| Rating:     | Teen And Up Audiences             |
| Archive Warning: | Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings |
| Category:     | F/M, Multi                        |
| Relationship: | Kili/Tauriel, Arwen/Aragorn, Fili/OC, Éowyn/Faramir, Legolas/OC, Galadriel/Celeborn, Elrohir/OC, Celebrian/Elrond, Thranduil/OC, Éomer/Lothíriel, Bilbo Baggins & Thorin Oakenshield |
| Character:    | Kili, Tauriel, Fili, Thorin, Dís, Thranduil, Legolas, Celeborn, Galadriel, Arwen, Aragorn, Éowyn, Boromir, Faramir, Elrond, Elladan, Elrohir, Sam, Rosie, Merry, Pippin, Bilbo - Character, Frodo, Celebrian, Gimli |
| Additional Tags: | Romance, Adventure, Missions, Archery, Academy, University, Modern, alternative universe, AU, Setting, Birthday, planning, Shooting, starlight, Coffee, War, Mordor, Character Death, Party, Fighting, Nightmares, life - Freeform, Marriage, Alternate Universe - Modern Setting |
| Stats: Published: 2015-03-20 Updated: 2019-07-20 Chapters: 23/? Words: 90235 |

**Shooting in Starlight**

by MelATCK

**Summary**

How would The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings characters live in a modern human setting?

Kíli does not know what he wants to do after university. His family encourages him to accept the invitation from Lothlórien Shooting Academy. He thrives at the Academy as his eye falls on a certain red haired lady, Tauriel Greenwood. But while the two young adults are attracted towards each other, their families who run the Oakenshield Company and the Mirkwood Estate don't always agree with their relationship. Will they be able to overcome their differences through many painful obstacles? The Hobbit and LOTR characters in a modern setting. Main focus will be on Kiliel but with subplots as well with Arwen and Aragorn, Éowyn and Faramir etc. Please read and review, comments are wonderful and keep me going! Enjoy! :)

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*Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at [http://archiveofourown.org/works/3579309](http://archiveofourown.org/works/3579309).*
The tires gave a squeaking noise as Fíli stopped his car. The blonde looked beside him at his younger brother who was still looking ahead. He had remained silent the entire way from home to the academy. His long dark brown hair was pulled into a half up ponytail to keep the excess hair out of his face. He looked a bit pale.

“Kíli, we are here.” Kíli looked at Fíli from the corner of his eyes, through thick dark lashes. He sighed a thanks and picked up the duffel bag in front of him before throwing open the passenger door.

“Hey!” Fíli called after him and the younger brother looked back. Fíli gave him a thumbs up and grinned. “You’ll be fine! You’re great at it so don’t worry. And besides it’s supposed to be fun, meet new people. Uncle Thorin would never have let you accept their invitation if he thought you wouldn’t like it.” This seemed to encourage Kíli as a smile started to creep back on his face.

The brothers, though 5 years apart, were very close, always knowing what bothered the other and how to cheer each other up. They could have been twins.

“Thanks Fíli!”

“Good! I’ll be back here in two hours.”

“Alright.” Kíli shut the door and walked around the car to get to the entrance. Fíli pushed his window down.

“Oh and Kíli?”

“Yeah?”

“Go kick some butt!” Fíli winked and Kíli laughed, winking back and raising his thumb up.

“Will do!” And with that Fíli rolled his window back up and drove away.

Kíli turned towards the Academy and took a deep breath. He could do this! He squared his broad shoulders, lifted his head and pasted a grin on his face. Kíli Durin was going to join the masters, those archers wouldn’t know what hit them –literally.

The shooting Academy was one of the most prestigious in the entire country, belonging to one of the best in the world. Becoming an archer here was like becoming royalty. But that wasn’t something very foreign to Kíli.

His family was technically royalty. The Durin family was one of the oldest in the world. A bit more than a century ago, his ancestors used to rule over the lands of Erebor as kings and queens. Nowadays however they didn’t rule over the people but simply owned lots of land and were the owners of a successful mining business carrying the same name, Erebor.

