing away like a thief doesn’t sit right with her. When she turns her back to the mountain, it feels
as though she’s turning her back on Thorin.

She glances over her shoulder before she leaves to quietly elaborate, “Kíli hasn’t forgotten you,
either.” Maybe she shouldn’t be so specific in front of Legolas, but Tauriel smiles faintly, and Bilbo
thinks she’s glad for the news.

As they walk away, Bilbo admits, “I am sorry I wasn’t able to attend the celebration with you.”

Legolas shrugs his shoulders in a very mortal gesture, replying cryptically, “There will be another
soon enough.”

Moving through the Dale camp, it’s clear that the armies on Thorin’s doorstep are larger than he’d
care to admit, and while the Lake-town refugees are mostly bedraggled and suffering, the elves are
prone and skilled. It only confirms to Bilbo that she’s doing the right thing. Clearly, the thirteen
dwarves, even in their stronghold, would be no match for this force, and she doesn’t need them
imprisoned again or worse.
The tent Legolas brings her to is larger than the others, round and yellow. He parts the flap and ushers her through them, where she hesitates but goes.

Inside, there’s a warm orange glow, cast about by so many candles: a pleasant contrast to the blue of the outside. Thranduil and Bard look up at her immediately, the two of them seated on a plush rug with a low table in the middle of the tent. Rather than across it, they’re next to each other, Thranduil on elegantly folded legs strewn out to the side, an arm draped over a trunk behind him and the other hand holding a glass of wine. He’s wearing silver robes and an Elven ringlet in his hair instead of his crown, looking quite as strikingly beautiful as ever. Bard is sitting on his legs, facing Thranduil, in a velvety black robe that’s far more expensive-looking than anything Bilbo saw in Lake-town. She can only assume it’s a present from the king with which he’s made his new alliance. Both look equally surprised to see Bilbo, and Bard says first, “Thank you, Legolas.”

Legolas dips his head respectfully and withdraws, the tent flap falling closed. It leaves Bilbo standing there awkwardly, looking about the room. There’s another branched off tent that shows an array of blankets through it, probably makeshift bedchambers, and two chairs along the fabric walls, one woven like the Elf King’s throne and the other more subdued. Bard is the first to say, “Please join us.”

So Bilbo goes to sit awkwardly across the table from them. The rug is wonderfully soft compared to what she’s used to, and she subconsciously leans into the heat of the candles, small though it is. She still tugs her coat tighter around herself. It’s the only thing she’s wearing, but it’s long enough that it covers all off her, and it was this or show up in a bathrobe, or even worse, golden chains. She doesn’t know where to start, but Thranduil muses for her, “Interesting for us to meet again in this way. I assume our contract has been dissolved, and you are not offering your services as a concubine again.”

He says this so very easily, and Bilbo can feel her cheeks flushing, while Bard looks at Thranduil in surprise. He mutters, “I think I’m going to need some of that wine after all.” He slips the glass right out of Thranduil’s hand and takes a quick swig, while Thranduil gives him a shallow smile of amusement.

All Bilbo can really do is mumble, “Sorry about that,” and fidget on the spot. Hopefully, what she’s about to do will make up for it.

First, Thranduil gestures at the table, offering, “Are you hungry?” Bilbo’s ravenous. The stack of fruits and bread, simple though they are, look delicious after so long on dried preserves. She plucks a piece of bread off the table with nearly trembling hands, trying not to give away just how starving she is.

While she eats the soft dough, Bard asks Thranduil, “Why do you think she’s a concubine?”

“Because she presented herself to me that way,” Thranduil responds easily, just as Bilbo finishes swallowing the bread and plucks up a string of grapes. Bard looks as though he’s trying to determine whether or not Thranduil is joking, but Bilbo needs a minute to finish chewing before she can explain.

She starts with, “I am sorry for that. But you had my friends imprisoned, and I knew that, while they had committed no crimes, Thorin’s stubborn and prejudiced towards elves, and he wouldn’t have told you anything to get himself out. When Tauriel caught me, I had to say something, but I feared if you knew how much the dwarves meant to me, I would be thrown in your dungeons with them, and we would all die there.” This is all true, and in her head, justifies the lies, but Thranduil’s expression doesn’t change.
Bard, however, looks admonishingly at the Elf King and asks, “Do you regularly lock up strangers for no real reason?”

This makes Thranduil stir. He tells Bard sternly, “I assure you, I had my reasons.” Pausing to gesture in the direction of the mountain, he adds, “And clearly I was right; look what’s happened now that that tyrant is on the loose.”

“I’m sorry about that too,” Bilbo interjects. “But Thorin isn’t a tyrant. He’s... he’s not acting right, I know that. And if I had my way, you would both receive your fair share of the treasure. But... Thorin’s not in his right mind. It isn’t his fault, and he is a good king otherwise.”

Though they both listen, it’s clear that neither man believes her. Bilbo can’t stop herself from eating grapes in between her words, and now she takes another slice of bread, aware it’s rude too eat so much but too hungry to stop. She thinks of bringing Bombur some, but then, of course, he’d know she snuck out. After Thranduil and Bard share a silent look but say nothing, Bilbo adds, shifting uncomfortably, “And... I really shouldn’t be telling you this, but you should know that his cousin, Dáin, is on his way. Thorin won’t give in easily, and soon he’ll have an army of dwarves at his back to make sure he doesn’t have to.”

Bard looks thoroughly exasperated, Thranduil not in the least bit amused. While Bilbo takes a red apple into her palm, he mutters, “This is why I do not like dwarves.” With her mouth full of a juicy bite, Bilbo can’t protest, and it doesn’t look like Bard disagrees anymore.

Bard only asks her, “Why are you telling us this?” He looks genuinely perplexed, and it makes her blush. Clearly, he wouldn’t fathom betraying his friends.

Bilbo doesn’t like to think of it as a betrayal. She lowers her apple and sighs, then tries to explain, “I love my dwarves. I do. I know they’re stubborn, and messy, and they can be incredibly difficult. But they’re good people, and I don’t want to see them hurt. Hobbits don’t go for battles the way you big folk do. I would stop this one, if I can. Which is why I’m here. I’ve... I’ve come to make an offer.”

Bard looks like he understands now, sympathy on his handsome face. But Thranduil merely says, “If it’s for more sex, I am afraid we must talk first; my situation’s becomes more complicated since we last met.” Tilting his head and looking aside thoughtfully, he adds, “Although Legolas may have changed his mind.”

Bard snorts. For the first time since she came into the tent, he’s grinning broadly. Looking at Thranduil fondly, he chides, “Oh, leave him alone.” A small grin tugs at Thranduil’s lips, though he says no more of it.

Red-faced, Bilbo says, “No.” Of course, she wouldn’t have turned down the offer if it came separately; she’s enjoyed both of these men immensely, and they’re no less beautiful now than when she first met them, though she’d have to be a fool to not see the bond between them. Unfortunately, she knows it’s going to take a lot more than her meager skills in the bedroom to stop a war. Fortunately, she has better means.

She reaches into her pocket and withdraws the Arkenstone. As soon as it’s exposed, it shines again, lighting the air around it, and she places it squarely on the table, its middle dancing in an elaborate celebration of hues. Bard’s jaw drops, and even Thranduil’s eyes widen. The two of them stare down at it, while Bilbo explains, “This is the Arkenstone, the king’s jewel. The heart of the mountain. Thorin values it above all else. I believe if you took it to him, he would trade you all that you ask for.”

“And you’re giving it to us?” Thranduil repeats, his eyes never leaving the stone.
Before Bilbo can answer, Bard asks, “How is this yours to give?”

That’s another uncomfortable bit. Bilbo shifts her weight on the floor and mumbles, “Um... I’m counting it as my fourteenth of the share, I suppose. I was promised that. And yes, I’m giving it to you. In the hopes that it’ll stop any more conflict.” Bard nods gravely like he understands.

But Thranduil frowns and says, “If I know anything of dwarves, they will not treat you kindly for this.” That, Bilbo’s afraid, is all too true, but she’s still hoping she can get away with them never finding out it was her who snuck it out. “It would not be wise to return to them after this. I would suggest you stay with us, where you will be well treated and thoroughly appreciated.”

That is a nice offer. Only a week or so ago, she wouldn’t have fathomed it, but now, she can’t pretend to not find the promise of food and sane company alluring. She’s still thinking longingly of it when Bard confirms, “If it’s true they’ll hurt your for your bravery, you should stay here. We will make sure you’re safe.”

She shakes her head, unable to explain, and sighs, “I have to go back.” She knew that when she committed to this plan, and as promising as their offer stands, she knows in her heart that she can’t take it. “I love them all, and I can’t abandon them now.” Bard still looks worried, Thranduil lost.

Thranduil says, “At least stay the night with us.” There’s warmth in his eyes, even if it is a distant one. She wishes she could tell them that Thorin isn’t any danger to her, but it would mean lying again.

Bard looks at Thranduil, who’s staring, steadfast, at Bilbo. Then Bard’s gaze falls to Bilbo, too, and he mumbles, “I admit... I’m a bit disappointed you were never presented to me as a concubine.”

She almost laughs. She can’t help but smile, and Bard mirrors it, however sadly. She knows she can’t stay the night, not if she has any hope of slipping back without them discovering where she was. She finds herself saying anyway, “I really must get back, but... perhaps I could stay for one more hour.”

After wrapping up and tucking the Arkenstone safely away, the three of them retire to the back section of their tent, draped off, indeed, like bedchambers. Bilbo notes without surprise that there’s only one cot made-up; her suspicions are correct. As she’s waved towards the bed, she finds herself immensely grateful that she’s bathed since her last round with Thorin. As Bilbo settles against the array of pillows near a makeshift wooden headboard, Thranduil stands at the edge and murmurs pleasantly, “It seems I am in the habit of being given expensive gifts in exchange for favour as of late.” He eyes Bilbo lazily, then Bard, as he counts off, “A hobbit mistress, a precious stone, a bowman...”

“I would hardly consider myself expensive,” Bard chuckles, though he looks worth a fair bit of gold as he draws his belt from his waist. “And as I recall, your favour came before our exchange of gifts.”

Thranduil steps forward to help push Bard’s long coat-robe hybrid over his shoulders, musing, “I prefer the sound of my description.”

“You prefer ‘your’ everything,” Bard quips, affectionate despite his teasing. His eyes are fixed on Thranduil’s handsome face, but Thranduil is fixated on Bard’s body, while he smoothes his hands down the front of Bard’s tunic, only to grip the bottom and slowly draw it over Bard’s head. Bard lifts his hands to accommodate, and Bilbo’s breath hitches as she watches one bit of creamy skin revealed at a time. Bard is just as well defined and strong as she imagined, which Thranduil seems to enjoy as much as her. He eyes Bard’s tight stomach and light abs with a definite appreciation, before
bringing his long fingers down to the front of Bard’s breeches.

Bilbo still can’t believe she’s lying here. It’s a special honour to witness such an intimate exchange, and though Bilbo never saw their meeting or their courting, she can see their connection now in every little touch, the movement of their eyes and their familiar smiles. Bard unclips Thranduil’s cloak to let it spill to the floor, while his fingers stray to run through the long, white-yellow strands of Thranduil’s hair. It’s clear that he enjoys this act, just as clear as it is that Thranduil enjoys basking in his attentions. As soon as Bard’s pushed away Thranduil’s robes, he twists his fingers back in Thranduil’s hair, and he uses it to tug Thranduil forward. Thranduil indulgently kisses him, full and right away with tongue, while Bilbo puts a hand over her mouth to stifle her moan. When Thranduil breaks the kiss, it’s only to trail his open mouth down Bard’s jaw and neck, while Bard tilts away and groans. Thranduil drops Bard’s breeches a moment later, leaving Bard in nothing, all hard muscles, light skin, and dark hair. His hands run down Thranduil’s body to do the same.

Once Thranduil’s bare, the two of them turn away from on another, facing Bilbo instead. It gives her the breathtaking view of both their bodies. They’re both trim and tall, but where Bard is roguish and work-calloused, Thranduil is lithe and delicate. Bilbo only gets flashes off their cocks—Bard’s thick and red and Thranduil’s long and straight—before they’re crawling forward onto the bed.

Thranduil stalks like a beast, naturally powerful and elegant, while Bard is more playful and approachable. They come to lay on either side of her, stretched out along the blankets, their hands tugging at her coat, until she wriggles out of it and kicks it aside. She feels wholly unworthy between them, fat and furred and much shorter, but neither of them seems to mind in the slightest. Bard looks at her with interest and hunger, Thranduil with idle novelty, even though he’s seen it all before. She knows that she’s the first hobbit either has ever seen, and perhaps the last, but it still surprises her that that’s enough. If she’d known how rare and desired she’d be in these foreign lands, she probably would’ve agreed to the quest much quicker.

First, they kiss her, lightly on either cheek, and then their mouths stray to hers, leaving Bilbo at a loss for who to turn to. Thranduil’s propped himself up on one elbow, but Bard’s hand strays over her round belly. When they finish kissing her, she needs a moment just to appreciate it; it’s so good to have soft touches again. While Bard reverently traces her stomach, Thranduil asks, “Do you truly love Thorin Oakenshield as much as you claim?” He sounds half disbelieving and half curious.

Without hesitation, Bilbo says, “Yes.” But then she sheepishly adds, “Though we were never exclusive.”

Thranduil smiles in response. It’s a thin, languid thing, and he drawls, “I admit I’m impressed with how well you share.”

“You’re sharing right now,” Bard teases, which causes Thranduil to lift one dark brow.

He quips, “You are still present, aren’t you?”

Bard grins but doesn’t bother to answer. Instead, he lowers himself over Bilbo, pressing his lips chastely between her ribs. Bilbo looks down at him, her own hands unsure of what to do and simply curled in the blankets, while Bard pecks further down her middle, kissing a slow trail towards her navel. He doesn’t stop there. He rifles through the curls below, ducking lower and lower, until he’s slid down the bed and lies between her legs, his final kiss placed just above her pussy.

He pauses only to look up at her and say, “It’s about time I returned that favour.” It takes Bilbo a minute to realize he means the time she was in Lake-town before and took his cock in her mouth. She never expected him to repay her, but evidently, he’s a man that doesn’t forget his debts.
Thranduil’s hand strays down to sift through Bard’s hair, but Bard only spares him a quick glance, focused instead on running his tongue along Bilbo’s lips. She gasps instantly, and Thranduil’s fingers slip out of Bard’s hair to trace up her thigh. By the time Bard’s run his tongue between her labia, Thranduil’s reached her breasts, and he rubs gently over them while Bard works his tongue inside her, wriggling up the pink folds as his mouth applies light suction. It’s a heavenly combination, only made better when Thranduil tilts her head aside and seals their lips together.

His kiss is intoxicating. He tastes like wine, his mouth larger than hers and commanding, taking immediate control. His tongue explores her lips and her walls and licks over hers, more like an experiment than an expression of love, but it thrills her all the same. When he withdraws from her, he curls his tongue inside his own mouth, looking contemplative and pleased. Bard’s tongue thrusts up inside her, and his fingers, slick, perhaps with spit, trace along the curve of her ass. She shudders as his blunt fingertips circle her opening, tapping lightly at her puckered brim. Thranduil keeps her busy by playing with her breasts, his hands making smooth patterns in them, squeezing here and there but mostly touching. He tells her in a hushed purr, “You have a very interesting body.” She chooses to take it as a compliment, but doesn’t have the words to thank him, not when Bard’s busy fucking her with his tongue.

When his finger pops inside her, there isn’t any pain at all. It doesn’t even register as strange like it usually would, not when her mind is busy elsewhere. Her hips are trembling in his grasp, trying to grind back up into his face, and he works the single digit slowly into her. He’s careful, plowing on but never rough, and she can’t help but wonder if he’s had practice with this—has he taken Thranduil yet, or has Thranduil taken him? Or perhaps they’ve done both, shared turns, and perhaps she isn’t the first third to lie between them, but of course, now isn’t the time to ask. Bard has his finger fully seated inside her in no time, and then he’s drawing it out to add a second, while she squirms and arches, her breasts squishing into Thranduil’s open palm. As if to himself, he murmurs, “Perhaps I will take you this time…”

“Yes,” Bilbo moans, whining more than she means to. She doubts she’ll ever get this chance again—certainly not after Thorin’s discovered her deceit—and he’s too gorgeous a man to pass up. He smiles indulgently at her cry, and when she looks down, she sees Bard smiling into her pussy. He’s got three dripping fingers in her now, and both her holes are wet and stretched. It probably wouldn’t be enough for a fat dwarf cock, but they’re both thinner than her dwarves, and she nods at the silent question in his eyes.

She still whimpers when his mouth leaves her. She has to fight herself not to push him back down, and instead lets Bard crudely wipe his mouth on his wrist and crawl back up the bed, on her other side. Before he’s fully settled down, Thranduil’s turning Bilbo, holding her waist to roll her onto her side, facing him. His hand roves down her rear, along her thigh, hiking her leg over his hip. In her effort to steady herself, some of her fingers land over his hair. It’s just as smooth as she imagined it.

Bard and Thranduil don’t waste any time. They kiss across her once, slow and languid, and it excites Bilbo to see Thranduil, so luxurious as he is, to sully his mouth with Bard’s, still full of Bilbo’s juices. When they part, Thranduil’s hand is between her legs, guiding his cock to her entrance. She can feel the press of Bard’s tip at her ass, and they both push in at once.

It’s just a little bit, but Bilbo cries out all the same, her body unsure of who to arch into so merely trembling in place. Both of them stretch her, not exceedingly so but enough for that thrum of excitement. They’re shallow at first, and then Bard is lightly pushing forward, pulling back, wedging himself in that little bit more each time, and Thranduil is fluidly slipping inside in one gradual movement. She can’t stop herself from reaching out to grab at his arm, and he gently takes her wrist, moving it across his body, letting her spoon against his lithe chest. Bard flattens in behind her. She can’t tell which of them manages to get fully inside her first, because she’s lost herself in all the
different sensations, made worse as Bard’s teeth graze her shoulder. She can only hope he won’t leave bites for Thorin to find. Yet she makes no move to stop him, because it feels so wondrously good, and she clings to Thranduil so tightly, wildly grateful for this windfall of ecstasy.

Thranduil is the first to move, but Bard quickly follows, the two of them sliding out of her little body, only to slam back inside it. It isn’t nearly so harsh as her dwarves have been of late, but it’s overwhelming with the two of them at once, filling her from either end and as deep as they go. The rhythm they move into is steady, and their hands overlap across her waist, holding her still as they push into her again and again. Sometimes Bard kisses her neck and shoulders, and sometimes Thranduil’s fingers play over her chest and face, and often they kiss over her, the curtain of Thranduil’s hair lingering along her cheek. The sounds of their love are just as delightful as the rest. She can only barely watch, her vision hazy as it is. Her skin overheats quickly, beading with sweat that Bard seems to mirror but Thranduil doesn’t. The two of them are a delicious contrast, yet so alike in many things. They treat her equally as well, if in different ways, and Bilbo is caught in the heady wonderment of who to push against. She wants more of Bard, and she wants more of Thranduil, and she wants all of their cocks filling her up, and she’s granted that wish with every thrust.

For an impressively long time, to her at least, the tent is full of their groaning and moans and panting, Thranduil unaffected but Bard ragged and Bilbo a mess. Thranduil’s pace never falters, though Bard, after a time, starts to hump her harder, adjusts against her to fill her deeper, and he grabs her ass to hold it down, even as Thranduil holds her back. Bard fucks her wildly, and Bilbo thinks he’s going to come, but then Thranduil brushes some of her sweat-slicked hair aside and purrs in her ear, “Come, my little concubine.”

And Bilbo instantly obeys. She explodes between them, screaming out and shaking, squirming delightedly on their twin cocks. They fuck her right through her orgasm, while she’s overrun with heat and bliss. She can feel her juices welling up around Thranduil, and her orgasm only seems to stretch out as Bard suddenly bursts inside her ass. Thranduil makes a tsking noise, as though Bard should’ve waited for his order as well, but Bard ignores it, grabs Bilbo harshly, and fills her up with his seed.

Thranduil finishes last of all. She’s amazed when he does, up close as she is, and she forces herself to see through her dizzying haze. Her body wants to pass out, but her mind is enraptured with the sight of him, his handsome features relaxing in pleasant release, his lashes gently falling to his cheek as his cock spurts inside her. She squeezes at him deliberately, milking him out, and he makes an elegant, contented noise, while Bard rasps in her ear, “He’s beautiful, isn’t he?” Thranduil smiles but doesn’t open his eyes. Bilbo’s sure the feeling’s mutual.