They would harvest and produce most of the resources themselves, especially gold, diamonds and other precious stones. These would be made into the most beautiful creations that were sought after by many, from other royal families and celebrities, to fashion designers. A few years ago they expanded the business to also include the average people who desired unique wedding rings or quality birthday presents. Fíli was more or less in charge of that section of the company. Their uncle Thorin, currently the head of the company was preparing his nephew to take over one day. Thorin Durin never married, nor had any children. However with the sudden death of Fíli and Kíli’s father, Thorin had supported his sister Dís with the upbringing of her two sons and he had practically become a father to both of them.

Fíli was currently his heir. At 27, he had finished his bachelor in international business and masters in law and trade, and was happy to be supporting his uncle.

Kíli had just finished his own bachelor in politics but he had no idea what he actually wanted to do.
At 22 years old he didn’t feel ready to commit to the company for the rest of his life. He had decided to take a year off and work in a café. This has surprised the rest of the family. It hardly happened that a member of the Durin family would work outside of the business and never in something so different as a café. But they were still ever so supportive, especially his mother who convinced him to take up his favourite sport again, bow and arrow shooting. While in his youth he would go to competitions, and generally win, he stopped during university to focus on his studies. But now he was back and he’d been invited to come to try outs at the world-renowned Lothlórien Archer Academy.

For a few seconds Kíli stood in front of the doors of the magnificent Academy, looking through the glass into a grand light foyer. He eyed his destination, the information desk, before taking a deep breath and opening the door. He didn’t stop and stare at the beautiful interior but remained focused on his goal.

The woman behind the desk had spotted him coming her way, and became ever so startled by his intense gaze. Quickly she scanned the agenda to see who this visitor could possibly be. As she eyed his name she mentally slapped herself, how could she not have recognized one of the Durin boys of Erebor? As he reached her desk she smiled at him.

“You must be Mr Durin?” As is being awoken from a trance, his intense dark brown eyes looked at her surprised.

“Huh, what?”

“Kíli Durin? That is your name right?”

“Oh yes, sorry, of course. I am Kíli Durin.”

“No problem at all. It happens to all of us.” The woman smiled and Kíli returned the smile. “Now,” she said getting to business, “the changing rooms are that directions, your instructor will be waiting on the other side at the range. I believe he has a session currently but that won’t be a problem.” She looked him over and pushed her rectangular glasses further up her perfectly straight nose. “How tall are you?”

“Oh…” Kíli said, slightly taken back by her question, “1,75 cm madam.”

“Hmm right, let me see if we have your size, most here are taller. But don’t worry if it doesn’t fit, it won’t be your permanent uniform. If you’re accepted they’ll make one specifically for you.” She said while looking in the cupboard behind her for the right size.

“Oh well actually, I brought my own stuff.” Kíli said raising his duffel bag as confirmation. He felt colour rising to his cheeks, he wasn’t that small!

“Oh great,” the woman said looking relieved, “well right that way then.”

“Thanks.” Kíli smiled and headed to the door she pointed to.

The changing rooms were very light and modern with few decorative touches here and there. Very streamlined just like archers themselves. Kíli found himself a locker and began to strip from his jeans, heavy leather jacket and rough knitted sweater. He made himself comfortable in his grey jogging pants, black fitting t-shirt and threw on his dark blue hoodie against the autumn chill. Finally feeling a bit more confident, he happily locked up his belongings. The feeling didn’t last long.

Just as he wanted to exit the changing rooms a group of students came in. The boys were taller than he was, all sporting long hair held together in low ponytails, their faces perfectly aligned and they all wore the silver coloured uniform he just turned down. The uniforms were fitted tightly around their lean bodies, but had to be flexible enough for the movements required with shooting. The shirt had a high collar and the sleeves were long. The ends reached their knees. They wore tight dark pants and high boots. A few dark blue bands decorated the shirt, which showed their ranking.

Kíli had made himself familiar with these rankings. Red was the ‘beginner’ level, though this was
only relevant in the academy itself; belonging to the academy already meant belonging to some of the worlds best. Blue was the intermediate level and finally green was the colour of the masters.