By the time Thranduil’s finished, Bard and Bilbo are thoroughly spent, and Bard pulls out of her to lie limply across the sheets. Thranduil leisurely makes his way out afterwards, and Bilbo rolls onto her back, staring blankly up at the ceiling of the tent.

It takes her a long moment to recover enough to say, “I don’t want to get up.”

“You don’t have to,” Thranduil replies, sounding entirely too put together for someone who just had an amazing threesome. Again, his offer is tempting, and Bilbo gives herself a minute to relish in their fantasy.

But then she must get up. Neither of them bothers to follow suit, and Bilbo has to bend to peck each one on their cheeks, which they take indulgently and with kind smiles. She tells them sincerely, “Thank you.”

“We’re here should you have need of us,” Thranduil tells her, before he turns to reach a lazy hand
across the space she once occupied, brushing Bard’s bedraggled hair off his sweaty forehead.

Bilbo forces herself to climb off before they suck her back in: a very real possibility.

When she slips outside the tent, the gold hits her all over again. Legolas is waiting for her, and it makes her blush to look at him, knowing that she’s taken his father. Before they set out, she remarks conversationally, “King Thranduil seems happy.” It’s an effort to be friendly, but the way Legolas lifts a brow, she expects him to say nothing in response.

Instead, he admits, after a moment’s quiet, “I believe Bard is good for him.” Then Legolas looks away; clearly it’s all he’s going to say on the matter. She quietly agrees but makes an effort not to grin.

The two of them set out through the camp, the stars and stray torches lighting lines of elves and Bard’s people practicing with weapons. A few tents are quiet, others busy in preparation for a battle Bilbo hopes will never come. They haven’t made it far when a figure wrapped up in a cloak beelines for them through the crowd, and Bilbo, seeing the person’s intention, slows her pace.

Indeed, the figure approaches them. Before they’ve unveiled, an old man’s voice tells her, “Well done, Bilbo Baggins.”

Bilbo recognizes the voice immediately. Gandalf brushes off his hood, revealing his withered but smiling face, his long, grey beard tucked into his coat. He holds his twisted staff in one hand, though his arms spread after his words. Bilbo lunges at him, hugging him tightly, completely delighted. It’s shaping up to be a very good night indeed, despite all her trepidations. Gandalf chuckles fondly and pats her back, repeating, “That was very brave of you.”

She blushes as she pulls back, mumbling, “Not really; I simply didn’t have any choice.” His smile is warm all the same. Beside her, Legolas is politely quiet.

Gandalf turns on his own so the three of them can walk together. Legolas stands on Gandalf’s other side, and if he knows the wizard, he says nothing for it. Bilbo can only assume that Gandalf either has or will talk to the new lords of the camp, as that seems to be his style, but for now, he tells Bilbo as he walks, “I am afraid I bring bad tidings. Darker things are brewing, and it will count on the everyday bravery of little folk like you more than ever.”

Frowning, Bilbo mutters, “I wish you didn’t tell me that. I am happy to see you, but must you always bring trouble?”

Gandalf chuckles and tells her, “Perhaps, but it seems that sometimes, you grow very fond of my trouble.” This, of course, is true, but she’s hoping it won’t apply again; she’s not sure what she would do with thirteen more dwarves—there simply isn’t enough time in the day. “In any case,” he goes on, “I am sorry to have left you as I did, but these things needed tending. I will at least walk you back to the gates.”

“But you won’t come in with me?” Bilbo asks, surprised. Surely, even in the height of dragon sickness, Thorin would welcome Gandalf, such a help to this quest as he’s been. But Gandalf shakes his head, and by now she’s too tired to bother fighting him over it. She knows well enough that wizards work in their own ways.

When they reach Tauriel, Legolas stays with her, and Bilbo bids them goodbye—for now—and continues up to the doorstep of the mountain, whilst filling Gandalf in on the more ‘appropriate’ thrills of their journey.
By the time Bilbo’s back inside the mountain, she’s still not exactly sure where Gandalf went. To deal with trouble, he told her, though that’s a very unspecific thing to say, and Gandalf seems to have a particularly broad definition of trouble. He warns her again that terrible things are brewing and that she must be careful, but she almost disregards this entirely because it’s simply too much for her to take—she has quite enough terribleness going on already, and anything else will simply have to wait its turn.

The watchtower is still clear when she checks, and that leaves her to stuff the gold chains into her pocket and creep down to where Bombur’s curled up on the inside of the Front Gate. She shakes him gently until he grunts and stirs. After a moment of yawning, he murmurs, “Thank you, Bilbo. Hard though this place is to sleep in, that was very good of you.”

She smiles to hide her guilt and kisses his mouth. His breath is stale but worth it.

She can’t stop herself from mumbling, “Sorry.”

He looks thoroughly confused and asks, “What for?”

She just shakes her head and sighs, “Whatever happens, know that I love you all.”

He smiles back. Clearly too tired to bother questioning her, Bombur pushes up to his feet. He pats her shoulder, and they walk back to the stairs together, none of the gold’s fever anywhere near this moment. She just wishes she could trust it to last.

Once he’s gone back up, Bilbo retires to Thorin’s cot. It’s still empty. She briefly entertains the thought of going to him in his throne, holding him and kissing him and promising she loves him, despite her treachery. But she knows she can’t, and instead she curls up in place.

She dreams of strange men cooking eggs on her stove.
The Clouds Burst

Chapter Notes

A/N: Another no-sex one, sorry. :( 

She sits with him, even though she knows the tempest is coming, savouring each and every moment, as painful as they are. He rarely looks at her. He trudges through the gold instead, staring down like he hasn’t already searched these piles a thousand times. Here and there, he stops to look at her with a burning gaze and deep breaths, and she thinks he might storm over to fuck her. But then a stray jewel will catch his eye, and she’ll be gone from his mind.

She doesn’t know if she’s gone from his heart. She’s just risen, ready to go throw her arms around him and whisper his name, when Bofur scurries into the chamber. He looks strange, done up in all his armour: he should be buoyant and light and carefree, but all the metal weighs him down. He looks at Thorin nervously and says, “They’re back.” There’s no question who, and it wouldn’t matter. Thorin isn’t likely to welcome anyone short of Dáin.

Thorin moves to follow Bofur without a word, his vision darkening. Bilbo hurries to follow, clutching her coat tight around her and fastening up her belt—she isn’t going to wear it open outside like she does in the hot, stifled air of the mountain. She already has Sting in her pocket, just in case—she knows that any hour could be her last.

Bofur and Bilbo are quiet on their walk, but after a time, Thorin grins and mutters, “They will have gotten wind of Dáin and be nervous for it. They must wish to surrender.” Bofur’s expression says it isn’t likely, but Thorin doesn’t seem to see it, and they walk on. Bilbo knows the truth of why Bard and Thranduil will have come, but she isn’t fool enough to say it; it would only throw him into a rage before the conversation even started. She can only hope that Bard and Thranduil know a more diplomatic way to bring up their new acquisition than she does.

At the bottom of the steps to the watchtower, Bofur goes on ahead, but Bilbo grabs Thorin’s hand. He pauses, looking at her grip. When it’s just the two of them, alone in the darkness broken by the sun straining through the rubble-tossed gate, Bilbo murmurs, “I love you.” She puts all her feeling into it, everything she has. Her voice almost breaks, but she makes herself stand strong; she’ll need it.

Thorin says nothing. His expression hasn’t changed, just a light frown. Finally, he bends to press a firm kiss to her forehead, his thick fingers grabbing into the back of her hair. It stings where he pulls, but she still doesn’t want him to go.

He separates, and they ascend the stairs.

All the dwarves are at the top. Evidently, all were called, and when Bilbo peers over the stone, she understands why. An army of elves lies below them, neatly lined into separate squares, Bard and Thranduil at their head. Bard is seated on a horse, and Thranduil on a large elk with enormous antlers. Bilbo’s still taking in the impressive creature when Thorin calls down, “I see you have not gotten rid of the elves! Until then, you bargain in vain.”

Bard glances sideways at Thranduil, but Thranduil has no reaction, neither shocked nor interested. So Bard shouts back on his own, “The elves have their own claims on the treasure, and they have
helped us enough that they would at least share partly in ours. They are not going anywhere.”

“Then we have nothing to say to one another,” Thorin steams.

It’s a painful start. Bilbo’s not sure she could negotiate with someone so exasperating, but Bard remains calm and merely asks, “Is there nothing you would part with any of the gold for?”

“Nothing you have.”

“Not even the Arkenstone?” He says it simply, easily: a statement of fact.

Thorin is dumbstruck. His mouth falls open, his eyes going very wide. He clearly can’t believe the words, but Bard draws the jewel from his coat and holds it up, the radiance visible even from all the way up the tower. Several of the dwarves gasp, pressing tighter along the rail to peer down. Bilbo shifts uncomfortably but says nothing. For a long moment, Thorin is silent, as though trying to process how such a thing could happen.

Finally, he snarls with twice the venom of before, “Why should I buy back what is my own? That was rightfully the jewel of my ancestors!”

“Like the loot of Girion was that of mine,” Bard retorts. “Now it seems we have both been forced to share. If you wish to have yours back, you will give us our share of the treasure. We ask for one fourteenth, brought out of the mountain by the morning.”

“One fourteenth,” Thorin mutters under his breath, confused but not with recognition. It makes Bilbo wince; the significance of that number should be obvious. But Thorin is busy seething and roars, “I will not bargain with thieves!”

“We are not thieves, and we ask for nothing that is not our own.”

Shaking his head, Thorin snarls, “You are nothing more than thieves and burglars! How did you come by this if not from pilfering it from under my nose?”

Bard is silent in response. Thranduil makes no effort to interject, which is likely for the best; Thorin would hear none of it. Though Bard looks firm, prepared not to give her up, Bilbo knows what she has to do. Thorin isn’t listening, and the last thing she wanted was to increase the hostility between them.

So she sucks in a deep breath. She’s been steeling herself for this all day, though she still doesn’t feel ready and doubts she ever will. She says too quietly, “Thorin.”

Thorin goes rigid. He turns slowly, his eyes still full of disbelief. The wind ruffles through his dark hair, but his armour makes him look like a different man, and she has to tell herself that as she admits, “I... I gave it to them.”

Thorin shakes his head. It’s a heavy, gradual movement. She wants to deny it, but she can’t. The words sink in. Everyone else is quiet around them, but she’s sure none of them can be pleased with her. Hushed, Thorin asks, “You would steal from me?”

“No.” She shakes her head, stepping closer, however unwise it might be. “No, I... I did it for you. I took it for my claim—”

“You have no claim over me,” Thorin growls, his shoulders now tense, teeth grit like an animal, facing her squarely like he’s about to lunge across the distance and knock her to the floor. Bilbo licks her lips and wants to explain, it was out of love, but Thorin takes another step towards her, and she
can’t stop herself from moving away. Another step, and he snarls, “You miserable rat.”

“I was going to give it to you,” she mumbles. She can feel desperation cloying at her, but it’s too late now. “I wanted to, many times. But...” She has to stop to take in a breath, close her eyes and open them again, trying to stare him down, “but you’ve changed. You’re not the man I met in Bag End, nor the one I fell in love with. And it’s hurting all of us...”

Thorin shakes his head again. The utter loathing wafts off of him; Bilbo’s never seen a look like that in anyone’s eyes before, certainly not on one of her dwarves; Thorin never even looked at the elves with such hatred. He opens his mouth, jaw formed like he’s going to roar, but then he closes it halfway and only hisses, “I’m disappointed in you.” It stabs at her no less than a sword would’ve.

He takes another step towards her, and there are too many dwarves at her back; she can’t move away. He towers right over her, her small feet tucked between his boots. She has to look away to keep breathing. For the first time, she’s afraid of him.

She whispers, “Are you going to throw me off the wall?”

Thorin’s mouth is open again. She thinks he really might. His arms lift, and she winces preemptively, ready for his hands to grab her—and he’s so much stronger than her; she could never hope to fight back, only pray that one of the others would come to their senses and save her, and indeed, beyond him, Fíli and Kíli look braced and ready to jump in.

But then Thorin only growls, loud enough for all those below to hear, “I wish that Gandalf were here to curse for burdening me with such a horrid creature!”

A familiar voice booms back, “If you don’t want my burglar, then please give her back!”

Thorin’s head whips around to stare between the pillars, and Bilbo follows his gaze—Gandalf is pushing through the crowd below, coming to stand between Thranduil and Bard, who look at him with little surprise. Thorin is agape again. Gandalf looks thoroughly done with all this troubling business and about to admonish Thorin for it. Even when his words are light, the tone is scalding, steeped in a magically enhanced volume. “If this is how you plan to act as king under the mountain, it’s best that she come down and stay with some reasonable people!”

“Well, I could’ve stayed, you know,” Bilbo interjects, still quiet. It draws Thorin’s face to her again, and she tells him, “Bard and the Elf King offered that I stay. But I came back, even though I’m afraid of you, because I hope the real Thorin is still in there somewhere, and I love all of you, even if you’ve forgotten that.”

Thorin looks at her steadily. She can only hope that her words will chip him away, that the wind will blow off the ashes of his madness. But when he finally moves again, it’s only to turn away. He walks three steps from her and mutters, “Go.”

Bilbo doesn’t move. She didn’t go through all of this to leave him now. All the other dwarves are silent, and Thorin shouts with all his might, “Go, or I will have you thrown from here!” Somehow, she doesn’t believe it.

But she moves anyway. She half turns, and Bofur’s hand lands on her shoulder. He whispers, “Go,” heavy and sad but true. She nods. She knows she has to.

She says over her shoulder, “I won’t go farther than Dale. And I won’t... I won’t leave until you’re cured.” Thorin doesn’t look at her, but Fíli, the next in her field of vision, looks like his heart’s split in two.
She knows the feeling.

She heads for the stairs, trying not to cry.

She does cry, a lot.

She tries not to, but she goes through the wad of handkerchiefs Gandalf gives her, and she rubs at her eyes until they’re red and can’t listen to the others telling her that she’ll be okay, because even though they’re friends, they’re not dwarves. In the end, she’s ushered off with Tauriel to spend the night away from it all, while they talk of going to war with the men she risked her life for.

Even though Tauriel’s tent is warm and comfortable, Bilbo would give almost anything to be back in the mountain. Tauriel lights scented candles that fill the air with pleasant aromas, and they wriggle out of their clothes and beneath the covers of her makeshift cot, where Bilbo shuts her eyes and tries to pretend she has a dwarf on either side of her. None of them have a body anything like Tauriel’s, so it’s difficult to imagine. After Bilbo’s tired herself out with sobbing, Tauriel gently bids, “Lie on your side.”

So Bilbo does, and Tauriel reaches to stroke down the length of Bilbo’s spine. It makes her shiver, though Tauriel’s fingers are incredibly soft. Her touch is light, intimate but ghostly. She splays all ten fingers out along Bilbo’s shoulder blades and gently draws them down, then up again, the tips of her curved fingernails making Bilbo’s skin tingle. Bilbo lets out a shaken breath, and Tauriel kneads in, drawing tiny, soothing circles along Bilbo’s back, again and again, in pretty, intricate patterns. Though her dwarves have given her a massage once or twice, none have been this skilled, and eventually, Bilbo can breathe again.

It’s still hard. But even sniffles dissipate under Tauriel’s kind touch. This goes on for a long, long time, and Bilbo’s body slowly relaxes, comes undone, like all the threads around her seams have been plucked loose and she’s finally free to melt into the earth. She could drift asleep like this, although memories still haunt her.

Tauriel asks quietly, perhaps just to distract, “What are bears like?”

It makes Bilbo’s face pull out of its haze, her eyebrows knitting together. She doesn’t dare move her torso, because she doesn’t want to dislodge Tauriel’s hands, so she only turns her face over her shoulder and asks, “Bears?”

“The wizard tells stories of people with skins that change, and a man you met who was sometimes a bear. I have never met one before; what are they like?”

“Oh.” It feels like such a long time ago, but it’s a pleasant memory she draws on, lying in the hay of Beorn’s shed. But of course, she was with all her dwarves then, so she forces her mind to go other places, like around the back, where she knelt over a pail and felt his hands on her. It takes her a moment to decide, “Nice, I suppose. Friendly, once he decided we were so. But very big. I think more than twice my height.”

“Many are very big to you,” Tauriel muses. “My king is especially tall.” She pauses, though her hands don’t falter, and then she comments almost cautiously, “Funny, how one should look up to someone so very tall, only to find that their interest may lie in quiet the opposite spectrum.”

Bilbo can unravel this meaning well enough. She feels selfish, moping about, when of course she isn’t the only one to have lost something great, although that knowledge doesn’t give her much comfort. It hurts to think of the princes she left behind with her king, but she still says, for Tauriel’s
sake, “Kíli is tall... for a dwarf.” She’s proud of how steady her voice comes out.

Tauriel seems relieved, though her fingers press in harder, as though rewarding Bilbo for the progress forward, or perhaps just sinking her deeper into comfort. “Yes, he is. And handsome, too, with a rather clever tongue. I hope he is well.”

“He isn’t mad like Thorin,” Bilbo mumbles, choked. “They’re affected, all of them are, but none are so corrupt...” She can’t even finish her sentence.

She wants the safety of Tauriel’s hands forever, but she rolls around anyway, twisting in the sheets, nestling closer into Tauriel’s body. More than to be touched, she needs to be held. She adjusts her arms, folded between them, and lets her knees press forward into Tauriel’s thighs. The blanket covers up to their shoulders, thick and soft, like the bundled pillows below their heads. The firelight plays over Tauriel’s sad smile.

She leans forward to peck Bilbo’s brow, as her long fingers wrap around Bilbo’s clenched fist. As she withdraws, Tauriel sighs in a fluid promise just short of Elven, “No spell is final. They will find a way to fix this, and if Thorin Oakenshield loves you as much as I saw he did back in the cells, then he will already have the power to come out of this on his own. It is merely a matter of time.”

Bilbo whispers, “I hope so.” But she doesn’t dare believe it.

Tauriel’s smile lifts around the edges, and she adds, “If it makes you feel better, some good has already come of our meeting: Legolas, though I doubt he would admit it, seems to share our predilection for dwarves.”

This makes Bilbo laugh. The sound almost startles her; she’s spent so long without it, but it’s a good feeling and she’s grateful to Tauriel. Tauriel relays, “He scolded another elf the other day for insulting the fullness of Dwarven beards.”

The smile stays on Bilbo’s face even after the laughter is gone. She understands why some elves may be wary of dwarves—after all, she was herself, once upon a time. But meeting them has a way of changing that, and at least she isn’t the only one susceptible to their charms.

At least she has a warm bed and kind company until her lovers can be saved. Tauriel bids her, “Sleep, Bilbo,” and it’s an order that Bilbo finds difficult to disobey.

She’s still sad when the darkness claims her, but at least it isn’t nearly so hopeless as she’d thought.

It’s strange, in the morning, to be woken by Tauriel’s soft caress, the curtain of her red hair slithering over Bilbo’s shoulder. Bilbo isn’t use to such delicate fingers running down her curves, but it’s always nice to greet the world as a kiss is pressed to her ear.

Then she remembers why she’s lying with Tauriel instead of in the mountain, and she feels sick.

She has to dress all the same. It doesn’t take her long, with how little she has, but Tauriel has considerably more to do, and Bilbo sits on the edge of the cot and watches the captain of the guards tug on her clothes and armour and weapons. It’s an elegant dance that Tauriel makes with a stony face, finishing to look like perfection. They leave the tent together, the candles already having faded in the night.

It’s bright outside, and the air is freezing. Tauriel seems to have a set direction, so Bilbo follows, but Bard comes to head them off before they get very far. Tauriel merely bows her head to him and continues on, though she does give Bilbo a tentative smile over her shoulder. Bilbo has the urge to
follow, although she knows she can’t; as gentle as Tauriel can seem beneath the sheets, she’s the head of an army, and that isn’t somewhere Bilbo can follow.

“Will you come with me?” Bard asks, though Bilbo sees little choice. She nods, and he opens his mouth, but seems to think better of it and merely starts walking. She’s grateful that he doesn’t ask how she is, because they both know, and there’s no sense launching into tears again. As they march through the scattered troops, Bard explains, “Dáín has arrived, and we must speak with him. If you are willing, I’d like you to attend; you’re the most experienced with dwarves.”

Once, she might’ve been excited to meet Thorin’s cousin. Now she merely sighs, “Yes.” And it feels a heavy promise: a reminder of what she no longer has. Bard says no more.

They find his horse with Thranduil, who’s already mounted his elk. The creature is even more enormous up close, and it takes Bilbo a moment to adjust to the mere sight of it. It pays her little interest, and Thranduil moves on to mount his own horse. When he’s up, Thranduil asks, “Will you ride with us?”