The boys had been laughing among themselves but fell quiet when they saw Kíli. They looked him up and down and Kíli suddenly wished he hadn’t turned down the uniform offer, even if it had been too bog it would have blended him in better than his own sporting gear. He felt terribly out of place. But thankfully none of the boys laughed, rather they looked curious.

“Where’s your uniform?” one of them even asked.

“I am here for try outs.” Kíli replied, hoping that would explain his appearance. He thought he saw some understanding in their eyes. The questioner even graced him with a small smile.

“Well good luck then.”

“Thanks.” Kíli mumbled and practically pushed his way through the exit. He thought he heard laughter behind him but didn’t dwell upon it.

He stepped into the range and this time he did take in the view, how could he not? It was the most beautiful place he had ever seen. The range was set up like a veranda. There was wooden flooring with massive racks of all-different kinds of bows on the walls beside him as well as hundreds of arrows displayed, all arranged on size and weight. The range itself was immense. It stretched well 10 meters across and had a width of at least 5. Fifteen archers were currently lined up at the edge and they looked out along a strip of grass in the front before reaching the edge of a forest. The trees displayed their recently coloured leaves in a magnificent show of reds, oranges, yellows, and greens. Between two archers clad in silver, Kíli saw a few targets spread throughout the open space.

There was a shout and Kíli quickly looked beside him. There, dressed in a silver and green robe, stood his instructor. Celeborn was a tall man, his long silver mane flowing over his shoulders. Though he was older, lines only minimally bared his face with only a few lining his clear blue eyes. Those eyes were fixed on his students who instantly straightened their stands. Another command and synchronically they picked an arrow from the holder on their backs.

“Ready!” They came into position, aiming their arrows on the assigned target. Kíli could feel excitement and anticipation fill the air. His own hands were trembling, he wanted to join, and he needed something to shoot.

“Fire!” roared Celeborn and with perfect timing all students released their arrows at the same time, piercing their targets with deadly precision. A few seconds passed in the silence before bustling began with the students checking their targets and arrows, some cheering with happiness, others groaning with frustration. Kíli didn’t miss the green bands lining their uniforms.

Celeborn had seen him and enthusiastically walked towards him.

“You must be Kíli Durin?”

“Yes sir.”

“Oh no need to call me sir, call me Celeborn,” and the two shook hands. “Well Kíli you’ve come right on time. I want you to see some of the training sessions so you know what will be expected of you. This is accuracy training, we also have endurance and the combination of the two, which many here prefer over this I am afraid.” He grinned as he caught a few students shift uncomfortably, obviously eavesdropping the conversation. “But I’ll admit, I find this part a very calming experience, my style of mediation, just don’t tell my wife.” He said winking at Kíli who smiled back. “Now will you come with me inspecting their shots?” It wasn’t really a question, as Celeborn put a hand on his shoulder and stirred him towards the waiting students.

Kíli couldn’t shake off the feeling of embarrassment as he stood beside Celeborn who commented on his students. Some he congratulated with their progress of prolonged success. Others who had already expressed their frustration were given stern comments, though most were given in
encouragement. Generally those students didn’t see to value Kíli presence as it added to their own embarrassment.

Finally they reached the end of the line and Kíli saw a tall girl with the longest and most beautiful hair he’d ever seen. Her hair was the colour of the autumn leaves, a rich red colour reminding Kíli of the fur of the young foxes that sometimes crossed the Erebor lands. The strands were braided into a thick French braid that fell along her straight back, the ends reaching her upper thighs.

“Tauriel, perfect shot as always?”

The girl Tauriel turned and Kíli felt his heart stop. Sure he’d seen beautiful women before, kissed them before and there were enough who had shared his bed, but they currently all became puffs of smoke, fading away from his memory. She was the most beautiful creature he had ever been fortunate enough to lay his eyes upon. She had a pale heart shaped face with delicate features. Her nose was small and straight with a slight upturned point. Her cheekbones were well defined and her pretty pink lips looked very kissable. But what captured him the most were her eyes. Almond shaped eyes surrounded by surprising dark lashes contained bright green orbs. They shone like the gems Kíli and his family collected they shone like the stars. They were the shade of newly sprouted trees, the shade of green that was full of life. Those eyes were alert, curious, sharp and filled with intelligence, something those other girls had lacked. And those eyes were looking straight at him. Shit!