But Bilbo has always preferred her feet and says, “I’ll walk.”

Even with her short legs, it isn’t difficult. The procession moves forward at a slow pace, and it quickly becomes clear that Bard is mounted for show and not speed. Bilbo walks between them, and they keep a safe distance. Bilbo still keeps hoping that Gandalf will rush in to join her, but his support doesn’t come. Instead, she watches the legions of elves neatly aligned before them part to let them through. It isn’t long before Bilbo can see the mass of dwarves in the distance, tightly knit together but outfitted for war all the same, their withered, bearded faces grim. The man in front with a full, white and orange beard is mounted on a large boar, which seems to her an odd choice, but then, no odder than an elk.

Somehow, Bilbo isn’t nervous. Politics have never been her game, and in a way, she feels numb to everything, sure that what they say here won’t truly matter; whatever the outcome, the dragon sickness will remain unchanged. She half expects Dáín to eye her approach with disgust, because she knows that Roäc is passing messages between him and Thorin. Even though he’s never seen her, she can’t be hard to pin as the one hobbit in the mix. Yet as Dáín spots her, he looks only surprised, as though he’s never even heard of a hobbit at all.

The elves and Bard he eyes less kindly. Once the procession stops, Bard announces, “Hail, Dáín, son of Náin. We had wind of your coming, and assume you mean to travel on to the mountain.”

“We do,” Dáín grunts testily, with none of Bard’s charm.

“I am afraid you’ll have to wait. We’ve struck a bargain with Thorin Oakenshield, and we can’t let you pass until he’s paid us our end.”

“And who are you to keep me from the mountain and my kin?” Dáín responds, and, dragon sickness or no, Bilbo can at once see the resemblance in him.

Fortunately, Bard is a patient man and says only, “We have no quarrel with you.”

Dáín looks about to disagree, but Bilbo jumps in, “Please. Just wait a little longer.”

His boar snorts. Startled, Bilbo automatically steps back, clutching her little coat tighter around her. She’s starting to wish she had brought her mail; she feels dreadfully out of place around all these armoured people, but then Thorin would’ve been suspicious, and she wouldn’t have been able to spend that last day with him. Dáín looks down at her, in all his hefty metal, and she looks back at
him imploring, pleading with her eyes for him not to make this any harder than it has to be.

To her surprise, he ultimately grumbles, “Very well. You have until midday, and no more, or we will burst our way through ourselves!”

Bard and Thranduil say nothing, merely turning to leave. Bilbo smiles her thank you, but it’s weak and falls quickly. Dáin is already muttering to the dwarf on his right. The elves close their ranks up again as soon as Thranduil and Bard are far enough in, and they walk back in mostly silence. When they’re far enough away that there’s no chance the dwarves could here, Bard mutters, “I don’t trust this.”

Thranduil replies simply, “I make it a rule not to trust anything dwarves say.”

And Bilbo says nothing, because she doesn’t want to think of the consequences if they’re right.

They’ve only just returned to the edges of Dale when Legolas approaches them. There’s a grim look on his face as he tells them, “There will be no treasure brought from the mountain.” Bilbo feels heavy but isn’t surprised.

Thranduil sighs. As he glances back towards the army of dwarves, he drawls, “I never wish for war, but they are making this particularly difficult.”

Bard says, “We must plan again.” They dismount, Bilbo readies to trudge after them.

They don’t even reach the tent before Tauriel catches them, out of breath for the first time that Bilbo’s ever seen—she didn’t even know elves could be taxed so. The expression on her face gives the bad news away, and she reports directly to Thranduil, “The wizard spoke true; an army of orcs and goblins is coming down the hills.”

Bilbo stares at Tauriel, unable to believe her own ears, but Bard only swears, and Thranduil doesn’t look particularly surprised. Her first thought is a dulled disbelief, and she’s impressed with herself as much as the others for not panicking. She’s never had much experiences with goblins or orcs, but she’s had enough to know that she never wanted to see one again, let alone an army. She wants to ask how, why, and where they’re coming from—but of course, everyone in Middle Earth now seems to have word that Smaug is gone. They’re still digesting this news when Gandalf rushes up to them, his grey robes billowing around his feet in his haste. She expects him to bellow advice, but instead he merely grumbles, “I knew this was drawing near.”

Bard is the one to say the obvious: “We can’t afford to worry over dwarves any longer.” Thranduil nods his agreement.

“Nor elves,” another voice adds—a dwarf pushing through the crowd, flanked by two elves in armour. Before they can announce her, the dwarf does so herself. She looks very much like Bombur without the giant braid, except for much darker skin and with armour shaped around her breasts. “Dáin Ironfoot requests an audience immediately!”

Thranduil looks down at her with a light frown and replies, “There is no need. We must mobilize our troops first, but tell Dáin Ironfoot that if he requests a temporarily alliance, it is so. We all face a much greater threat now.”

The messenger bobs her head, giving Bilbo the distinct impression that this is exactly what Dáin wanted. Dwarves and elves may not naturally be friends, but they share a much lower bloodlust than goblins and orcs. As the dwarf hurries off with her escorts hot on her heels, Bard mutters, “We can only hope it will be enough.” He turns to Tauriel to ask, “How many do they have?”
As Tauriel launches into her description, Bilbo’s attention drifts to Gandalf, who’s shaking his shaggy head and mumbling, “We can only pray that my word reached the eagles and the bears.” Bilbo would ask if they have a chance, but she’s too frightened to hear the answer. Gandalf bends to take her hand in his, and he draws her into the tent while the others hurriedly discuss their war.

She takes a last look at the mountain before she’s inside, longing more for their safety than hers.

She’s told to stay put. She knows she should—she left what little mail she has in the mountain, and she has absolutely no fighting experience or training, and the last thing she wants to be to her new allies is a liability. But it’s so hard to sit and do nothing while the sounds of chaos grow nearer, the loud clamour of steel on stone and the cries of the fallen. There probably isn’t anywhere safer than where she is, in the heart of the Dale ruins, tucked into the most protected tent, but she knows that no where can really be safe. She waits for as long as she can bear.

And then she must do something. She can’t sit by like a coward while everyone she loves goes to war, and she slips on her ring and draws Sting from her pocket. There’s little conscious thought to it. She just has to help. And she has to find her dwarves. If nothing else, she has to be with them in their hour of need, even if she has to do it invisible and from the shadows; she can at least stand there and hack at the ankles of orcs that dare to come near her king.

She bursts through the flap of the tent just as the screams flare up around her, and she knows the fighting’s breached the toppled city walls. The square she’s in is empty, but the noise is deafening and from every direction, and the dust is still wafting in the air from where it’s been kicked. She takes a step forward, and a huge, grey wolf darts out from between the buildings. Bilbo barely manages to stifle her shriek, but it runs straight past her, and she realizes as it disappears around another building that there’s a goblin hanging off of it, dragging along the ground. A man from Lake-town comes racing after it, holding a long sword at the ready.

Another wolf follows it, then two more soldiers, then three goblins, and they all rush at one another, clashing in the middle before an Elven arrow shoots right through one of the goblin’s skulls. Bilbo jerks her head away before she can see the damage, though she hears the body hit the floor. She looks towards the mountain and wills her feet to move while her heart hammers in her chest. She runs down stair after stair, twisting down side streets and having to backtrack everywhere the fighting’s too thick, terrified every time she sees a wolf that it’ll smell her and tackle her down, but they’re all preoccupied with visible targets. Her blood is pounding so hard in her ears that she can’t think straight; she just needs to reach the mountain, but every time she thinks she’s in the right direction, she has to veer off to avoid the battle. She loses sight of it behind certain buildings and down narrow streets, but she goes where she can, racing as fast as her feet can carry her and thinking of everything she went through. She took trolls. She took spiders. She took the goblin once before, and if she can survive losing Thorin, she can survive anything. But she’s still terrified.

Around another corner, and she spots a line of two elderly women and three children, the women scurrying into an open cellar while an elf helps them down. The three children hurry after as the second woman descends the hatch. But the smallest child trips, and the older boy and oldest girl rush back to help her, the wooden door snapping shut behind them.

Four orcs plunge out from between two pillars, and Bilbo freezes, unable to run past and do nothing—these are innocents, like her, unequipped for fighting, and her grip tightens around Sting’s hilt, her palm sweaty—she doesn’t know what she’ll do—even invisible, she can’t take on so many
at once. But she gulps in her breath and holds her dagger before her, ready to charge right at them all the same, except that a long blade pierces into the nearest orc’s back. The children, huddled together in fright, look with wide eyes at Thranduil, who sweeps in out of nowhere, his cape whirling around him as he spins, skewering all four orcs without a second step. They topple to the ground, and he stills, his silvery hair and polished armour glinting in the sunlight. Bilbo’s help becomes needless and impotent, and instead she finds herself gaping and in awe. He’s rescued them before she’s even had to move.

The cellar jerks open, and the elf’s head sticks out, his arm reaching for the children. Thranduil guides them to him, and Bilbo forces herself to move on—she can do no good here.

She returns to running. The short break’s recovered her breath, though she loses it again soon enough. It might’ve been better to follow the children, to hide with them, but she doesn’t want to be safe anymore; she wants to be in the mountain. As she lunges around another corner, she spots another woman hurrying into the shadows, except that when that woman looks hurriedly over her shoulder, Bilbo sees that it isn’t a woman at all, but Alfrid bundled up in a crude disguise of common skirts. She’d be disgusted, but there isn’t any time to dwell on him, and she knows that she’s no better; she hasn’t fought a single enemy. She’s hoping she doesn’t have to.

She finally finds her way past the crumbled Dale walls, and she hurries down the slope of barren land, filled to the brim with the cries of battle.

The battle’s too thick to see past, so Bilbo just has to follow the natural slope beneath her feet and keep going where she can. It helps that she can duck between the legs of some of the monsters in her way, that she can throw herself to the ground and scramble below the clash of swords, but it’s not enough to just be invisible, and she knows she’ll have to help—the first time she swings her dagger out at an exposed orc’s leg, the blood spatters her shirt and she screams automatically. The orc crumbles to the ground, howling in pain, and the dwarf it was fighting looks shocked, but not too much to smash his hammer down into the orc’s stomach. Bilbo just barely manages to stumble back in time, but she picks herself up and makes herself keep running, the adrenaline thinning her head. From there on out, she slashes everywhere she can.

The stench of spilled blood and open wounds and unwashed orcs and goblins is nauseating. Her ears are ringing. How she manages to make it to Ravenhill, she has no idea, but soon she’s running up the side of the mountain, belatedly recognizing the view between the towering people all around her. A cry pierces the air, and she throws her head back to see a giant eagle swooping past—Gandalf’s call made it through.

She stops at a knot of orcs, nearly running into them, her sword in her hands and ready to attack, but then a massive bear bolts through, hurtling them all to the side. It roars so loud that she has to clap her hands around her skull, and its black fur ripples, shrinking, until Beorn is standing in its place, his muscular arm reaching down to pry a sword from a fallen foe. She would recognize him anywhere, and she screams his name before she can stop herself, but there’s too much chaos for him to hear her.

In the next second, something slams into the back of her skull, and the ground rushes up to meet Bilbo’s face, her world going black.
The Return Journey

Chapter Notes

A/N: Warning for a bit of Fíli/Kíli in the sex scene.

She wakes in Beorn’s arms. She recognizes his scent through the stench of drying blood, and no else has arms so very big. Her head is nestled against the soft, dark skin of his chest, still holding remnants of black fur. Her head is throbbing violently, and she groans in distress, nuzzling tighter into him.

“Take off whatever magic has vanished you, if you can,” his deep voice tells her, and Bilbo frowns in confusion.

She flexes her fingers before her and finds the ring still in place. As soon as she’s slipped it off, he murmurs, “That’s better. I had to follow the memory of where you were last seen, and sniff you out with my nose and feel around the earth. The wizard said you could have such an enchantment, and I must say I’m impressed.” He chortles, and it covers up her whispered apology and gratitude. She can tell that he’s moving, but when she makes the mistake of looking forward, she quickly jerks back to hide in his body. The devastation is everywhere. The eagles’ calls pierce the air occasionally, but there are few screams and no battle cries. It’s over.

She can only assume they won. He’s too tranquil to have lost, and his pace isn’t especially harried. For a moment, she just drinks in that peace, closing her eyes and trying to ignore the pain in her skull and the ache in her feet.

Then it comes crashing back, and she gasps, “The dwarves—!”

“I have recognized a few,” Beorn tells her calmly, “and I have seen none dead. But I am taking you to camp now, so you will see your little fellows soon enough. For now, you’d best rest.”

She doesn’t think she can, now that the worry’s seeping back in. But the pain is there too, and she’s exhausted, emotionally and physically. She spends the journey back to Dale drifting in and out of consciousness, with Beorn cradling her close and making sweet promises of milk and honey for the future.

Bilbo’s still rousing herself when they reach the knot of re-erected tents in the middle of Dale, most scorched and torn but proudly resilient. As Beorn sets her down on the cold stone pavement littered with wreckage, Bilbo rubs at her eyes. She hears Gandalf chuckle, “My dear Bilbo, how good it is to see you!”

She looks up at him to smile, only to frown again at his arm, which rests in a sling. His hair is a wild mess and he seems to have lost his hat, but he’s otherwise just how she remembers him. She nearly jumps when a large bear passes by her, wandering off through the encampment—Beorn, she realizes belatedly. It leaves her alone with the friend that started it all. He’s smiling very happily, and she thinks he must’ve been genuinely worried for her, and now she feels bad for leaving him out of her thoughts—she was so busy with pining for her dwarves, and she’d always somehow thought Gandalf quite invincible. His mortality is an unpleasant reminder, but then she thinks of all the bodies
around her, goblin, orc, and allies alike, and she feels foolish for thinking one arm and her head
bruise so devastating. They’re alive.

“A terrible business,” Gandalf tells her, reaching down to pat her shoulder. “But we came through it
in the end, and now I suspect we shall be safe for a good many years.”

Bilbo almost laughs that years won’t be enough; she’d prefer a good many decades or millennia. But
that’s the way with Gandalf: always bringing her the news she doesn’t want to hear. In any case,
she’s very glad to see him too, though all that comes out her mouth is, “And the others?” She can
hear the tremble in it and is immensely relieved when his smile is only kind, not grave.

He reaches stiffly sideways with his good arm, drawing the flap of the tent aside, and nods his head
to usher her in. She follows immediately.

Dwalin and Balin are inside, the two of them facing her, across a cot that’s been rigged together to
lift off the ground like a proper bed. The man lying in it turns his head to look at her, his face beaded
with sweat and caked in dirt, a little bit of blood trickling out the corner of his lips. He’s thoroughly
bandaged around the middle, his shirt stripped away to make room for it, though the blankets are up
past his stomach. Bilbo’s breath catches.

She runs across the tent. She knows Thorin’s injured and doesn’t want to hurt him, but it doesn’t
register fast enough, and she throws herself across him by instinct, burying her face in his hair and
holding onto his face, pressing her body into his and breathing him in. A hand cups her cheek, and
she recognizes it as Dwalin’s—she lifts her head to look at him, holding his hand over her. She can’t
stop the tears from welling up in her eyes. Balin soothingly strokes over her shoulder. She wants to
kiss them both, but they’re a little too far away.

Thorin, she kisses. She presses a firm peck to his forehead, lingering and full of feeling. She means
to pull back and give him room to breathe, but instead she kisses down between his brows, along the
edge of his nose, the very tip of it, and finally his lips, all chaste but hard; she needs to feel him. As
she lifts onto her elbows, hovering over him and petting back through his hair, he smiles weakly at
her. His face is littered with creases of pain, but his eyes are alight with life. He lifts a hand to brush
back her bangs, then to cup her cheek where Dwalin’s hand has slipped away. His thumb softly pets
the corner of her eye, drawing away the moisture that’s gathered. He murmurs, voice strained but so
perfect, “My Bilbo... I’m so sorry.”

She shakes her head. She holds her hand over his and doesn’t quite have the words, so she just
smiles at him, even as the water builds. He looks like he’s in agony, stitched together everywhere,
and she looks aside at the others, asking Balin softly, “Will he...?”

Balin nods, seeming to know without her having to finish it. “He’ll live.” Bilbo laughs and gulps at
once, shuffling his hand forward enough that she can kiss his palm.

“I was such a fool,” Thorin rasps. There’s no dragon sickness in his eyes, only the man she’s known
all along. It’s like the fighting knocked it all out of him, or maybe, so battered as he is, he doesn’t
have the strength to be a tyrant anymore. He licks his dry lips and says, “When the battle struck the
mountain... my only thought was for your safety. I was mad to send you away. I was wrong, and I
was cruel...”

She shakes her head. She means to tell him that it wasn’t his fault, that the Arkenstone corrupted him,
but she only lets out a broken sob. She’s crying profusely, mostly so relieved but also scared, and it’s
all just been so much, and Thorin tries to wipe her tears away with his trembling fingers. He sighs,
“You were the only one strong enough to see the truth and tell me so. Bilbo... can you ever forgive
me?”
She lets out a choked laugh. She was never mad at him to begin with, couldn’t be, was only mad at the sickness and is so glad it’s gone. She bends over him again, pressing her lips to his mouth, and this time he lifts his tongue along her seam, slipping inside to taste her like a starving man. It’s particularly wet, because she can’t stop crying, and she can taste the blood in the corner of his mouth, coppery and pungent, but she still can’t seem to pull away, until he turns his head to cough. She mumbles, “I forgive you. I love you.” He presses his face into the side of hers and murmurs something back that might be the same. His grip on her is frighteningly weak, but she knows he won’t slip away, because she won’t let him.

She holds on, until Dwalin gently pulls her shoulders back, giving Thorin’s lungs room to fill. “He kept asking for you,” Balin tells her, only to lightly squeeze her arm and add, “We all worried for you.”

Bilbo doesn’t know what to say. She takes Balin’s hand and kisses it the way she did to Thorin’s, then reaches for Dwalin’s to do the same. The relief in them is palpable, the love on their faces almost devastating. They both look alright, though smudged in dirt with battered armour, and they stand strong on watch for their king.

The tent flap opens behind them, and Bilbo turns to see Óin ducking inside, carrying a bowl of thick liquid. He smiles brightly at seeing Bilbo, and she smiles back through her tears.

He comes to the side of the bed and hands the bowl to Dwalin, who brings it down to help Thorin drink what’s likely medicine. It leaves Óin’s hands free to clap on Bilbo’s shoulders, and she loops her fingers around the braids of his beard and gives him a chaste kiss, saying, “It’s good to see you.”

“You as well, master hobbit,” Óin returns with a soft chortle, his hands running fondly down her sides. “I’d heard that you were found, but it’s nothing compared to truly seeing your face, full of life!”

Bilbo’s cheeks almost hurt from smiling so wide. Her tears have stopped flowing, but they’re still crusted at the edges. While she wipes them off with the heel of her hand, she hears Thorin splutter, though Dwalin makes a scolding noise and keeps feeding him the broth.

“Medicine,” Óin confirms for her. “But I’m afraid that won’t be enough without rest. We’ll have to save the celebration for another night.” He winks, and she nods sheepishly, understanding. She wouldn’t have done anything naughty like this, not with him hurt, but she can understand why Óin would remind her anyway. When she turns back to look at Thorin, his eyelids are half lowered, though he’s frowning, as though he might’ve liked to do something restless with her.

She kisses his forehead and promises, “I’ll be right here. I won’t leave you again.”

He tries to shake his head, but he doesn’t manage to go very far. “No... no, there are others... others I kept you from... go.” He tries to lift his hand. It barely makes it off the mattress.

She slips her fingers into it. Squeezing him, she amends, “I’ll at least stay until you sleep.”

He doesn’t seem to have the strength to fight her.

So Bilbo sits on the edge of Thorin Oakenshield’s bed, watching Óin’s medicine help him to rest, while Dwalin and Balin come around the other side to hold her.
gathering the dead and helping the wounded up. Bilbo isn’t sure which direction to take, but then she
thinks she hears a snippet of song on the wind.

It’s familiar, both the tune and the voice. She follows it, twisting around a crumpled building, to a
line of wounded people with a nurse at the end, dabbing a cloth over the forehead of a fallen elf and
offering herbs. Bofur’s kneeling in the middle, humming softly.

Bilbo runs for him before she can even cry out. She hugs him so hard that it nearly sends them both
toppling over, and Bofur turns around mid-grip to sing, “Bilbo!” He throws his arms back around
her. She holds him ridiculously tight, delighted as he presses a kiss to her forehead.