Kíli blinked and shook his head slightly. What had he missed? Had she spoken to him? Questioning he looked at Celeborn who looked at him amused.

“Kíli this is Tauriel, one of the best here.”

“Oh yes, sorry,” Kíli mumbled as he awkwardly pushed out his hand towards Tauriel who raised a perfect eyebrow in surprise but still accepted his hand. “I am Kíli, it’s nice to meet you.” Tauriel smiled making his heart slam in his chest.

“Likewise.”

Kíli didn’t know exactly how long they held hands but he became awkwardly aware of his large rough hands compared to her slim soft ones, but that wasn’t the worst of it. To his own horror he realised that she was in fact taller than him. Though not by all that much, but still, her half a head extra height caused him to having to look up.

The Durin family was of small build. Only a few members, himself included, had grown past the 1,70 cm threshold. Though he usually didn’t care about his height specifics, when he was with his brother, he would remind everyone that he was 1,76 cm tall exactly, something he was very proud of and frustrated his older brother endlessly, whose height had stagnated at 1,72 cm. Their mother was tiny (though no less impressive) at 1,60 cm tall. It was because of this lack of height that the Durin’s tended to be attracted to smaller people in general, Kíli included. However he did prefer women of a smaller build, in contrast to the curved beauties his brother and friends brought home. While he had looked up to women in a figurative sense, Kíli couldn’t remember the last time he had done so literally.

They released hands and Tauriel broke their eye contact, breaking the spell. She turned to Celeborn, her eyes serious.

“Unfortunately not a perfect shot.” She said trying to mask the disappointment in her voice. Celeborn raised his eyebrows in surprise.

“Oh no?” He asked and looked through the monocular to look at her shot more accurately. “Hmm well I still think it’s good.”

“It’s not supposed to be good,” Tauriel exclaimed, not bothering to hide her frustration, “it’s supposed to be perfect!”
Kíli looked at the target curiously. The arrow had hit the centre. It wasn’t an easy target in the slightest. It lay far away within the trees. The arrow had to fly completely straight to not be hindered by the other trees, leaves, and branches. Kíli eyed the monocular.

“Can I um… look?” He asked and Celeborn nodded with a smile while Tauriel looked at him rather sceptical. He lowered the monocular and found the target. The arrow had indeed pierced the target centre but lay slightly off the red circle centre. He turned his head to Tauriel in disbelieve. “You don’t find this perfect? Does it literally have to be in the centre?”

“Yes of course. As a master all your shots have to be deadly accurate.” She replied, obviously annoyed by the fact he didn’t’ know this. “All of my shots are perfect except for this one, I just can’t get it right!” She angrily admitted.

Kíli closed his eyes and tried to imagine himself taking the shot. How would he stand? How would he hold his bow? What would his breathing pattern be like? And how did his arrow need to fly. He hadn’t realised however that he had been moving around. When he opened his eyes Tauriel looked at him strangely.

“What are you doing?” Embarrassed Kíli turned to Celeborn, who smiled at him as if he knew exactly what was going to happen.

“Can I try?” the smile broadened and with a movement of his hand another student stood beside Celeborn.

“Lindir, can you get Mr Durin here one of our bows and an arrow. I think the Blue Mountain one will do.” With a light bow Lindir left.

Tauriel stepped aside, looking slightly shocked and Kíli took her place and started to roll his shoulder back. He wasn’t aware that most students has now left their posts and curiously had joined the corner of the range. Celeborn smirked as he looked at Kíli clothes.

“Didn’t like the uniform did you?” At that moment Lindir returned and handed Kíli the bow. It was shorter than Tauriel’s but of a heavier build. The moment his hand touched it, Kíli felt shivers of pleasure go up his spine. He recognised the build. It was similar to the one that his father had also used and given to Kíli when he started to go to competitions.