“Bilbo!” another voice adds, and Bilbo disentangles to see Nori lying on the ground, now scrambling
up to sit and hug her around the middle. He nuzzles his face into her crotch, and she yelps. It’s an
innocent enough gesture, but her instinct is still to blush, though she brushes through his star-like hair
and does find herself grinning.

“Too hurt to sit up, were you?” Bofur asks, his hands landing on his hips. Nori gets a stricken look
on his face and immediately slinks back to the ground, clutching his stomach and starting to moan.
Bilbo frowns, fretting, but Bofur makes an exasperated noise and says, “Don’t worry; he’s only
pretending to be in pain so they’ll give him more numbing medicine. He saw that smarmy Alfrid
doing it.”

Any other time, Bilbo might laugh, but now she only puts her hands on her hips like Bofur and says,
“That’s a mean trick!” She thinks that a little bit because there are people here that genuinely need
whatever numbing agents they have, and mostly because he had her worried again.

“It really does hurt,” Nori whines, though now she can see where he doesn’t really mean it—the part
of his stomach that he’s clutching looks perfectly fine, his clothes not even torn in the slightest. A
wistful smile comes onto his face, and he lifts a shaking hand to add, “perhaps a quick blow would
make me feel better...”

She means to scold him but somehow only sighs, “Later.” He shrugs like it was worth a shot. She
does take his hand and bend to kiss it, but she pulls away as it trails down to cop a feel of her breasts
through her battered coat.

She wraps her arms around Bofur again instead, because one hug can’t possibly be enough. He rubs
her back and tells her, “It’s so good to see that you came through.” She feels the same way but is still
too shaken to articulate as much.

So she just clings to him, watching Nori fondly over his shoulder, until Nori asks, “Sing me another
song?”

Bofur disentangles from Bilbo, chuckling, “Oh, alright, you baby.” Nori grins like he’s won a grand
prize, and Bofur tells Bilbo, “Bifur and Bombur are helping out in the tent across the way. You
should visit them—Bifur’s been bursting into tears whenever anyone mentions you.”

“But you’ll have to come back to me soon,” Nori adds. “You promised me a blow.”

Bofur rolls his eyes, but Bilbo just sends Nori an affectionate air-kiss as she walks around him,
which he catches in his hand and slaps against his heart.

The tent Bofur’s pointed to is down in the next clearing, and Bilbo takes the twisting street stairs two
at a time. The thought of her dwarves is the only thing in her head, but she doesn’t quite make it
inside before she sees a flash of red and hears a familiar grumble. She stops in her tracks and takes
two steps back to peer around the tent’s edge, where Glóin is coming out of a side street, the long form of Legolas half draped over him. Legolas seems to be limping, one leg lifted off the ground and his weight resting on Glóin’s sturdy frame, his arm around Glóin’s shoulders. Glóin has his thicker fingers wrapped tightly around Legolas’ hand. He seems to be admonishing the elf prince, but that stops as soon as he spots Bilbo. Instead, he barks across the distance, “Well, you’re a sight for sore eyes!”

Bilbo automatically moves towards him, but a taller figure rushes past before she has the chance to run. Startled, she watches Thranduil halt before the pair, a flurry of Elven rushing out of his lips. Legolas’ cheeks stain a faint pink, but he answers otherwise calmly. Bilbo hurries up behind him.

As soon as Bilbo’s in front of him, Glóin pushes Legolas off and grabs Bilbo, hands clasping her shoulders. He jerks her forward into a hard, firm kiss that she melts into, his dull helm digging into her forehead and his beard scratching her chin and throat. He doesn’t let her go until she’s breathless, and while she’s at a lost for words, she hears Legolas mutter, “Ada—” before he’s swept off his feet and into Thranduil’s arms. She looks up at them in surprise; it’s strange to see Legolas, so strong and independent as he is, being carried like a child, but evidently the fright of having him lost in battle has stirred something in Thranduil. He cradles Legolas against his body, muttering swiftly in his native tongue while his long hair sweeps over his shoulders and mixes with Legolas’ similar locks in the wind.

Bilbo turns her attention back to Glóin, who boasts proudly, “You are an impressive little lass indeed, Bilbo Baggins! And to think I once called you a grocer!” Bilbo blushes, even though she did nothing nearly so impressive as the rest of them—indeed, she seems to have missed most of the battle entirely.

Over Glóin’s shoulder, another procession trails over to them. Glóin follows Bilbo’s gaze, turning to look, and they watch Bard approach with the children behind him—the three she saw during the battle, she thinks. Bard gives Bilbo a wide smile at seeing her, but he’s turned to Thranduil a minute later, wasting no time in saying, “Sigrid tells me you saved her and Bain and Tilda.” Sigrid, Bilbo thinks, must be the oldest girl. She stands just behind Bard, smiling and blushing at the elves. All three of the children bear Bard a great resemblance, and Bilbo is sure they’re his children; they even seem to share his predilection to elves, and stare on in clear fascination. Bilbo can’t blame them; Thranduil looks particularly stunning in his thick armour and silver crown, though the effect of holding Legolas so does make him appear more paternal than regal. Thranduil waves the hand under Legolas’ knees, as though to say it was nothing.

Bard doesn’t seem to think it’s nothing. He and his children are suddenly all talking at once, while Legolas tries to squirm out of Thranduil’s grip before looking horribly embarrassed and going rigid again, and Glóin chuckles and pats Bilbo’s shoulder, gently tugging her away. “Food first,” he tells her, “We can deal with reunions later.

Reunions are all Bilbo wants. There is food in the tent, with various elves dividing it up and sending each other off, probably organized to distribute equally beyond the different factions that all pulled together last minute. Bilbo immediately spots Bombur, sitting in the corner with his top off and several bandages around his middle, one arm stretched over the table to occasionally stir a fat pot of broth. Bifur’s standing next to him, and xe rushes over as soon as Bilbo’s inside.

Bilbo holds Bifur back, the scruff of hir beard tickling her delightfully, the soothing babble of Bifur’s noises a wonderful relief. When Bifur pulls back, xe’s smiling right to hir eyes and Bilbo says for hir, “It’s marvelous to see you too.”

Bombur grunts from the back, and Bilbo steps around Bifur, slipping her hand down into hir’s.
Together they walk to the end, where Bilbo bends over the chair to give Bombur a looser hug—she doesn’t want to disturb any of his wounds. He pats her back and gives her cheek a warm peck. As she pulls away, she runs her fingers lightly over his stomach and asks nervously, “What happened?”

“Battle wounds,” he tells her bluntly, “but never you mind about them; I’ll be right as rain in a few days. The important thing is that you’re looking well enough for the both of us!”

“More or less,” Bilbo chirps, though in truth, the pounding in her head hasn’t truly gone away, just subsided under the weight of her relief. She cheers herself up by patting his stomach and promising, “I’ll have to give you some belly rubs when you’ve healed up, to make sure you’re good as new.” He grins very wide, clearly liking the idea of that.

“Bilbo!” Dori’s voice breaks in. Bilbo barely has time to turn and look at the tent’s entrance before Dori and Ori are launching at her, holding on from either side. Bifur has to stumble out of the way to give them room, and they peck her on either cheek, squeezing her tightly between them. She doesn’t know who to turn to, so she simply basks in their combined love.

“You look well,” Ori says when he lets go of her, his hands skimming down her arm and lifting up the bottom of the coat to check her thighs. She squirms under his attention, delighted that he seems to be as well as her.

She says, “You too,” while Dori inspects her other side.

“I was so close to meeting my end,” Ori tells her, his cute face dropping into a frown. “A warg managed to pin me down, and I was so sure everything was over! But then Dwalin swooped in with his hammer—”

“Don’t frighten her now,” Dori fusses. “There’ll be plenty of time to go over the heroics when the horror’s long behind us and we don’t all have each other to find.” He turns to Bilbo to ask, “Have you seen everyone?”

“Everyone but Fíli and Kíli,” she answers.

Dori nods. “They’ll be in the next tent over.

“But don’t go just yet,” Ori insists, “I’m not done hugging you.” He latches back on, and Bifur brushes Dori out of the way to join, while Bilbo laughs and does her best to hold onto as many of them as she can.

The tent is lined with straw cots on the floor, and Fíli and Kíli each occupy one near the back, Tauriel sitting behind Kíli and wrapping a roll of bandage around his outstretched arm. They both look up at Bilbo, and Fíli tries to get to his feet, but Bilbo gestures him to sit back down—she can see that they’re both hurt. She rushes up as quickly as she can instead, coming to sit between them, and Fíli leans in to give her a kiss and a one-armed hug. Kíli tugs at her with one hand but can’t get close enough with Tauriel still working on him, so Bilbo does the work of leaning over to him. He grins into it before wincing, and Tauriel mumbles, “Sorry.”

“It’s so good to see both of you,” Bilbo sighs, before quickly adding, “and you, Tauriel.” Although she’d never doubted for a moment that Tauriel would be alright, as skilled as she is. Tauriel grins like she guessed as much.

“She rescued me,” Kíli says, sounding both in awe and proud.

“He rescued me first,” Tauriel says simply.
On Bilbo’s other side, Fíli gets out of his bed, coming to sit on the edge of Kíli’s, which makes it easier for Bilbo to face them all. “Yeah, yeah, you’re both great.” He rolls his eyes affectionately.

“You’re pretty great too,” Kíli teases, which makes Fíli grab him by the hair and peck his forehead. Tauriel finishes the bandage and slices it off the roll with a stout blade, tucking the edges in.

“What have you seen Thorin yet?” Fíli asks her, when he’s done doting on Kíli.

“Yes. He’s resting.”

“He came around in the end, you know.” Fíli’s smile fades as he says this, looking serious again. It sobers her up, both his expression and the thought of Thorin. “When he thought he’d lost you, and that he’d never see you again...” Fíli shakes his head, unable to finish.

Kíli, with his newly wrapped arm, threads his fingers back through Bilbo’s hair. The two of them draw her in for a proper hug, one warm prince on either side. They’re both without their coats, scraped and bruised everywhere, but they’re alive, and that’s all Bilbo could’ve hoped for. When she pictures the two of them standing strong behind their uncle on the battlefield, watching Thorin’s madness ebb away only under the torture of war, it makes her heart swell up again. She wishes she could’ve been there, but more so she wishes it had never happened, that it never came to this. She finds tears welling back up in her eyes, having never strayed far from the surface.

She sniffs, and Fíli rubs her back soothingly. Kíli asks against her ear, confused, “What’s wrong, Bilbo? We all came through it.”

She mumbles, “I know,” then sniffs again and sobs, “And I’m just so happy for it!”

She stays by Thorin’s side whenever she can. He comes in and out, but always he remembers her and looks at her with love. While she sits besides his bed and pets through his hair, Balin tells her what he’s learned from Gandalf. The eagles, he explains, had held their suspicions of the goblins plans for a time, and they’d gathered and prepared in response. Still, they were sure they would be overwhelmed, but Beorn’s arrival turned the tides. He came in his bear form, unstoppable and huge, and he took down the orc leaders with the first run, which scattered all the others. It was still a grievous battle, as all wars are wont to be, but they fared better than they could’ve hoped, and they have new allies to show for it.

Balin tells little stories too, individual shows of strength and bravery among their friends. Bilbo likes these stories less, because she doesn’t want to think of them being hurt, though she’s glad her dwarves are proud and pleased. Finally, Thorin waves Balin quiet and murmurs, “You’re worrying her with all the violence.”

She tells him, “That’s alright,” and more importantly, “I am very proud of you all.” Then her finger snags along the braid draped over Thorin’s shoulder, not for the first time—it’s coming apart. So she tugs off the little metallic end and finger-combs out the strands, only to properly divide them up again.

She’s only just started the new braid, tight at the base of Thorin’s skull, when Balin asks softly, “What are you going to do now?” When she looks up at him, she understands his meaning right away. He’s trying to hide the sadness, but he isn’t entirely successful. Her fingers pause.

She still didn’t want to think about this. She forces herself to look back down and concentrate on the
braid, though she deliberately avoids letting her eyes slide over Thorin’s handsome face. With some difficulty, she says, “I suppose... I was supposed to go home.”

They’re quiet for a moment. Bilbo finishes retrying the braid and pops the clip open to seal around it again, then runs her fingers below it and lays it along Thorin’s bared shoulder. His creamy skin looks much better than it did when he was first brought from the battlefield—she’s helped wash him herself. But the bandages are still in place, and when his hand seeks hers out, there’s still dirt beneath his fingernails.

He wraps his fingers around hers, squeezes lightly and sighs, “I wish you could stay. The Arkenstone’s pull had already begun on me when I asked you to be my queen, but I meant it nonetheless. Perhaps it was foolish, but I had allowed myself to think a long time ago that you would have a constant place in my life.”

His words and his voice make her stomach clench, like he always does: giving her butterflies, even after all they’ve been through. Because it’s easier to laugh things off than face difficult truths, she teases, “And what would Dáin say to that?”

“I should think he’d be jealous of Thorin to have such a beautiful bride,” Balin interjects in a chuckle.

Thorin doesn’t look in the least bit worried over Dáin’s reaction, and he says simply, “After all we have been through, I doubt a hobbit bride would be particularly upsetting. Besides, if he is half as good a man as I remember him, he will be pleased that I have found myself and respect the choices that make me happy. Let me tell you, it was not an easy journey.”

Bilbo believes as much. Her own transitions in self, between her loving mother and strange wizard friend and bizarre Dwarven company, have been relatively painless, but she isn’t so naïve to think everyone so lucky. She’s only happy that Thorin can be happy now. She lifts his hand to her lips and kisses the back of it, wanting to say that she would spend an eternity at his side if she could.

But then there’s Hobbiton, and it tugs in the back of her mind—unfinished business, and her home. As much as the dwarves belong in Erebor, she belongs in the Shire, in the open grass and soft hills and pleasant sunlight. She doesn’t mind being in Dwarven tunnels nearly so much as she once might’ve thought she would, but Bag End is still a part of her, and she wishes fervently that she could go back and forth easily without the giant, nearly year-long journey in between.

They must know this. Thorin and Balin let her think, though she goes nowhere but upsetting circles, until Thorin squeezes her fingers to draw her attention back. He tells her quietly, “You must bring the Arkenstone.”

Her tongue sticks in her throat. She stares at him, horrified at the thought of him taking it and becoming mad again. She mumbles, “What?”

“To the Shire,” he says, looking her dead in the eye, serious despite all her confusion. “It’s too powerful a treasure for anyone here to have. It corrupts the hearts of dwarves, of elves, of humans. Gandalf has said he dare not take it for that same reason, and I would not trust it to give to even Beorn or the eagles. But hobbits, it seems, have stronger hearts than the rest of it, and as much as I would love to keep you here forever, the fact is that it would be cruel to keep you from returning to your home. You must return, and when you do, if you are willing, I would have you take the Arkenstone and bury it deep into the earth, where no one would find it and use it for ill deeds.”

His words make sense, in a strange, bizarre way. And a part of Bilbo leaps at it: an excuse to go home. But she still doesn’t want to leave him.
Balin reaches across the bed to lay his hand over theirs, and he assures her, “It won’t be the end, Bilbo. We have new friends now that will make the distance easier. We have eagles to fly us over the mountains and elves to take us through the forest. It is a great distance, yes, but it’s not unimaginable. And you will never have to be alone.”

“I’ll be alone once I’m in the Shire,” she starts, voice nearly cracking. “I know Gandalf would go with me, but then to return to Erebor? I would be on my own...”

“I would come to fetch you,” Balin promises. “We all must do our part to restore the mountain to its former glory, but there will come a time when I am able to leave. Erebor can spare one old man, and I’m sure others would go with me.”

“Balin...” She doesn’t want to leave them now.

Balin shakes his head. The weight of their hands on hers is reassuring, but thinking of the journey home still fills her with dual homesickness. Her home is with them too, and now she feels like she’ll have that ache wherever she goes. “Thorin’s plan is a good one, Bilbo. I was wondering myself what we would do with such a powerful stone, knowing what fate it could bring us to. But this is for the best.”

“I don’t want it anymore,” Thorin bitterly adds. “I’ve seen what it makes me become, and it’s not the man I want to be.”

“I’ll come back,” Bilbo says, somewhat out of the blue. Her mind hasn’t made itself up, but she knows what she has to do. “I’ll go, since it seems I must. But I will return.” Then, thinking better of it, she adds, “And I won’t hear a thing about leaving until you’re on your feet again.”

Thorin smiles at her. It’s a rare treat, the sight of his happiness, but she drinks it in and lives in that moment, bending back down to kiss his cheek. He reaches his stiff arm around her, holding her in tight.

Rebuilding Erebor is a slow process. They have to heal the people before they heal the mountain, but dwarves are a resilient folk and Thranduil and Bard’s people prove good allies. When Bilbo tells them of Thorin’s plan to dispose of the Arkenstone, they trust her, and it gives them trust in Thorin. They’re given drips and drabs of treasure in the interim of dealing with their own injuries and rebuilding; Bard’s people plan to resettle in Dale, which the dwarves help with as much as they can. Dáin’s people stay to help and earn their share of the treasure, and the day that Thorin can walk back to Erebor with Dwalin and Balin on either side is a wondrous day indeed, even if it does mark that Bilbo will have to leave soon.

With the dwarves recuperated—and thoroughly in need of some fun after each hard day’s work—Bilbo is able to make up for lost time. The war has sobered them all, and with the Arkenstone hidden by Bilbo and soon to be taken away, all traces of dragon sickness are gone. Bilbo is free to flitter about them again, now staying in comfy Dwarven rooms and soft beds, which is a thoroughly welcome change. It still isn’t Bag End, but she feels the closest she has to home since she first set out on this wild journey.

It isn’t until a week later that Bilbo manages to catch them all together again, outside of public assemblies and planning. After it’s grown dark outside and they’ve all put away their tools, Bofur manages to round them up, all except Thorin and Balin, who are still out in a meeting with Dáin. The rest of them gather in a small little lounge-like room around the living quarters, with a fat—and thoroughly dusted—rug on the floor and a fire in the hearth. While Dori and Bifur help gather chairs from other rooms, Bilbo sits in Dwalin’s lap and watches Bofur fuss with the mechanisms he’s been
working on. She’s known about his project for the past few days, mainly because he’s whispered promises of it in her ear every time he passed her, but somehow she didn’t really think he was serious. Apparently, he’s very serious. Just as Dori and Bifur bring the last of the chairs, Bofur finishes screwing a thick, black protrusion onto the end of a long pole, the other side of which breaks into cogs and gears. He looks at it proudly when he’s done, saying to no one in particular, “It’s good to have a home to work in again, with as much supplies and comfort to explore our talents as we deserve.”

The more Bilbo hears about Bofur’s ‘toy’ business, the more she wonders exactly what that entails, and what sort of business he’ll be setting up in Erebor. Judging from the faces of the dwarves around her, there’s a market for it.

She can guess well enough what this particular device is used for. She half expects Bofur to oil it up and insist she come test it immediately, but instead he holds out an arm towards Fíli and Kíli, who’re sitting next to his work bench. “Now, with a little help from my lovely assistants...”

The two of them climb out of their chairs and take a seat on either side of the device. It looks strange between them, jutting up into the air, disembodied as it is. But the firelight gives everything in the room a warm, inviting hue, and Bilbo isn’t nearly so worried over it as she might’ve once been. If anything, she’s curious, and even though she wants to be the first to test Bofur’s machine, she certainly wouldn’t mind seeing Fíli or Kíli ride it.

Dwalin says first, “I hope you don’t mean for anyone to take that thing dry.”

“Of course not,” Bofur answers, waving a hand. “That’s what my assistants are for. As I think we all know, it’s not too difficult to get Bilbo plenty wet.”

Bilbo blushes automatically, though she also smiles, pleased that she was right and she is meant to play a part. Selfish though it might be, she likes to be the one on display for her dwarves, the center of their attention, the one they all share and can go to. She seldom has the chance to be exposed to all of them at once, and it’s certainly a thrilling thought. And now Bofur’s device can make it fair; she can be shared equally between them all, shown off without any one of them getting to be specially inside her. Not that she would mind that, either. She looks expectantly at Bofur, but before he can usher her over, Fíli and Kíli descend on the shaft in the middle of the floor. Sharing a look between them, they slip to the ground, pressing their lips to its base and licking up from either side, until their lips meet over the tip. Bilbo’s breath hitches just from watching them.

The brothers share a kiss, chaste and obviously for show, too pretty and full of tongue. Then they’re back to swiping their spit along the toy, lathering it up, licking hungrily at its girth as though it’s a special treat. The texture of it looks strange, malleable, not quite hard, though Bilbo’s sure it can’t be as wonderful as a real cock, not so soft and warm. Fíli and Kíli don’t seem to mind. While all their friends watch from other angles, they work their talented mouths around the fake cock, and Bilbo’s sure that several of her dwarves must be imaging that it’s their cock the brothers are worshipping.

Near the tip again, Kíli nudges Fíli away with his nose, then opens his mouth wide and slides himself all the way down it, impaling himself and moaning at each new measure he takes. Fíli leans in to lick the side of Kíli’s lips and nuzzles into his face while he bobs up and down on it, until Fíli whimpers, and Kíli pulls off to give his brother a chance. Fíli takes it the same way, and Bilbo finds it difficult to decide where to look: Fíli sucking off the instrument, Kíli running his open mouth along his brothers face, or either of their hips gyrating against the ground.

Bilbo grows very aware of Dwalin’s hard cock beneath her, and soon she’s rubbing against it, too. She’s in a short skirt today and a blouse, given to her by smaller dwarves, though she hasn’t bothered with underwear or a bra—not when she knew she’d be coming here. It would be so easy to reach
between her legs and free Dwalin’s cock and wrap herself around it, but before she gets the chance, Nori chuckles in the chair next to them, “If that was meant for Bilbo, you better include her soon, or you’ll have her wet and spent before you’ve even tried the damn thing!”

Bilbo mewls her agreement, and she feels Dwalin’s large hands close around her waist, gently sliding her off his lap and setting her down on the ground. It takes her a second to get her bearing, and then she stumbles forward, falling to her knees in front of the toy. The pole that snakes along the ground sits right on the other end, Fíli and Kíli on either side of her. She has to make a keening noise to get their attention, but then they’re sliding off the shaft and looking up at her, sensual mischief all over their faces.

Fíli kisses her right away, grabbing at her hair and using it to hold her against him. Kíli licks at her neck, his hand playing over her chest, dipping to cup one breast while Fíli takes the other. They knead her in tandem, and when Fíli lets her mouth go, she turns to meet Kíli, but they take advantage of the transition to shove her down. Her back hits the floor, Fíli’s hand still protecting her head. While Kíli sets in on her mouth, Fíli licks his way down her throat, and both their hands slide between her legs. They rub her through her skirt, until Fíli’s rolled it out of the way. Then Kíli returns to squeezing her breasts, and Fíli lowers his head beneath the fabric.

The first lick across her pussy makes her arch off the floor. She always loves the feeling of Fíli’s stubble along her bare skin, the long braids of his mustache trailing tantalizingly along the sides of her pussy. Kíli pulls away from her, but her whine of distress cuts off when she realizes where he’s going. The brothers have to push her thighs wide apart, but they fit side-by-side below her, both their tongues coming out at once to lave along her pussy. Bilbo slips her fingers into their long, silky hair, but she doesn’t have to guide them; they do that on their own. They eagerly lick at her over and over, until she’s quivering and begging, “Please—” Even then, they only switch their tactic, don’t *fuck her* like she wants. Kíli starts flailing the tip of his tongue against the peak of her clit, while Fíli tilts his head sideways beneath Kíli’s chin and presses along the seam of her lips, only dipping shallowly inside. They both hold her legs down, preventing her from humping their faces, and she moans, “Fíli, Kíli—*ohhh*—please, more—”

Fíli obliges first, thrusting his tongue suddenly inside, slicing deeper than before, wriggling right in past her crumpled labia and up against her inner walls. Kíli sucks her clit into his mouth, locking his lips around it and sucking gently while Fíli pulses in and out, switching angles to touch everything he can. Her body arches again, her head lolling back. Her other dwarves are all around her, almost as flushed as she is. Dwalin and Nori are the ones directly in front of her, Dwalin massaging himself through his trousers and Nori having already taken his cock out, busily stroking it up and down, only slightly off-rhythm from the thrusts of Fíli’s tongue. Bilbo wants to ask them to *come here*, hoping one of them will stick their cock in her mouth, but before she can, Nori quips, “Show us your tits, Bilbo.”

It takes a few tries to get her fingers out of Fíli and Kíli’s hair, but she finally does, reaching her arms back to rip at her neckline. One of the buttons flies off, and the other she hurriedly unfastens properly, spreading the thin, white fabric open as much as she can. She drags it below the hump of her breasts, forcing them higher and perkier in the air, held there and jiggling as Fíli and Kíli’s mouths lightly jostle her against the carpet. She reaches her hands back behind her head afterwards, trying to steady herself, but their ministrations still wrack her body. Finally, Dwalin takes his cock out, and Bilbo stares upside down at it, mouth practically watering at the sheer size of it—he’s so *big*, and she knows he’s good with it, too—maybe he could rub it around her face while Nori filled her mouth—

Suddenly Fíli and Kíli pull away from her, and Bilbo whines, head snapping back to look down her body. Bofur’s tugged them away, and they sit aside where he puts them, kissing one another to share
Bilbo’s juices. Before Bilbo can complain, Bofur’s reaching down for her arms, and she lifts her wrists to let him grab them. He hauls her back up to sit, then guides her to turn around, facing outwards again.

He pats her hips to make her lift them, and she sits up on her knees, while he guides her back to the toy. There’s a certain strangeness to it, something more clinical about being guided to an object instead of a person, sitting in a room full of witness. But Bofur has a way with her pussy, and it always feels natural to have his hands on her body. He spreads her entrance open with two fingers, and he presses her down onto the tip of it, until she gasps and he lets her stop. He pets her hair, brushing her bangs aside as she tosses her head back, and he kisses her forehead to murmur, “Good job, Bilbo, you’re doing so well…”

Bilbo moans, and even though it feels odd and too stiff, she takes it for him. She drops her weight, pushing herself down, letting the manufactured cock sink into her body, while their collective attention keeps her wet and loose. Whenever Bofur pets her, it makes her want to be good for him, because he rewards her so very well. She takes more and more of it, until her ass squishes against the ground, fully impaled. She can feel the metal rod it’s attached to digging in between her crack. Bofur bends lower to gather her skirt and make sure it’s completely useless, not hiding any of the view. A few of the spectators moan appreciatively, and Glóin grunts, “How does it feel, Bilbo?”

It’s hard for Bilbo to explain. She licks her lips and mumbles, “B... big... and hard.” Which is about as much as she can say. She rocks her hips on it experimentally. It’s a little cold, or at least, colder than she’d like. But her body’s warm, and the air’s hot. She puts her hands on the ground, then realizes hunching over obscures the view, and she draws her hands back up her thighs instead.

Bofur reaches to take her hands, and he brings her arms up above her head. Pinning her wrists against the nape of her neck and holding them there, Bofur promises, “We’ll have to rig up some proper cuffs for these eventually, and a few harnesses...” Bilbo groans at the suggestion, and it spurs her on to rock her hips again.

There isn’t enough leeway in the toy. It stays straight up inside her, unforgiving and unbendable, so it forces her to ride up for her friction. She uses her legs to lift herself, her thighs straining with the effort, then drops herself back down and cries out at the sensation of being filled again. She can see Bombur out the corner of her eye, tugging his cock and palming his fat balls, and it makes her lick her lips with want and do it again, up, then down, then again, working herself into a steady rhythm, while Bofur holds her wrists captive and keeps her breasts pulled taut, her clothes utterly useless. The sound of her pussy squelching around the toy fills the room, mingling with their collected groans and the beating of skin-on-skin, many hands on many cocks, and Fíli and Kíli making out behind her. Bilbo is just starting to get the rhythm mastered when Bofur moves her hands again, this time bending her arms flat against her back and wrapping her fingers around the pole. It forces her posture completely straight, and he tells her, “be a good girl and keep that position.” She nods, but still mewls in disappointment when he leaves behind her.

She hears metal grunt like a lever being pulled, and the instrument inside her slams deeper, jerking up far enough to make her nearly choke and bounce up, shocked. It recedes just as fast, sinking almost completely out of her, only to shove up inside again just as far. Bilbo’s breasts bounce so hard that the way they slap back down is almost painful. The next one comes, and the next, fucking her faster than she did herself, and hard, relentlessly hard, steady and wild at once. Bilbo cries out on each one, squeaking as it recedes, then losing it again when it goes back in. She can’t keep her hands around the pole—she tries, but she needs her hands to steady herself, and then she tries to hold her breasts to stop them from jiggling so frantically; they’re much too full for this abuse. But she doesn’t even think of asking him to turn it off—she knows he would instantly—but it’s exhilarating to be fucked so hard. She was already wet, but the rough treatment only turns her on more—her juices are
dribbling thickly down the shaft, her thighs starting to bead with sweat. She doesn’t have to use her legs at all, doesn’t have to do anything; the machine fucks her all on its own. She turns her head, because she wants to tell Bofur how brilliant he is, but he’s already come to stand at her side. When he slips his fingers under her chin, Bilbo moans for all she’s worth, looking up at him with utter adoration.

“This is just the beginning,” he tells her, a smirk on his handsome lips. He’s left his hat on the workbench, and his brown hair’s side-lit in yellow from the fire. She wants to tell him he’s a genius, but his thumb is tracing her chin, and it presses into her lips, weighing down the bottom one and forcing her mouth open. She wants to suck on him, but he moves it around too much, feeling her up as he muses, “Once you’ve pleased the others, we can start working on a second shaft to fill up that sweet ass of yours, and then attach some straps to keep your legs spread. Perhaps we’ll tie your wrists and ankles together and hold all three of your holes open and ready. And then, of course, we’ll have to do something about those big tits of yours…” Bilbo finally manages to suck his thumb into her mouth, and it’s not enough, but she suckles on it anyway, wanting more, while the machine fucks her pussy and Bofur purrs, “Perhaps I’ll even install one in your bed and your chair in the dining hall, so you can be filled up all the time. You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

He pulls his thumb out, like he expects a response, but Bilbo doesn’t think she can manage. Not with how badly her body’s shaking, how hot she is. Somehow, she moans, “But I... I want your cum…” Somewhere from the circle of dwarves, one of them swears. She drops her face, embarrassed but meaning it; the only downside to having this tool plunge inside her is that it can’t fill her up, and she wants that, she wants all of them. She hears fabric rustling and looks at Bofur again, to see him parting his coat and pulling out his cock.

He says thickly, “You can have that too,” before he shoves his cock right into her open mouth. She stretches her lips wider for him, forcing her jaw apart, taking him down as far as she can at once. It’s hard for her to pull back and forth with the machine driving her up and down, so she only sucks hard at it and bobs the little bit she can. He’s warm and heavy on her tongue, pulsing with life—just what she needed. Bilbo worships Bofur’s cock with everything she has, even when she feels other forces pulling at her—She blinks her eyes open to see Nori standing in front of her, grabbing her hands. He brings them up to wrap them around his cock, and she tries to pump him dryly while she pleasure Bofur. Someone shouts for Nori to get out of the way of the view, and Nori shuffles aside, forcing Bilbo to twist her body at an awkward angle, but she manages. She’s too far gone by the time Nori smears the head of his cock along her cheek, so all she can do is mewl around her mouthful. Bofur groans.

He fills her mouth a second later, too fast but Bilbo’s so greedy for it; she swallows right away, even while the torrent’s still coming. His seed splatters against the back of her throat, still spurting after each of her gulps, and he shoves his cock deeper against her face while she does it, and only her wealth of practice keeps her from choking. She tries to keep pleasing Nori at the same time, but she misses swallowing the last load when Bofur pulls his cock back, and it drags a pool of his seed out across her tongue, little rivers dribbling out the sides of her mouth. Nori grabs her hair and turns her the minute her mouth is free, so he can shove his cock inside. He holds her down and humps her face wildly, while she scrambles to hold his base back enough to keep her from gagging. Nori’s even faster than the machine, though he can’t take her as deep, and between the two of them, Bilbo’s head eclipses into nothing.

She doesn’t even realize Bombur’s moved until he’s standing right in front of her; she doesn’t even have to look up to recognize his thick cock. He shoves it into her face just as Nori did, grinding it along her skin to spread the precum just beneath her eye and up across her forehead. She lifts her other hand to grab his base, pumping him hard, though she can tell from his familiar, ragged breaths that he’s already close, and he’s leaking copiously against her.
She gives Nori a final suck, and he suddenly pulls out of her, only to explode a split second later. She shoves her eyes shut just in time but cries out in surprise, which lets a great glob of it splash along her tongue. Another spray comes from the other direction, and she hears Bombur groan with his orgasm, the two of them painting her face at once. Their ample loads soak down her jaw, drizzling along her neck, some pooling in her cleavage and other flecks splattering her breasts from the get go. Bilbo can’t do much more than splutter and take it, and she doesn’t dare open her eyes until she’s completely convinced they’re done. Glóin’s now pushing between them, his cock bobbing proudly in the air, and all Bilbo can think is she wants it in her mouth. She’d crawl towards it, but she can’t move, fixed on the instrument as she is. Her hands slip off of Nori and Bombur, landing limply at her sides, and Glóin pumps his cock in front of her face and asks, “It still going strong?”

“Absolutely,” Bofur sighs in a satisfied voice, somewhere off behind her. “It’s fucking her pussy raw; I’ll be surprised if she can walk straight after this.” Bilbo whimpers—she’d be surprised too, but she doesn’t want to walk straight; she wants to be passed between their beds and bathe in their cum. Glóin seems satisfied, and he grabs her face on either side to jerk her forward onto his cock.

Her hazy eyes widen she sees who it is. Thorin, Balin, and Dáin come into the room, Thorin and Balin looking only mildly surprised and Dáin halting in shock. Bilbo’s only seen Dáin a few short times—certainly nowhere near enough to lump him in with her other dwarves. Over the whine of the machine, Bofur asks, “Uh, should I... turn it off...?”

Bilbo means to say quiet, but instead she moans, “No.” She’s so close, and it feels too good, and she’s already made the mistake of looking at Thorin, which makes her so hot she can barely stand it. Thorin looks down at her, standing tall above her, all dressed in his royal robes and a thick crown atop his head. He’s so insanely gorgeous, and he’s hers, and she can’t resist grinding her body against the toy as it fills her. Her world narrows down to Thorin Oakenshield, and suddenly it’s too much, all their touching and the cum in her mouth and the sight of her king, and Bilbo comes on the spot. The orgasm is a giant one that tears through her. She nearly doubles over to scream. She can feel her juices squelching thick around the toy, her hips now wildly humping it, and there’s the sudden burst of overwhelming pleasure and the wave of dizziness that comes after, but she doesn’t come down.

She just keeps going. She’s still horny. The toy’s still fucking her. She lifts her head from where it’s falling, looking right at Thorin and begging him with her face not to make her stop now.

He orders sternly, “Open your legs.”

Bilbo whimpers. Her legs are open, but she spreads her thighs as wide as she can, until her muscles are straining and she’s physically sore, but she holds them there anyway. It dislodges a bit of her skirt, and it slips down between her, but she hurriedly grabs it and pulls it back out of the way, making sure that all of her is exposed. Thorin and Balin still watch her face, but Dáin’s eyes have gone straight down to her pussy, and she knows Thorin’s ordered it for his sake. Glóin steps completely aside, and Dáin takes a step closer. Bilbo can feel the instrument pounding into her pink lips, spreading her wide and forcing out her own liquids. Finally, Dáin says, sounding almost reverent, “I think I understand why you want to marry her.”

“She’s much more than that,” Thorin says with a bit of a chuckle, though his lips lift with pride around the edges. “But yes, she is particularly scrumptious in the throes of passion.” Bilbo preens
under the compliment, trying to sit straighter but failing, too wrecked to keep it up.

Thorin turns towards the chairs, sitting down in the one Glóin occupied, and he makes a gesture towards Bilbo, announcing, “Someone else get in there and leave Balin and Dáin seats.” Both Dwalin and Óin stand up.

Ori asks, “Can I have a turn after?” And Bilbo doesn’t hear Bofur respond, but Ori grins a moment later, so she can only assume that Bofur’s nodded behind her. Glóin and Dwalin take their places on either side of her, making sure her seed-slicked front is still visible for Dáin to see. Because Dwalin hasn’t yet had anything of her, Bilbo turns to him first, swallowing his cock in one swift movement, though she can’t get as far on it as most since he’s simple so very big.

She gives him a suck, bobs her head once, then slips off and turns to Glóin, giving him the same treatment, her hands coming up to hold each cock out towards her face. She lets the rhythm of the instrument inside her guide her movements, and she evenly goes back and forth over and over, making sure to suck and lick along the way, giving her dwarves the best she has. They don’t seem to mind sharing. She’s got her mouth locked around Glóin again when she feels a third cock nudge against the side of her skull, and she pulls off and looks back to see Óin grinning and thrusting himself against her hair. She only smiles at him and goes back to Dwalin, because she doesn’t know how much longer she can last, and she was hoping to pleasure every last one of them.

It isn’t long before Glóin bursts with a loud cry, his seed splashing everywhere, and Dwalin follows quickly, painting her just as much. She has to stay where she is and keep her eyes closed while she takes their loads, but she fully intends to suck Óin off as soon as she gets a chance, except that he peaks before they finish. He coats her hair and shoulders and she can feel it dribbling hotly down her back while he rubs himself off against her. By the time the three of them leave her, she’s an utter ruin, her eyes slipping languidly between Ori’s spread legs, Balin, and Thorin. The machine doesn’t give her the option to move, and she doesn’t want it to; she’s already addicted to it. She concentrates on riding it while she rides to her own end, though it stops just before she’s made it.

It settles down, leaving Bilbo to sway, unsteady without it pounding into her. She whines in desperation, looking back over her shoulder to see Bofur with his hand wrapped around the lever. She tries to mewl his name, but there’s so much cum in her mouth that she can’t talk properly. She looks forward instead, and Thorin snaps his fingers, drawing her attention.

She’s too weak to get off the toy. She’s trembling all over, slumping forward, and she rocks her own body into it, too faint for full thrusts. Thorin climbs out of his chair.

He comes towards her and kneels down before her. She doesn’t dare kiss him, not with her mouth as messy as it is, but she does unconsciously arch towards him. His hand dips between her legs, and his index fingers draws up along her held-open pussy, right up to the nub of her clit. He pinches it and orders her, “Come.”

Bilbo screams. She drops her head and comes so hard she nearly blacks out, her vision swimming as the pleasure pervades every last nerve ending, filling her with heat and weightlessness. Her mind swims, completely lost. For what seems a small eternity, she’s caught in that transition.

Then she’s very slowly coming down, her body returning under her control and her vision clearing, though she stays heavy and limp and sticky, panting hard. She’s ridiculously satiated. She’s struggling for air and can’t seem to stop shaking.

Thorin strips off his coat. Left in a plain tunic, he takes her hips and lifts her carefully off the toy. She can feel herself dripping as she leaves it, left gaping open, and her walls are still quivering and dilating, trying to adjust. Thorin takes her under her knees and back and bundles her up in his arms.
He takes her back to his chair, where she nuzzles into his chest, aware she’s staining his clothes but too spent to care. Balin pulls her legs over his lap, stoking them lightly.

She hears Ori’s voice tentatively asking, “My turn?” followed by several enthusiastic noises.

Bilbo drifts into a pleasant sleep before she gets a chance to watch.

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On the last night before she has to leave, Bilbo lies in Thorin’s bed. It’s the largest, the grandest: the king’s chambers. Fíli and Kíli have moved into the room he occupied when he was younger, and once they’ve scrubbed all the dust and dirt away, there are still things lying about that Thorin says remind him of his grandfather. With only a single candle lit against the wall high above their bed, too small to do anything but keep them from tripping in the dark, the world is narrowed down to their two bodies and the faint edges of their rectangular kingdom. Everything beyond the mattress is black, the new sheets below them pure white and the thick blankets patterns of red and browns, embroidered here and there with gold. They lie side by side. Even though Bilbo’s been here before, this is their last time for too many moons to come. She wants to memorize everything about him that she can.

Every time she’s just about to drift off, she thinks of something knew. She lifts her fingers to thread through his hair, brushing it over his broad shoulder, and she traces the braid she placed in only this morning. When she runs her knuckles along the stubble of his jaw, she can’t help but murmur, “Your beard needs a trim.”

Thorin chuckles, probably because his beard is rather short for a dwarf. She thinks she might cut it tomorrow morning before she goes anyway, just so when she does return, he doesn’t look like a completely different person. Her hand makes its way to his mouth, and he takes hold of her wrist so he can press her palm against his lips.

“This is not the last time,” he reminds her, and even though she knows, it’s something she has to hear. He shifts that little bit closer, his knee nudging between her thighs. She’s been proud of how well she’s resisted so far—even though he’s healed enough to move about and resume command, she’s been told that he isn’t well enough for anything too rigorous. The kisses he gives her are only gentle, and he presses several reassuring pecks against her lips before mouthing his way over her chin.