He lined himself up close to the edge and spread his legs to align with his shoulder. He then angled his body and held up his bow. He felt the string beneath his fingers and pulled it. It was strong and sturdy he would need to pull it hard in order to reach the target. He stood a small step to the right, taking the wind into consideration. Once he thought his stand was right he accepted the arrow Lindir was holding and lined it up. His father had taught him to breath in and out very slowly to minimise extra movement. When he was satisfied his breathing was correct his drew his arrow so close to his face, he could feel the feathers against his cheek. There was an intake of breath behind him but he didn’t let it distract him. Finally he relaxed his shoulders and let go.

There was a soft thud sound as the arrow hit its target. Kíli didn’t dare to check whether he had succeeded. Luckily he didn’t have to. Several students had sprung to life and were looking through the monoculars it didn’t take them very long. Within a few seconds the one closest to him let out a gasp of surprised and turned towards him with a mad grin of him face.

“You’ve done it! It is right in the centre!” He exclaimed. Others quickly gathered around, all wanting to glimpse at the evidence. Kíli became overwhelmed with students congratulating him. Celeborn had looked himself as well and smiled happily. He put a hand on Kíli shoulder.

“I knew you could do it! I’d say you passed our accuracy training!”

“Thank you sir!”

Kíli turned to Tauriel, who looked at him in disbelieve. But a smile started to creep onto her face. She shifted her weight to one leg, angling her hip and placed her hands in her waist as she faced him.

“How did you do that?”

“I don’t know, I just did.”

“No but I mean, your stance was exactly the same, I just don’t know what I was doing wrong.”
“Did you relax?” Kíli grinned mischievously and Tauriel raised her brow. 
“Excuse me?”
“Your shoulders, did you relax your shoulders?” He asked and smiled at her. 
“No… I didn’t,” She admitted and smiled back, “But I will do now!” and she winked at him. 
“Thanks for the tip.”
“No problem.”
“Does this mean you are already a master then?” Tauriel asked teasingly. Kíli grinned and puffed out his chest. 
“Of course I am!”

He wasn’t.

Author’s note:

Just in case the heights might put you off, I am from Europe so I measure size in centimetres (cm), but here is the conversion to feet approximately:

Kíli: 1,76cm = approx. 5’8
Fíli: 1,72cm = approx. 5’7
Dís: 1,60cm = approx. 5’2
Average Durin (male): 1,70cm = approx. 5’7
Tauriel: 1,83 cm = approx. 6’0

My sorry if they are still quite off but I hope you get the general idea. Basically Tauriel is taller than him by about half a head, so significant but not as ridiculous as in the movies.
Caramel Macchiato

Once back home, Kíli was greeted by the smell of his favourite food, a hearty stew, filled with potato, carrots and meat, especially lots of meat. Fíli who had picked him up from the Academy entered the house before calling loudly.

“Mum, we’re back!” There came loud noises from the kitchen and within seconds their mother Dís appeared in the hallway. She was wearing her apron with a wooden spoon sticking out of the front pocket, still dripping with stew, but Dís didn’t care.

“There’s my baby! How did it go darling?” She asked as she gave Kíli a hug and kissed his forehead. Kíli felt like he was being squeezed to death and gave Fíli a pleading look but he just grinned, just as Uncle Thorin who had also appeared in the hallway with an amused look on his face.

“Thanks mum, it went great, I think I…Ow! Mum not too tight, I am sore.” He winced and his mother instantly let go, frowning.

“What? Are you hurt? What did they do to you? Come here let me see!” And before Kíli could even protest, she’d lifted his shirt and several bruises and cut appeared. “My God what is this? What did they do to you sweetheart?” She cried in near outrage.

“Mother, don’t worry, it’s nothing too bad. Its just part of the training, that’s all.” Kíli said trying to soothe his mother while at the same time trying to cover himself again.

“It’s the endurance part of the training. We had to run through the forest shooting targets while at the same time being chased around. It was actually quite good fun. But I fell down a few times, so got a few of these bruises.” He pulled his mother from him, his hands on her shoulders and grinned at her, “But I am fine, and even better, I am in, I passed the test!” He said breathless and with a feeling of disbelief. Dís smiled widely and placed a tender hand on his cheek, her eyes full of pride.

“I knew you would, your father would have been immensely proud of you.” And she let him go but before she walked back to the kitchen she turned to him once more, now waving her spoon around rather dangerously.

“You are still too reckless!”