He brushes the short waves away from her neck to lick down her collarbone, and Bilbo gasps lightly, arching into him. They’d almost made it through the night, but then she feels his hand slipping over her ass, and she breathes in the musky smell of his hair and sweat. She never really stood a chance. He comes back up to her mouth, promising in the interim of kisses, “There will be times, when Erebor is strong and the lands are at peace, where I will be able to go with you.” That thought makes her nearly giddy.

She thinks of having Thorin in her bed at home, of serving him at her dinner table, of sitting with him in the river in just their under things. The other hobbits would be scandalized, of course, but they would be too afraid to scold Thorin, and Bilbo thinks it would be worth it. She’ll never be a proper hobbit again, anyway, although she’s told she makes a wonderful honourary dwarf. Perhaps some of the others would be able to come, if only in small groups, like an honorary guard to Thorin or for their own vacations. She sighs happily, “You’ll have to spend a summer with me.”

“I will,” Thorin says. His other arm wedges underneath her, so he can pull her tight against him. She has a small range of clothes again—Alfrid even brought her a specially tailored nightgown, probably in the hopes of favour, as Bard’s become something of the new Master and pays Alfrid far less attention than the old one. It isn’t so nice as proper hobbit clothes, but it’s a far cry better than what
she’s grown use to. The thin fabric slides silkily between them, too sheer to stop her from feeling anything. All he wears is his underwear, but Bilbo’s trying to avoid that; she doesn’t want to tax him.

He doesn’t seem to mind taxing her. He kneads her rear gently as he runs his tongue along the shell of her ear, murmuring, “We have many seasons to come, and we have come through much harder things. We will find a way to bridge that distance, Bilbo, and we will share each other’s homes.” Bilbo mewls delightedly; that’s just what she wants. Erebor is her home, in a way. She’ll always belong here. But she belongs in the Shire, too. But then, if she can share lovers, she can surely learn to share houses.

He kisses her again, and his hand slides around her hip, dipping between her legs. It presses into the valley through her nightgown, and Bilbo squirms against it, first pressing into his touch and then turning her head away from his mouth. “Thorin,” she mumbles in warning, “you’re supposed to rest.”

“I will rest,” Thorin replies. “But if you will allow it, I should still like to pleasure you.” He curls two fingers in to slip along her pussy, and Bilbo shudders and lets out a little moan—she’ll definitely allow it, but the trouble is that she wants to please him back, and she can’t.

Thorin doesn’t seem to mind. He rubs her gently through her clothes, while she clings to his shoulders and nips at his face, nestling into his beard and kissing him where she can. They’re quiet, slow, languid but still passionate, just careful. She wishes she could wait until his recovery’s fully along, but they all insist that the Arkenstone can’t be left here that long. Still, she’s looking forward to when she returns, free of its pull.

She loves this, too. She rocks her hips against him, trying to be subtle and easy but making the bed creak all the same. Finally, she can’t take it anymore, and she begs, “Let me touch you.” So he takes her wrist and guides it down between their bodies, helping to slip her hand inside his underwear. She wraps her dry fingers around his cock, pleased to find it already hard. She strokes it as he touches her, and they stop kissing to just look at one another, sharing the same pillow. He’s beautiful when he’s pleasured, pink-cheeked and heavy-lidded, though he’s always handsome. For a long while, they lie like that, riding an erotic rhythm, steady but strong.

Then she needs to talk again, because she loves his voice and needs to know that the madness is gone. She licks her lips to ask, “Would you still like to see the Arkenstone between my breasts?”

He doesn’t hesitate to answer, “No. They’re pretty enough as they are.” She grins and wants to laugh, but it comes out as more of a moan. He’s rolling steady circles around her lips, fingertips grinding too shallowly in every few thrusts. She’s glad she didn’t wear panties; they’d be sticking to her.

Then it’s his turn to ask, hushed and powerful, “When you return, will you still be my queen?”

She nods instantly. Of course. She’s never wanted anything more, and her breath hitches just from thinking about it, coupled with the gasp of his touch; he plays with her body so perfectly. He presses, “Even after everything I’ve done? After how horribly I’ve treated you? You would stand before the throne of Erebor and my kin, and bond with me?”

“I would,” Bilbo moans. She doesn’t know even know what a Dwarven marriage is like, but if it’s anything like a Dwarven relationship, she wants it just as much. Being bonded to Thorin, officially and publicly, is more than she could’ve ever hoped. It would give her a right to this place, even though she’s just a hobbit. Then she thinks of what it would be like in the Shire, and she murmurs with a glow spreading through her, “Would you, far in the future when your kingdom is sound, come stand with me in the Shire and marry me?”
“I would,” Thorin promises. His voice is husky, deep. It fills Bilbo with thoughts of being on the green grass of Hobbiton, party decorations everywhere, all of her friends invited and Gandalf there with his fireworks, reading out their vows. And then she would have a similar party, a similar bonding, with each of her dwarves, although perhaps some would have to be in Rivendell or Beorn’s, to save the other hobbits from heart attacks. Her heart clenches at the imagery. It makes her breathless. She leans her forehead against Thorin’s. When she holds onto him, he feels so right in her arms. She can’t imagine letting him go.

Her eyes are starting to get watery around the edges. She can’t help it. She spent so much of the journey afraid and lost, and now she’s wound up with everything she could’ve ever wanted, and she has to leave it all tomorrow. She knows she’s coming back. It’s an overwhelming mix of emotions drowned out in love, and it’s just too much for one hobbit to hold onto.

Bilbo comes with a little, strangled cry and a sob, tears spilling down her cheeks as her body jerks in his arms. She folds into him, riding his hand towards her end and smearing his precum around, pumping him hard, to bid him to follow. Before she’s finished coming down, he grunts with his own release, spilling into her hand. He bends to kiss her tears away.

He murmurs, “I love you.” It’s the most powerful thing Bilbo’s ever heard.

She hiccups, “I love you too,” and then almost laughs at herself. She pulls her hand back to wipe off on her hip, then tries to scrub the tears away.

They wind up borrowing into each in a sticky, sweaty, too-hot mess, with Bilbo’s cheeks crusted over and her limbs lightly trembling. But they fall asleep all the same, peaceful and sweet.

Many of the eagles have returned to their nests, but the king approaches Erebor above Thranduil and Bard. He perches atop the watch post, where Dáin gives the parts of the treasure that he can wear and carry away in his talons. On the steps of the Front Gate, Thorin presents Thranduil and Bard with what’s left of their share. The fourteenth they’ve been allotted is a sizeable amount, and Bard leaves many chests of gold with the dwarves in exchange for promises of labour to aid in Dale’s rebuilding. Dáin’s dwarves have all stayed, and they fill the halls of the Lonely Mountain with pickaxes and other tools, rebuilding as only dwarves can.

The last box Bard is given contains a wealth of white jewels: those which Girion loved most. From where Bilbo stands beside Thorin, she can see the glow of them shimmer over Bard’s face. He whispers, “Beautiful,” and takes a moment to bask in them, clearly admiring.

But then he turns to Thranduil and passes the box along, declaring, “To my king, who came to the aid of my people when we were at our worst.” Thranduil opens his mouth, perhaps in surprise, and it looks as though he won’t accept them. But then his eyes linger along Bard’s face, and he takes the box graciously. The appreciative look on his face shows that these are, indeed, what he most would’ve wanted, as gold means little to the elves, but beauties like the stars are treasured. He bows his head in thanks, which gives Bard a smile.

“There’s nothing left, then,” Gandalf says for them, a little behind Bard. He gestures for Bilbo to come while he announces, “It was a good quest to have, Thorin Oakenshield, though I will not say it was good to know you, as that sounds much too final, and I’m sure we will meet again.”

Thorin says, “I should be honoured.”

Bilbo still has trouble leaving. She’s said all her goodbyes inside the mountain, with the hopes that it would lessen this blow, but of course, she’s still tremendously sad. She can’t stop herself from
hugging Thorin one last time, not at all certain that she wants to go.

But she has to. She knows that. The only reason she pulls away is that she hears Bifur sniffing in the
background, and that makes her rush around Thorin to wrap hir in another tight hug. Bofur joins in
from the side, and then Bilbo has to do the same for Bombur, through to Dori and Nori, then Ori and
Dwalin, Balin and Fíli and Kíli, and finally Glóin and Óin. By the end of it, she’s crying again, but
she isn’t the only one. She wants to run back to Thorin, but Gandalf insists, “Come now, before you
have us all drowning in tears despite our very happy ending!”

She does follow him, but she calls along the way, “I’ll come back!”

And the dwarves clamour their returns, long past when they’re out of sight. Bilbo has to borrow a
handkerchief from Gandalf to blow her nose and wipe at her eyes, because none of her own have
survived the journey.

She has her own treasure, though she only brings the little she can tote so far: one chest of silver and
one of gold, which Legolas and Tauriel kindly carry for her, as they’re very heavy. When they reach
Dale, these chests are left to the eagles to retrieve in their talons. They’ll be waiting for her in the
mountains, she’s told, but she chooses to walk as far as she can with her new friends. Bard kisses her
goodbye on the forehead, and she’s helped up onto a horse with Tauriel to head back around the
Long Lake with Gandalf and several elves on their own steeds, Thranduil on his elk and Beorn, in
bear form, walking along beside them. She keeps turning back to look at the mountain long after
Dale’s faded into the distance.

Sometimes, she thinks she can hear the dwarves’ songs on the wind, but she knows that it’s really
only her own heart.

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When they come to the edge of Mirkwood, the elves give their goodbyes. Tauriel gives her a kiss
and a hug, and even Legolas says they will likely see one another again. Before Thranduil can leave,
Bilbo draws a necklace she’d stashed away in her pocket from her last pick of the treasure. The
white jewels in it aren’t quite so magnificent as Bard’s, but she still thinks it suits Thranduil’s taste,
and she holds it up to him, offering, “Please take this.”

He has to bend very low to reach it, as tall as his elk is, but he takes it in his fingers and holds it up to
the light of the fading sun. With a friendly smile on his lips, King Thranduil asks, “And what have I
done to deserve such a gift?”

It isn’t pure kindness, or even thanks for offering her protection while the dragon sickness took her
dwarves. She shuffles her feet and uncomfortably admits, “When I was in your home, before Tauriel
found me, I stole food from you. This can’t repay that sin, but you have my regret and my apology.”

Thranduil simply chuckles. He fastens the necklace around his neck, where it rests elegantly along
his silver robes. He’s returned to his crown instead of the circlet he wore during battle, and he looks
very much the king of a peaceful woodland realm again. He tells her, “There was no sin. If I had
known you were there, I would have fed you, but I will take your gift with thanks. You will always
be a friend to the elves, Bilbo Baggins. If you should come my way again, my halls are always
open.”

Bilbo smiles very brightly and says, “Thank you.” Better friends she couldn’t ask for, and she does
plan to come this way again. If not on her own, she thinks Kíli will likely make the expedition at his
first chance, and she’ll be sure to join him. For very separate peoples, it’s interesting for her to think
of the bonds hobbits, dwarves, elves, and even humans have formed with one another. And
skinchangers, she remembers, when she sees Beorn restlessly stir against the edge of the forest.
With that, the elves make their leave, and Gandalf helps Bilbo up onto his horse. They set off to ride north of the forest, cleared as Gandalf promises it from his own adventures, and Beorn lumbers on beside them, faster and more magnificent than they could ever hope to be.

Saying goodbye to Beorn is difficult. He’s the last of her companions, excluding Gandalf, who’s promised to take her all the way back to Bag End. She spends one night in Beorn’s place, Gandalf in the barn and her in his bed, offering him milk in the morning before she fattens up again on honey and sweets. He leaves her with a good many stories and jars of treats, and she invites him to come to Bag End any time, although she doubts he’d be able to fit even through the front door.

The eagles come then to take her and Gandalf away. It’s a lonely journey, flying on the back of one over the Misty Mountains, looking down through the clouds at the tiny land below. She doesn’t dare look too far east, because she’s cried entirely too much lately and doesn’t want to do it again. She can only hope that the eagles will be so kind as to take her over the mountains again next time. They may not be able to go very far over the total distance she must traverse, but it’s certainly a help, and she thanks them thoroughly when they’re set on the other side. Then she and Gandalf set off to Rivendell, talking of pleasant friends and grand adventures.
Bilbo spends her first night in Rivendell wondering if she made a mistake.

Rivendell is still a beautiful place. She still enjoys the soft beds, the grandiose halls, and the stunning gardens, and especially the luscious meals she’s given and the pleasant company of the elves. But it isn’t the same when she’s in her bed alone. Lindir offers to give her company, but she knows that he’d rather be with his lord, and it’s dwarves she’s missing.

She can’t help but think of just giving Elrond the Arkenstone and heading back to Erebor in the morning. It isn’t really a feasible plan—the eagles have already gone, and she imagines Elrond would refuse such a gift, just as Thranduil and Gandalf did. And even more so, if word ever got back to Thorin, Bilbo knows that he’d hate to know his family’s treasure lay in the hands of elves. So it remains bundled up in her belongings, lying on the chair across her room. The moonlights keeps everything strikingly lit compared to night inside a mountain, and now it feels odd to her to be able to see so much through the darkness.

She tries to scrunch her eyes closed and sleep, but all she can think of is the last time she was here, with all of them camping out, some in her pocket and some not yet. She had her period then, though thankfully it’s past now, and Fíli and Kíli offered her comfort for it.

What she wouldn’t give to have them on either side of her now. She sucks in a deep breath and thinks sleep, but then she remembers what it feels like to have Fíli nipping at her tongue and Kíli nuzzled into her shoulder. She whines in distress and rolls onto her back, twisting the blankets under one side, but then her mind conjures the image of Balin between her legs, burying his bulbous nose into her stomach and lapping his big tongue along her folds.

She whimpers and tries not to, but she thinks of Nori playing with her breasts, of Ori lying over her to rub their nipples together, and then of Dwalin fucking Ori hard and crushing them both together, and Bilbo would be able to feel every one of his hard thrusts through Ori’s trembling body. She thinks of rubbing Dori’s cock with her foot and having Bofur spread her pussy open for Glóin’s cock, and Óin rolling her over to spank and eat out her ass.

And she thinks of Thorin, sitting next to her, watching it all and ordering it, and Bilbo has to press one hand against her mouth to stifle her moan. The other dips into the low-cut neckline of her nightgown, her fingers snaking over her breast. She squeezes, but her fingers are too small, and no matter how much she kneads her own flesh and tugs at her pebbling nipples, she can’t mimic the feel of a dwarf’s attentions. She makes a silent vow to never take this journey alone again. Once Erebor is rebuilt, at least one should always come with her, so they can enjoy the splendor of Rivendell together, and Bilbo won’t be left to desperately hump the air and her own fingers for an illusive release.

She turns back onto her side again, mostly so she can cross her legs and a little so she can burry her face in the pillow. She keeps playing with her breasts, working back and forth to stretch and squeeze.
them, while her other hand reaches down her body. She runs her fingers along her pussy and tries to pretend her hand is Bofur’s. He’d touch her just right, and she’d be wildly rutting into him in no time.

She should’ve gotten a toy for the road. He should’ve made her one—automated, if he could manage—it wouldn’t be enough—but it would be something, and she’d know it was from him. Instead, all she has to play with are her own fingers. She squeezes her thighs together and rubs her fingers around the top of her pussy, running over all her dwarves in her mind—Bombur’s round belly, Dwalin’s thick fingers, Ori’s tight rear, and the scruff along Kíli’s chin...

She starts with specific things, memories of what they’ve done to her, daydreams of what they’ve said—Glóin suggested he and his wife might take her at once, and surely they can when she returns, and Nori spoke of fixing one of Bofur’s toys onto the saddle of a horse, and she still has to dress Thorin up the way he did to her; pinch his nipples with gold and drape strings of jewels down his chest...

Before long, she has almost her whole hand inside herself—nothing compared the girth of Dwarven fingers—and it’s all a blur of wants. Images rush together, feelings and heat and she needs every last one of them, and she’s drowning in dirty fantasies of bathing in their cum and watching them fuck each other unconscious in vast piles of gold. She gets to the point where she’s sweating and red but too busy to push away the blankets, and she lets her thighs tremble as she chases that high, moaning and trying not to scream. Finally, it gets too be too much, and she can feel the pleasure peaking out of her reach. She gives one last squeeze, curling her fingers inside herself, and she gushes around her own hand, mind thinning into nothing.

All her muscles release a second later, the tension ebbing away. She pants, realizing belatedly that she’s made her pillow wet with her spit. She drags her fingers out of her body, wiping the excess liquid off on her thighs. She eyes the washroom over her shoulder, but doesn’t want to get up. She’s exhausted, emotionally and physically, and needs that to sleep.

So she rolls onto the dry side and curls up, eventually drifting off to lighter memories.

Bilbo stays at the Last Homely House for a week. At every supper, she tells more of her tale, and Gandalf fills in the parts of his own quest. Elrond, though disturbed by much of the unexpected perils, is a very good listener. When that week is up, she feels like she’s found another place she never wants to leave.

Here and there, she’s witnessed Elrond and Lindir enjoying one another’s bodies, but with her dwarves so far away, she can’t bring herself to join in. Next time, she tells them, she’ll be more joyous, and she’s pleased when Elrond tells her he’s sure there will be a next time.

Both he and Lindir stand on the platform that her and the dwarves first crowded onto. The hostess from before brings one horse saddled with her gold, and one horse for Gandalf to borrow: another gorgeous white animal that Bilbo finds much too tall. Elrond helps her onto the back of it, and she clutches onto Gandalf’s robes and says her goodbyes. She says especially, “Thank you very much for having me.”

“You are always welcome,” Elrond replies, and with a fond smile, he repeats, “I am sure you will be back again.” He nods his head to Gandalf as he steps away, and Gandalf turns the horse around.

They set off for the Shire, now every last one of their friends truly behind.
Bilbo had nearly forgotten the troll gold they buried, but Gandalf takes them along that path, past the still-stone figures of the three monsters that once tried to eat them. As Gandalf helps her off the horse, Bilbo admits, “I don’t think we need much more treasure.”

“Yet, you never know,” Gandalf replies airily, in that mysterious way of his. He picks up the edges of his robe as he putters down the slope of gnarled tree roots, and Bilbo follows out of habit. “In any case, we will only take one; I don’t think the poor horse could carry much more.”

It takes a bit of work to find the disturbed earth that Nori and Glóin once covered, now overrun with fallen leaves and sprigs of grass. Gandalf brushes the loose soil aside with the end of his staff, and then he kneels down to bid her, “Dig with me.”

In truth, Gandalf doesn’t do much digging. She uses her hands to scoop the dirt away, while he occasionally sticks his staff in to tap the soil. After only a few minutes, his prodding results in a dull knock, and they know they’ve hit something. A bit more digging, and Bilbo uncovers the handle of a chest. Gandalf reaches down to pull it up, and they check the contents—a mass of heavy gold coins.

This they take to the packhorse, who grunts at them but doesn’t seem otherwise distressed. The other two are fixed on either side of it, and the third they balance in the middle of its back, which Gandalf straps down with a length of rope. “Elven rope,” he explains to her, “which is much sturdier than the other kind, and the same for Elven horses.” Then they walk back around to Gandalf’s steed, and he lifts her up first. A flick of the reins, and they’re off down the path, ready to become the richest people in all of Hobbiton.

Before they reach the Shire, Bilbo’s homesickness is at a peak. She misses her home, of course she does, and her mother’s good dishes and her collection of maps, and even the doilies that so confused her dwarves. Coming over the crest of the hill to watch the morning sun hit the grass makes her heart ache in her chest, and she nearly falls off the horse in trying to peer around Gandalf. It almost feels strange to see hobbits out and about again—little people like her, with the proportions she’s used to and the same shaven chins but mostly short, curly hair. Before long, they reach a dirt road, and Bilbo can smell fresh bread and hear the far off sounds of lazy folk humming in the wind.

They ride all the way to the Brandywine bridge, but there Gandalf stops his horse. They’re already drawing stares, and though most are gaping at Gandalf, big and strange as he is, she recognizes a few faces. Somehow, in the midst of coming home, she’d quite forgotten how very different she’ll be. Hobbits have never been as accepting as dwarves, but she’s still a hobbit, through and through. Perhaps it’s truly best that she be left to walk into Hobbiton on her own, although she’ll be very sorry to let Gandalf go.

He doesn’t dismount, but instead gestures for her to, and Bilbo wrinkles her nose but does so. It’s always a bit scary, slipping off a horse on her own, but she manages. He passes her the little bundle she carries around that holds the Arkenstone, a golden pipe from Erebor, two necklaces Thorin gave her, some food from Elrond and Beorn, and one of Gandalf’s handkerchiefs. When she glances back at the packhorse, Gandalf says, “I shall take her around after dark, so your reputation isn’t completely ruined.”

Bilbo chuckles a, “Thank you,” knowing it’s too little too late. But it is best, she imagines, that she not be seen toting heaps of gold inside, or she’ll have others knocking on her door for years.

Then he tells her, “Goodbye for now, Bilbo Baggins, although I suspect I will see you again before too long.” It still makes Bilbo frown, and her eyes grow a bit watery around the edges. He immediately says, “None of that now, I should quite like to keep my eyes dry, especially as this is not the end.”
“You’ll come back to take me to Erebor again, won’t you?” she checks, hoping the casual conversation will stay her own tears. But Gandalf shakes his head, which puts dismay all over her features. “Well, then how am I ever going to make it there?”

“Oh, I suspect you’ll find your own way, when you’re ready,” Gandalf answers cryptically. “I think you’ve more than proven on this adventure that you can achieve great things, far beyond what we may think.”

It’s Bilbo’s turn to shake her head: that sounds absurd. But she reminds herself that Balin promised to fetch her, and one way or another, she knows she’ll get back—she won’t let anything keep her from her dwarves, once she makes up her mind.

In the meantime, she has to let Gandalf go, which he does quickly, before she can start sobbing. He’s a troublesome old fellow, but he’s also given her the best gifts of her life, and he’s become a very dear friend, however odd and disastrous he can be. It’s sad to watch him gallop off, and she waves in spite of herself, calling out before he disappears over the hill, “You’re welcome to tea any time!”

In some spots, she lingers, enjoying the feel of the warm dirt path beneath her toes and the scent of blooming flowers in the air. In other spots, she runs, because home is calling to her.

It’s still bright out as she wanders up the path to Bag End, pleased to see that it looks just the same as she remembers it, comfy and beautiful, with all her resilient flowers pushing through. As she reaches the start of her wooden fence, another hobbit nearly comes barreling into her, grumbling bitterly, “As though those aren’t my spoons to have!”

The hobbit stops abruptly when she sees Bilbo, eyes going very wide. Bilbo takes a second to catch up, then realizes that Lobelia Sackville-Baggins—who Bilbo hasn’t at all been looking forward to seeing or even spared two thoughts to since leaving—has obviously been trying to get her grubby hands on Bilbo’s good spoons again. As though she hasn’t missed a day, Bilbo’s hands come up to her hips and she haughtily demands, “Have you been trying to rob me again?”

“I have not!” Lobelia scowls back. “Someone else has beaten me to it, even though I’m clearly the one with the right! And what a nasty temper that someone has, to—wouldn’t even open the door! Trust you to have such rude friends, Bilbo Baggins.”

Bilbo has no such friends, not in Bag End, at least, and that does give her pause. Forgetting about Lobelia entirely, she glances up the hill at her quaint little home. It looks completely in the ordinary to her; obviously, Lobelia is quite mistaken. Lobelia rants on, “And where have you been off to, anyway? Never mind, I don’t want to know! Up to some sourly adventures with that awful wizard, no doubt. It’s been quite clear that you abandoned Bag End, which the Sackville-Baggins obviously have every right to. We’d assumed you were dead. In fact, I was just about to go see the proper authorities about arranging an auction for the rest, but—”

“No one has a right to my home!” Bilbo cuts in, quite as miffed as Lobelia despite having entirely more reason, “As you can see, I’m quite alive, and no one has abandoned anything. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I must be getting on to my house. Good evening!” With that, she thrusts her chin in the air and marches around Lobelia, completely ignoring the gasp and humph that goes on behind her. Bilbo marches straight up the hill, for once pleased at Lobelia’s mistaken nonsense, as she’s rather fond of her spoons.

The front door is just as she remembers it, round and freshly green, although by now there is a chip here and there from the stray peck of the birds or the pounding of the sun. She doesn’t remember locking the door, but perhaps the handle has rusted and jammed and Lobelia misinterpreted that as
someone trying to keep her out. By now, Bilbo has seen her fair share of ruins—she knows what a stolen place looks like. But the front of her house is neat as ever with no signs of any trouble, and the glass of her windows is even a little grey on the inside, as though they haven’t been dusted in far too long. First thing tomorrow, she’ll have to do a thorough clean, though tonight she simply wants to rest, walk amongst the living memories of first meeting her dwarves, and decide where she’ll bury the Arkenstone.

The brass handle is a little stiff as Bilbo turns it, but it does crick open. Just to be certain, she looks around carefully inside, but everything is still how she left it. Her coats are even still on the peg. Clearly, she hasn’t been looted, and Lobelia is more a fool than ever.

Bilbo’s cautious for the first few minutes, as she steps inside and shuffles off her pack, but the house is silent, save for the murmur of the comings and goings outside. It’s particularly warm—much warmer than outside, and more so than she remembers. She leaves Sting along the bench in the front hall, but the Arkenstone she takes straight for her bedroom. She stores it under her bed for lack of anywhere better and then wriggles out of her clothes—she’s grown entirely too used to wearing the same thing for eons.

Then she collapses on that bed, just to feel it, and soak it in. It’s the exact right size for her, although it would be a bit small for all the lovers she now needs to fit inside. The sheets are a little musky—they’ll need to be washed. Mostly, it’s soft and inviting and smells the way she remembers, stronger than elves but lighter than dwarves. Her feet kick aimlessly over the edge a few times, and then she sighs and pushes up. She’s tired, but she knows she won’t be able to sleep right away. There seems to be nothing she can do to forget all those she left behind, so she thinks she may as well give in and start writing it down—it does make for a rather marvelous tale, and she’s going to need to do something to occupy her time before Balin shows up to fetch her. She certainly can’t go back to the quiet hobbit life.

First, she finds a nightgown to put on—the same one she wore when Dwalin first appeared on her doorstep. She doesn’t even need her housecoat to move about; it really is dreadfully hot inside. It’s almost as if her fire’s going, although of course, it can’t be—it would’ve burned her house down by now.

When she comes into the hallway, she realizes that her house is just a bit brighter than it should be—she hasn’t lit any lights, and the glow from the living room is awfully gold for the crisp evening air. She walks closer with curious steps, wondering if she should go back for her ring.

By the time she turns the corner, it’s too late, and then she’s too rigid with surprise to go running back.

Her living room is entirely taken up with the long, languid form of a dragon. The crimson scales dance in the wakes of the lit hearth, a spiked muzzle resting just before it, as though just having puffed the fire inside. Under Bilbo’s gaze, giant, leathery wings flap and settle along the dragon’s flank, and golden eyes blink open to peer at her, while Bilbo wills herself not to faint.

She mutters, sure she must be wrong, “S... Smaug?”

But that can’t be right. Smaug was enormous, and this dragon, though curled up and still far too large for a hobbit’s room, is nowhere near that size. And besides, Smaug was killed. He fell into the lake. Except, she suddenly remembers, that Smaug can change his form, and falling into a lake is a far cry from dying for a creature quite so powerful.

“Bilbo,” Smaug purrs, in the same silk-soft voice she remembers. One of his claws lifts, reaching forward, and he lurches up, tossing his snout back and puffing smoke, and then Smaug is
transforming right before her eyes, slinking into the body of a man. Bilbo has to look away after a
time, because the glowing light becomes too much, but she can still see the tail shrinking in her
peripherals and hear the wings beating towards her ceiling. When the glow dissipates, she looks
back, to find the tall, red-brown man from the mountain she remembers, with his smattering of scales
and his tail dragging heavily along her carpet.

His wings have gone, but red spikes still jut out of his hair. He comes to stand before her, wearing a
thin smile, and he tells her, “I’m very pleased to see you’ve returned.”

Bilbo doesn’t know what to do. She feels like she should gasp but doesn’t have enough breath. She
mumbles numbly, “What are you doing here?”

“I was injured,” he calmly explains, and his hands lift towards her as he talks, his clawed fingertips
brushing over the sides of her face and back into her hair. “I was shot in the chest, but fortunately,
dragons aren’t so easily slain. The blow was a grave wound, and it threw me into the water, but I
crawled out when darkness came.” He pauses, as though considering past events, then smoothly
continues, “I could hardly stay there, with so many hunting me as they were. Everything I told you...
there would be no point telling others. They would not understand, or rather, wouldn’t wish to. I had
to find somewhere to rest, somewhere where no one would think to hunt a dragon. And then I
thought of our bond, and the solution become obvious...”

“Our... our bond?” Bilbo squeaks, and now that she thinks of it, she can recall dreams, snippets here
and there that she could hardly remember in the light of day, much less believe. But Smaug’s lips
twist into a broader grin, and he nods.

“Our connection,” he purrs, his chin dipping so his words can blow across her lips. “You felt it too,
when we mated. You may not have been able to grow the seed of my body, but you certainly could
of my mind...” His tongue dips out to trace along her lips, and Bilbo gasps, parting them to let out a
moan. Smaug chuckles at her reaction. “Dragon magic is such a helpful thing...”

Then he steps backwards, and Bilbo automatically follows. She’s drawn to him, just like before. She
tries to ask as she goes, “And you’ve been here all this time...?”

“It’s been such a small moment, in the life of an immortal creature.” He reaches the middle of her
rug, and his hands run down her face and over her shoulders, curving along her sides to wrap around
her waist. When he falls to his knees, she falls with him, pulled easily into his lap, which still only
has them eye to eye—he’s so very tall. But thicker, stronger than an elf, thinner than her dwarves.
He’s a species all of his own, and she can see his tail circling around them in the corner of her eye,
like an enchanted gate. She doesn’t know where to put her hands, so she opts for his shoulders. He
isn’t wearing anything, though in a way, his scales almost seem like clothes. He’s so very
magnificent, all of him, so it isn’t just the size and shape and hardness of his cock against her thighs
jutting up between them, that makes her mewl in want. The chiseled arches of his biceps, the flat
surface of his chest, even the dark tufts of hair between his spikes pull her in. His eyes are
captivating.

She has to force herself to ask, “Will you go back?”

He replies simply, “You don’t wish me to.”

“No,” she breathes. No, of course not. And not just because his lap is so very hot against her skin,
his steam making her nightgown cling to her body. It’s so hard not to melt under his beauty. Bilbo
licks her lips and begs, “Please, Smaug. Don’t hurt my dwarves. They’ve been through so much...”

His head ducks, and she thinks he isn’t listening. His long tongue snakes out to lick between her
breasts, and Bilbo’s pleas break off into a groan. His hands run along her arms, brushing down the thin straps of her nightgown. It gives him more cleave to lap between, though he has to lift her on his knee and bend his spine to reach. Bilbo shudders, and when Smaug finally lifts his head, the smile has gone. His expression is very serious, curious and reverent but solemn. He breathes, “You have the Arkenstone.”

She doesn’t answer right away. There should be no way for him to know, but he continues, “I can smell it, sense it on you.”

She only answers, “Yes,” and waits for his response.

He uncoils. He slowly sits back, resting on his arms, his knee lowering. A part of her misses the intimate start, but she knows they have to talk. She has no idea what the Arkenstone means to him, so she offers nothing, until he slowly asks, “...How did you come by it?” She opens her mouth, but then he shakes his head and mutters, “No, that is not right. You will have found it in my hoard, of course. But how did you get it here? Surely the dwarves would not have let you leave, if they’d known you carried such a valuable, powerful treasure...”

It makes her proud to say, “Thorin gave it to me to take here. He wanted me to bury it. You see? Dwarves aren’t so greedy as you say. He fell under its spell for a time, yes, but he recognized that it corrupted him, and he had it sent away.”

Smaug peers closer to her again, as though trying to determine whether or not she speaks the truth. Knowing that she does, she meets his eye. Finally, he looks towards the fire and murmurs, “That stone was never meant for mortal hands. It belongs with the creatures of old. I will admit I’m... impressed... that your beloved king was able to recognize such a thing.” When he looks back at her, it strikes an idea.

It’s a wild one, but so have many of her plans, and they’ve all worked out for the best. Just to be sure, she prods, “It couldn’t corrupt a dragon...?”

Smaug snorts. He could, of course, be lying, but she doesn’t think he is. “It’s born of my people; it has no power over us. You’ve seen my magic for yourself; you know what I am capable of quite on my own. Treasure is a precious things to dragons, yes—we collect it, bask in it, but that is because it is as natural to us as soil is to you. We do not need jewels for power.”

She believes him. She looks at him for a long moment, and then she says quietly, “I have more treasure coming later.”

Smaug lifts an eyebrow.

“And I would...” Bilbo has to pause, hesitate; it’s a huge proposal. But then she sucks in her breath and plows on, “I would give you all of it, and the Arkenstone, if you would promise to leave Erebor alone. I... I know it’s your home. And I am sorry for that. But... it’s Thorin’s home, too, and, well... surely we could work something out.”

Smaug is quiet, frowning.

He considers her more, and then he lowers his head, shaking it. He mutters, “After using your home for safety, I can’t hurt you.” He lifts his head again and looks her in the eye, the gold capturing her heart. “Bilbo Baggins, for your sake, I will leave Erebor alone. I had assumed all mortals were corrupt and lesser beings, but you impress me with your willingness to give up such a treasure. If you love this Thorin so very much... well, I will admit he must have at least some good qualities.” His lips twitch at the ends when he adds, “I admit I am not so opposed to kings.” And that makes Bilbo
think of Thorin sitting in Smaug’s lap, which isn’t at all a helpful image during a seriously discussion. Then Smaug goes on, “But I will need a mountain.”

“Aren’t there more near the Lonely Mountain?” Bilbo asks, thinking of her maps and the views in the distance of Erebor’s gates. “That dwarves aren’t in, I mean...”

Smaug snorts again. Bilbo doesn’t understand the joke, though she can see amusement in Smaug’s eyes. He shakes his head and explains, “There are the Withered Heights, where most of my people are from, but it isn’t a place where one individual may claim a home. The next closest would be Mount Gundabad... and that would be amusing indeed, for some dwarves claim that their race was born there. It would, perhaps, be amusing to take refuge in their hold, while they occupied mine, if it weren’t for the orcs—far too many for my taste.”

“Gundabad...” Bilbo murmurs. She has to think about it, because the name seems familiar, and not just the sort of memory from a hazy view of a map. For some reason, she can hear Legolas’ voice in her head repeating the name, then Tauriel, then Gandalf. After a moment, she exclaims, “Oh! But most of the orcs will be gone. They were in the army that marched on Erebor, and they were defeated.”

Smaug blinks in clear surprise. It gives Bilbo a slight grin to have shocked a dragon. He says, “My, the world has been busy while I slept.” Then he twists into a broader grin and muses, “But if that is true, then that would suit me quite well. It isn’t so very different from Erebor, as you call it, though I am sure I will still have to gobble up my fair share of vile vermin to clean it properly. ...But I can handle a few smatterings of orcs. I’m sure they would’ve found their own loot over the years; there would be no need to even take yours.”

“I wouldn’t mind,” Bilbo insists, because making peace between dragons and dwarves seems far more valuable to her than any old treasure chest.

He smiles and says, “You are most generous, Bilbo Baggins. Though I will not take your treasure, I appreciate the offer.” He moves to kiss her forehead, then slyly adds, “But I should think I would still like the Arkenstone, if only to make sure it never corrupts mortals again.” Bilbo nods automatically. It would actually be a relief to relinquish that responsibility.

“And then,” Bilbo says, unable to help herself, “Perhaps you could meet with some of my dwarves. I think if you got to know one or two, you might actually like them.” Smaug looks as though he might not disagree.

He asks instead, “And you?”

“I need to be everywhere at once,” Bilbo sighs. “I should like to visit Rivendell again. And I should like to come back here when I could, as it is a tad trying being the only hobbit. And I would visit you, if you would have me. ...But I think my main home would be with Thorin and my friends.”

“I suppose I could share you,” Smaug sighs. Then his tail flicks thoughtfully, and he adds, “Perhaps I will meet other hobbits someday, as pure and sweet as you.”

She smiles encouragingly, and he bends forward to kiss her. The long, bow shape of his mouth presses tantalizingly into her mouth, and as he leans his forehead against hers, he murmurs, “And I will take you to your mountain, just like I will fetch you to bring here and to my door when you should so need. I think I would like to explore as much, perhaps even this... ‘Rivendell’...”

“That sounds wonderful.” More wonderful than she could’ve asked for. He could fly so much faster than she could walk or ride, perhaps even faster than the eagles, and he could go the entire distance.
It makes her giddy to imagine she could be on the steps of Erebor tomorrow, then right back here. She takes the initiative to kiss him for it, showing him her pleasure. He mewls happily against her smaller lips, while his arms wrap tightly around her waist.

He lowers her slowly to the floor, until Bilbo’s lying along the carpet with him between her legs and his body draped over hers. He looks just as delectable in her home as he did in the splendor of Erebor, but now it’s so sweet and tangible, and she isn’t afraid of him anymore. Before meeting him, she would’ve thought a dragon in the Shire would’ve meant the whole thing up in flames, but to think that Lobelia didn’t even know who was home makes Bilbo want to laugh—a dragon somehow managing to hide himself in her little home.

And to think, Lobelia scolded her for having strange friends. Now she lies below one of the most gorgeous men in all the world, letting him bunch her nightgown up around her waist. As he reveals the creamy skin of her thighs and stomach, he runs his hands over her and purrs, “You’re just as beautiful as I remember.”

Bilbo breathes too huskily, “You’re just as alluring.” He grins and locks his mouth around hers again, open, so his tongue can thrust into her mouth. At first, he only tastes, nips and teases as he rubs his full shaft between her legs. But then he pushes the bulk of that tongue inside her mouth, filling her to the brim so that she almost chokes, her saliva bubbling up around it, her own tongue crushed under the weight. There’s something so bizarrely arousing at being taken by an animal, this magnificent creature with such different characteristics, with claws that dance so carefully along her skin and sharp teeth that manage never once to pierce her. When he withdraws his tongue, her jaw is left open, and he licks around the sides while she pants for air.

He drags his hips slowly into hers, and as she mewls, he asks, “Will you be wet for me again?” She nods, unable to speak. She would’ve liked a pillow, but she doesn’t think she could stand up now if she wanted to, certainly not make it to the bedroom. He tilts her head to taste her chin, jaw, and neck, and his strong chest crushes hers down, grinding into her breasts until the nightgown has completely bunched beneath it. His fingers splay over them as soon as they’re free, squeezing and kneading roughly, super-heated. Her nipples harden near instantly beneath his attentions, her channels slicking up as she feels his thick cock rubbing along her lips. She tries to hold onto his shoulders, but he’s almost too hot to touch, so she drops her arms and lets them lie loosely across the rug. He doesn’t seem to mind doing all the work. He rocks into her, over and over, while he plays her body to its edge, where her thighs are quivering and she needs to be taken.

He knows. He fills her mouth again, held over her on all fours, and he reaches down to rub the head of his cock against her pussy, back and forth until she whimpers, “Smaug—”

Then he presses into her, just that very tip, and Bilbo gasps and arches up—she’d forgotten how very big it felt, and she’s out of practice. She’s wet, yes, but not nearly enough to take him, and he runs his teeth along to her ear, where he hisses words she doesn’t understand.

She knows, instantly, that it’s magic. It slithers down her, a broiling heat that sizzles through her veins, takes over her body and makes her channel clench and quiver, expanding, slicking with more juices. She can feel herself opening impossibly wide, sucking at him, and the spongy head pushes deeper—Bilbo’s voice breaks. Smaug purrs more magic, and there is no pain. It feels good, so good, to have his enormous cock inside her, and he rocks it deeper with little, fervent thrusts, while Bilbo struggles with everything she has to breathe.

He kisses her while she adjusts, and his hips don’t stop at all. It isn’t like when he first took her, when he made her beg and explored her beforehand—this is familiar, strangely domestic, like she’s come home to a husband that’s had her a hundred times before, and he’s waited so long that now
he’ll take her on the sitting room floor without any pretext. It has been too long. A dragon is a delicious thing to have in her repertoire, and she’s sure there can’t be any like Smaug, so handsome and intelligent and sinfully charming. She could fall into his eyes for days, but instead she can barely keep her eyes open.

He pushes until he’s fully inside her, and then he stills, letting her grow used to the feeling of a huge, hot organ pulsing inside her. Her thighs are clinging weakly to him, her arms boneless. He hasn’t stopped relentlessly toying with her breasts, and when he pinches her nipples to tug them into the air, she thinks of wearing gold for him, too, the way she did for Thorin. Then Smaug’s tail slithers over her body, and she grunts at the strange texture of the scales. It runs along her chest and curves at the other side, looping back to bracket her breasts, squeezing at once, and Bilbo cries out and thrusts up into the tight hold. Smaug’s tail tosses her breasts up and down, forcing them to bounce, and Bilbo wishes he would just rip the nightgown to shreds—it’s like being fucked in a furnace. When his tail finally releases her breasts, they feel heavy and a little sore, and Bilbo would throw a protective arm over them, except that Smaug’s already returned to toying with her nipples. His tongue laps over her throat, and she can’t take it anymore; she wraps her legs around his waist and tries to hump him, moaning, “Smaug, please—fuck me...”

He obliges. His cock slips out, dragging all her juices, only to slam inside again, pounding her loudly into the rug. Bilbo tosses her head back, losing her voice, and Smaug does it again, nipping at her jaw, a third time, and his tongue plunges back into her mouth, filling both her holes. He fucks her hard as only a dragon could, and she can feel all the differences with it—the strange ridges and bold veins and the sheer size, but most of all the warmth and the lick of scales, textured and hard. He runs his hands down her body, crushing her waist, dragging his nails along her wide hips and up her sensitive thighs, then back again along her curvaceous sides. As soon as his tongue leaves her, she kisses him, only to have him take over and capture her through it.

Under the pleasure of Smaug’s love, everything else slithers away. She forgets the loneliness of her journey and all the troubles she went through, all the worries she had. She’s clouded with dreams of the future, of being able to visit anywhere at any time, and riding Smaug’s cock for it, maybe watching him fuck her friends, but then a particularly hard thrust will come and she’ll dissolve back into incoherency, whining at him and arching to rub her breasts against him. She kisses him whenever she can, surrenders to screaming the other times, and tries to suck on his tongue when he fills her with it. Before long, Bilbo’s a mess of sweat and spit and her own juices, trembling so hard she can barely control herself.

She comes first, amazed she lasted as long a she did. She wants to scream, but her voice is gone, throat rasped raw, and instead she just twists and contracts, sucking at him as much as she can. He keeps fucking her, even as her juices well up around him and her body starts shuddering to a different rhythm. He doesn’t pull his cock out of her until she’s nearly wracked with spasms over the lingering pleasure, so overwhelming as it is. He lifts up to kneel over her, gently guiding her around. He raises her up to her hands and knees. It’s a difficult position to hold with how spent she is, but his tail wraps around her waist and keeps her in place, and he presses his long cock between the cheeks of her ass to thrust against her. He reaches down to fondle her breasts while he humps her, throwing her back and forth each time. When Bilbo’s ass starts to grow red and raw and very sore, she whines, and he tucks his cock between her legs instead, shoving her thighs together and rubbing against her pussy, until Bilbo’s writhing and worried she’ll grow aroused again and get fucked so hard she’ll pass out and wake up to find him gone once more.

Then he comes, painting her rug and her front, all the way up her stomach and between her breasts to drench them and drape down. Bilbo’s face is protected from most of the blow, but then Smaug pulls his hips back enough to let the spray cover her ass and drizzle all down between her thighs. She’s
soaked in no time. The stench of it makes her knees shake, but she’s exhausted and collapses as soon as his tail and hands let her.

He grasps his flagging cock to rub absentmately around her pussy while he muses, “Yes, I will have to think about this a good deal.”

She wakes in her own bed, for the first time in nearly a year. The sun is peaking through her curtains, making the little round window glow. When Bilbo sighs, she shifts in place, and the strap of her nightgown blows down one shoulder. The mattress grunts behind her, and a long, brown-red arm with elegant scales tosses over her waist. The curled fingers at the end draw her in, until her back is flushed against Smaug’s molten body. She smiles to herself, and shuts her eyes to bask in the last few remnants of a dream.

Then she rolls onto her other side, snuggling up to him and whispers so as not to break the magic, “Would you like breakfast?”

“I would be curious to taste anything you made me,” Smaug purrs, before brushing a lock of fallen hair behind her ear. His golden eyes are half-lidded and hazy, and she wonders, recalling little bits of sleep, if they shared their dream somehow. She seems to remember a great deal of flying, and that isn’t so common for her. Perhaps that’s how they’ll call one another in the future. Smaug bends to kiss her, and though her breath is stale, his is toasty and pleasant.

She wonders aloud and around a yawn, “Have you eaten my stores?” Not that she had much left, after the dwarves devastated her kitchens before she left. But Smaug simply shakes his head.

“I snuck out to hunt when I had to, though dragons needn’t eat so much as mortals think.” That’s perfect, because Bilbo doubts she has enough to feed such a large stomach, even deceptively shrunk as it is.

It takes her a few minutes to gather the will to push out of bed, but she has things to do—perhaps a story to write—and if for no other reason, she must get up to air out the house. She opens her bedroom window first, enjoying the cool breeze of the outside compared to the fog of Smaug’s smoke.

Smaug stays sprawled in her bed like a particularly elegant trophy while she heads for the pantry. There are a few things left, but most hasn’t survived the long length of time she’s been gone. After a bit of rummaging around her stores, it becomes clear that she’ll have to go the market later, but for now she fetches some of the leftover pastries from Rivendell and a small jar of Beorn’s honey. She’s setting down plates when Smaug wanders into her kitchen, quite as naked as ever. As he takes a seat at her table, she asks, “Would you be opposed to wearing clothes when you’re in this form?” Mostly because it makes it difficult to concentrate on other things, and partially so the dwarves will be able to take him seriously. At least the table cuts off the lower half of him from view, so Bilbo is able to settle in and keep her eyes on his face.

“I suppose not,” Smaug says, tapping the plate of scones with one claw. “Although I wouldn’t know where to get them.” He skewers the nearest one, lifting it up into the air to tilt and stare at curiously.

“I didn’t make these,” Bilbo admits. “They’re a gift from Rivendell. I’ll have to go shopping later. But anyway, I’m sure the people of Dale would be happy to lend you clothes, assuming, of course, that you wouldn’t hurt them again.”

Smaug makes a scoffing noise. “I will not burn them if they do not shoot at me.”
“You should meet Bard,” Bilbo diverts. “I’m sure if he got close enough to speak to you and get to know you, he wouldn’t shoot at you anymore.”

“You’re so very optimistic. I must say, it’s one of the reasons I’ve enjoyed my time in the Shire.” Then he pops the scone into his mouth, the entire thing at once. Bilbo only takes small nibbles of hers, while his powerful jaw grinds the pastry to bits.

When he’s finished, he picks up another and says, “I have thought more of your words. If it’s true that the orcs have been vanquished, I am most impressed. And I trust your judgment. We will attempt this solution.”

She smiles and says, “Thank you.” It solves more for her personally than he could imagine, though he grins pleasantly at her as he dips his latest scone into the jar of honey.

Remembering the bundle under her bed, Bilbo suddenly gets up from the table. Smaug stays where he is, munching away, and Bilbo wanders back to pull out the bundle and dig out the Arkenstone. It shimmers like it did all the way back in Erebor, but she doesn’t feel nearly so much a pull towards it as she once did: the solution Smaug’s promised her is far better than the wealth this jewel could bring her. She brings it back to the table and sets it down, double-checking, “And you promise me you won’t grow corrupt with this?”

Smaug’s eyes flicker over the Arkenstone, interest all over his face. But he continues eating and tells her around scones, “Dragon hearts are not the same. Besides, I am no king: I have no subjects to abuse. I will treasure this more like an egg.” As Bilbo smiles, pleased, he seems to think, then finishes, “In any case, I will have to remain levelheaded in order to maintain my relationship with you, for I think I might like to come back to this quaint little home sometime.”

“I would love if you could fly me back and forth,” Bilbo admits. “...And between Erebor, if you obliged.”

Smaug nods and swallows down the second last scone. The final one he leaves on the plate, and he nudges it towards her with his palm. “That is doable enough. Come to think of it, we will need regular trips here indeed, if we are to keep that dreadful woman from stealing this lovely house and all your spoons.”

Bilbo laughs, picturing the horror on Lobelia’s face if she ever discovered just what it was that kept her out of Bag End.

Bilbo doesn’t stay nearly so long as she might’ve thought. There are things to do, clothes to wash and floors to mop, and she goes shopping to gather all the handkerchiefs she’ll need, and a few trinkets she thinks her dwarves might enjoy. The gold Gandalf left in the middle of the night she hides deep in her home, just in case she ever might need it, but it’s a very small pack she brings with her when she and Smaug go sneaking out one night. This time, Bilbo is sure to lock her door.

It takes a bit of sneaking around the hedges to make sure they aren’t seen, but they must go quite a ways into the fields before Smaug can transform. Then he lifts Bilbo in one palm to place atop his back, and she holds onto his spikes, exhilarated before they even start.

When his great wings flap around her, she throws herself tight around him, clutching on for dear life. He leaps into the air, and suddenly the wind is whipping at her, and he’s soaring off so fast that the greenery below is a blur, obscured by passing clouds. He flies much higher and faster than the eagles, and he’s much bigger, with no feathers and large spikes and a long neck that snakes through the air before her. She can only see down when he turns: otherwise it’s all his red body and the dark
blue sky.

They fly for what feels like a very long time, during which the sky goes from dark blue to pitch black, the stars glimmering brightly overhead. They can’t talk, because Bilbo’s little voice would never survive the wind. Eventually, the land below reaches higher, and he calls back in his mighty boom of a voice from his true form, “We will stop first at Mount Gundabad, and we will see if there I could make my home.”

It gets colder the further they go, but Bilbo was warned and wore a coat, and Smaug’s body is its own heater. By the time they start lowering, the only thing Bilbo can see on either side of his great body is white snow.

He lands them in a little valley between two rock peaks, before a large, stone gate that reminds her faintly of Erebor. Here, Smaug sets her on a pillar and slithers off, his form shrinking enough to slip through the black entrance. He’s only gone for a few minutes, but when he returns, there’s a grin on his long muzzle, and she knows it was a worthwhile trip. “This will do,” he tells her, as he bids her to climb onto his back again. “I will take you close to the Lonely Mountain and return when your dwarves have had time to adjust.”

Settled atop him, Bilbo presses a kiss to his spine and swears, “You’ll gain thirteen friends, I promise you.”

Walking to the gates of Erebor alone is strange, but not nearly so frightening as it should be. Smaug sets her down in one of the blind spots, tucked behind the mountain where he won’t be seen, and she kisses him a final time and promises to send for him when she can. It leaves her to walk around the slope with just one little bundle in her hands and her bare feet against the hard stone. It takes quite a bit of walking, but before long, she’s running, because she just can’t wait.

She thinks she’ll have to go through guards. Surely they’ll have some sort of sentinels outside, or perhaps workers chiseling away at the old stone, but instead, the first thing she sees is Balin, sitting on the edge of the front steps, tucked out of the way and therefore facing her, though his head is down in a clump of scrolls. She races for him, breathless, and when she’s close enough for him to hear her steps, he looks up, blinking in surprise.

He shouts, “Bilbo!” and quite forgets about his scrolls. Jolting up, they topple out of his lap, and he slips off the polished step to run across the uneven mountain edge, while she runs all the faster. When she reaches him, she practically flies into his arms, and he lifts her up to squeeze tight, burrowing into her hair and sighing happily, “My dear Bilbo!”

“Balin,” she mewls, just as happy. She nuzzles into his beard, having missed its faint scratch. She wasn’t gone nearly so long as they’d planned, but it was too long all the same.

It’s a good many minutes before he sets her down, but when he does, he asks, “However did you get back so fast?”

Bilbo answers simply, “I have a lot to explain. But I think it’s best I tell you all at once.”

Balin nods. “Of course, of course! Dear me, but you are full of surprises! Come, Thorin will be overjoyed. Goodness, they all will!” He wraps his arm around her while he turns, guiding her up into the gates: her home away from home.

In the short time she’s been gone, Erebor’s come a long way. Many of Dáin’s people have settled in,
and all are working hard to restore it to its former glory. She’s very proud of them, but even more so, she’s proud of Thorin for consenting to a treaty with Smaug, if only so he can have Bilbo flown easily back and forth. It’s the only way he can keep her, and more importantly, the only way she can keep him happy. It takes several long talks to get him to finally listen to the dragon’s side, but he does in the end, and the story is too close to his own to completely brush it off. Fíli and Kíli are even more excited for it—they’re young and less stubborn, less dead-set against the new. They both find Smaug utterly fascinating, and eventually, Thorin lets them speak to him alone. Kíli comes away from it almost in tears, so thoroughly excited at the promise of taking a ride alongside Tauriel, so they can see the world in the blink of an eye, yet still come right back home. Now that Thorin’s been forced to accept a dragon and is ashamed of his own actions towards the elves, he doesn’t even try to keep Kíli and Tauriel apart. It leaves Gandalf to sigh when he returns, “None of you dwarves can seem to stick to your own size, can you?” And they laugh and shake their heads, because they’ve all seen too much by now to settle for anything less than all the delights of the world at once.

Gandalf explains, when he comes, that he’d meant to go with Balin to fetch Bilbo, and he’s quite surprised to learn of their new solution. Naturally, several of the dwarves ask him why he never thought to speak to the dragon before, but Gandalf admonishes them with the observation that none of them thought of it either, and he was the one who brought Bilbo, which turned out to solve all their problems.

With Gandalf back, Bilbo can scrape together the plans she’s been steadily building for weeks. She didn’t want to have the celebration without him, responsible for it as he was. She knows it simply isn’t practical, even with Smaug, to bring all her many friends, though she does intend to write Lord Elrond and Beorn letters of it. She’ll also have to include it in the final chapter of her book, which she’s now certain she has to write, because so very many people keep asking her what the adventure was really like, and one little hobbit doesn’t have the lung capacity to explain it so many times.

King Thranduil and Bard—who’s since become the official Master of Dale—visit for the ceremony. Legolas is off on his own adventures, Thranduil explains, but Tauriel joins them, and Dwalin catches Alfrid trying to sneak in the gate, so Bilbo lets him in, too. She didn’t know much of Dwarven customs when she came here, but between the lot of them, she’s learned enough for a lifetime, and in some ways, it isn’t so different from a hobbit wedding.

It takes place before the throne of Erebor, which of course, Bilbo knew Thorin would want it to. All her dwarves line the platform by the throne itself, Thorin directly in front it, the guests along the different walkways. Thorin wears long robes of blue, his clothes silver beneath but not armour. He wears the heavy, gold-and-silver crown on his head that looks almost like a bird in flight, reaching up with shimmering wings. His long, dark hair has been brushed into perfect waves, one braid trailing down either side with little diamond clips. Bilbo comes up the long stairs at the other end, Gandalf walking slowly beside her, presenting her in place of a father or brother, just a very dear friend.

There is no music in the hall, at least, not yet. She’s sure the dinner after will be a great raucous, and she’s already heard Bofur practicing a few songs. For now, she looks around at all the smiling faces, Dáin’s people that she’s met, elves and people from Dale, and of course, the cluster of dwarves themselves. She can’t quite bring herself to look at Thorin for more than a second, because it makes her heart swell, and she’s already close to bursting. Her steps never falter. Her own long, silken red robes drag behind her, her feet bare as they always are. She doesn’t wear any jewelry, except for the little clasp in the tiny braid that Bifur knotted into the back of her hair for good luck. When she finally reaches the platform that holds the throne, Bilbo can’t avoid it anymore. She lifts her head and looks into Thorin’s eyes.

He looks as overwhelmed as her. His eyes run up and down her form several times, and as she comes before him, his arms reach out, palms up to accept hers. She places her hands over his, and
their eyes lock. Gandalf slips into the line of her other dwarves, and Bilbo steps aside so she and Thorin can parallel the throne. Their fingers loop together and stay that way, as though nothing could tear them apart.

For a moment, that’s all the world is. The two of them, standing there, amidst all their friends, smiling so wide that their eyes are crinkled and watery around the edges. She feels vastly overwhelmed but wouldn’t trade this moment for the world.

Dáin approaches them: the next in line to officiate their bond. He holds a small, silver crown in his hands, but he doesn’t lift it up. First he asks, voice loud enough to echo off the walls, “We have come today from far and wide for two of the most sacred ceremonies happily joined into one. We are here to witness the bonding of two souls and the inauguration of a most worthy queen. Thorin Oakenshield, son of Thrain, of the line of Durin, you are the King under the Mountain. You are the rightful lord of Erebor, and it is yours to give and share. Bilbo Baggins, daughter of Belladonna Took, friend of all and loved of many, you have done more than any other to rescue this great kingdom, and it is yours to take and share.” Dáin pauses for a breath, and Balin sniffs, standing just behind Thorin. Dori quickly hands him a handkerchief, and Bilbo tries not to look at them, because she’s sure she’s just about to follow. She still can’t believe she’s really here. Thorin squeezes her hands, and it draws her eyes back to his, his gaze burning right through to her heart.

Dáin turns to Thorin to ask, “Thorin Oakenshield, is it your wish to bond with Bilbo Baggins, to share all that you have and all that you are, to love long past the greying of your beards?”

Thorin breathes, “Yes.” His voice is worshipful, rich, and he lifts her hands to press a kiss to her fingers, which breaks down the last bit of barrier she had. He brushes his thumb chastely over her knuckles as he promises, “I will love you, Bilbo, with all that I am.”

Bilbo sniffs. She tries to hold back a little sob, but it’s too late, and a tear trickles out the corner of her eye. She can’t wipe it away, because he doesn’t let go over her hands.

Dáin asks her, though she can’t look away from Thorin, “Bilbo Baggins, is it your wish to bond with Thorin Oakenshield, to share all that you have and all that you are, to love long past the greying of your... foot hair.” Nori snorts, then quickly tries to stifle his laughter under Dori’s glare, and Bilbo can’t stop herself from letting out a short giggle. More tears are coming now, and they get in her mouth as she tries to return the words.

“Yes. I... I will love you, Thorin. With all that I am.” She lifts his hands to kiss the same way he did to hers. She’s trembling more than she thought, but she realizes belatedly that half the shaking is his doing. She lifts her head again, sniffs and tries not to stop.

Dáin places the crown atop her head. It’s light and sparse, looped in intricate silver aches and inlaid with precious stones, but small and delicate enough for a hobbit to wear. Thorin’s face nearly splits with his proud smile, and Dáin announces, “You are named Queen Bilbo Baggins, Lord of Erebor, the kingdom of dwarves. ...And one hobbit.” Bilbo finally looks over at him, but all she can do is smile.

When she looks back to Thorin, he gathers her face in his hands. He draws her up as he moves down, and he seals their lips together, kissing her warm and hard. She throws her arms around his shoulders, heart exploding under the warmth, the softness of his touch, the way he feels so right in her arms, and the promise that he's hers forever. She hears someone whistle behind her but can’t bear to tear away, and then several of the dwarves are cheering and shouting encouragement, and by the time she finally pulls away to breathe, she can’t help but laugh through her tears.

She’s nearly knocked to the floor by Fíli tackling her from the side. Kíli shoves in front of Thorin to
latch onto her front, and Bombur grabs her waist and pecks the back of her head. All the dwarves push through, and Dáin has to step back off the platform to make room for them, while each of them kiss her in congratulations, and Thorin gets a few of his own hugs and touches. Bofur and Nori kiss her on either cheek at the same time, Óin pecking her forehead and Glóin nearly biting her jaw, Bifur kissing her hand and Ori her cheek, Dori her nose. Dwalin and Balin wait their turns to kiss her lips, and finally Dáin is chuckling, “Alright, you lot! Let her through!” But Thorin is the one to squeeze in again.

Thorin ducks down to grab her, picking her up so that she has to latch onto his shoulders, squeaking in surprise and delight. He walks right past Dáin, headed down off the platform, walking past all the friends that smile and clap as she goes. She wants to thank all of them for coming, but she can’t seem to look away from Thorin again. In a way, she’s glad Dwarven ceremonies are short, because she’s not sure she could’ve gone much longer without sobbing herself into a puddle. Besides, she’s told the actual celebrations will go on for days.

And after that, they’ll need to relax, and Bilbo sighs as they descend the stairs of the hall to the dying cheers of their loved ones, “We should ask if Smaug will take us off for our honeymoon.”

“After we’ve made love,” Thorin agrees, which makes her laugh and kiss his chin. He smiles back down at her, pausing his steps so he can nuzzle into her forehead. He gives her another kiss, not nearly as chaste as the one on the platform, passionate and fiery: the brunt of Thorin Oakenshield.

Then he carries her off to their new bedchambers, to begin their new life together as King and Queen under the Mountain.

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