Kíli grinning followed his mother to the kitchen where his uncle lay an arm over his shoulder and hugged him tight.

“I am so proud of you Kíli! We all are!”

“Thanks uncle.”

“Mum made your favourite today. I think I should start shooting too.” Fíli laughed but he was shushed by his mother with her new-found wooden weapon.

“Oh hush,” Dís cried, “as if I never make your favourite!” and she ruffled her oldest golden hair.

While enjoying his mother’s ever so delicious stew, Kíli told his family all about the training. He tried to describe in full detail what the academy looked like, decorated in a style his mother would like.

“There was this girl,” Kíli said trying to keep his face in control, fearing he would blush too much. “She belongs to the masters, being one of the very best. However there was one target she couldn’t get exactly right, and some how I managed to hit it perfectly. That’s why Celeborn allowed me to pass the accuracy training.” He avoided eye contact and concentrated on his plate but when he looked up and caught his brother’s gaze, he saw laughter in his blue eyes.

“You always were best at accuracy in the competitions, that’s why you won most of them.” His mother said while adding more stew into his plate.
“What happened after that?” His uncle asked turning his intense stare to his nephew.

“Celeborn began training with the intermediates and they started the endurance training which he wanted me to join. And that,” Kíli laughed, “Practically destroyed me.” He instinctively reached for his shoulder, which was feeling pretty sore. “But,” he added quickly seeing his mother’s eyes, “It was good fun! Gives you so much adrenaline, it feels great. The best part was seeing Celeborn’s face afterwards. He looked so pleased. Well that’s when he said I’d been accepted. Trainings for me will be twice a week. I have to start from the bottom obviously, so I’ll have a red band.” His uncle nodded in agreement.

“It sounds great Kíli, I am glad you had a great first day.” His mother smiled.

Dessert and coffee followed after dinner. Fíli and Thorin brought Kíli back up to date with the company.

“We’ve got designs coming in to create some amazing things with a new stone we found. It’s a brilliant blue colour, something that’s quite in demand. Uncle is trying the create a deal with Rivendell, it seems to be going to right way.”

“Oh congratulation, I hope things will go well. Keep me updated on the process.”

“Definitely will do.” Fíli smiled.

“I am gonna head home.” Kíli said after another hour of talking and finishing his second cup of coffee. He felt sore and incredibly tired.

“Are you sure dear? I can make your bed if you like.” His mother asked but Kíli smiled, shaking his head.

“No mum, thanks for the offer but I have to go back. Got to work again tomorrow.” He stood up and gave his uncle a hug. “Thanks for everything!” Thorin smiled at him, pressing his forehead to Kíli’s.

“No problem son.”

He picked up his duffel bag and walked to the hallway, where his mother was waiting with his jacket ready.

“Thanks mum.” He said as he slipped into the heavy leather. His brother also came into the hallway.

“I’ll walk you to the bus stop Kíli.”

“Oh you don’t have to.”

“I want to.”

“Alright sure.” Kíli smiled and turned to his mother and gave her a tight hug. “Thanks for tonight mum.” Dis smiled at him and patted his back.

“It’s fine baby. Now let me know when you’re home. Also remember that it’s your uncle’s birthday soon. I want you both to help me plan something special. Why don’t you bring along a nice girl? Your uncle would like to see you happy.” Kíli laughed and pressed a kiss against his mother’s cheek.

“Aren’t you going to be my date?”

“Oh you silly boy!” his mother exclaimed ruffling his dark locks. “But do think about it,” she added seriously before winking, “I would love some grandchildren!”

“And that’s my sign to leave.” Kíli laughed and opened the door with Fíli following right in his footsteps. He turned once more to wave at his mother before walking through the lit drive way to the main street.

Fíli threw his arm over his brother’s shoulder and Kíli looked over doing the same.

“I am proud of you, you kick their asses.” The blonde said grinning.

“And they kicked mine.” Kíli reminded him.

“But that was expected.” His brother winked and Kíli punched him. Laughing the two brothers walked on until they reached the stop. Apart from a middle-aged man, they were the only ones. They leaned against the glass walls.

“So, how’s Arild?” Kíli asked looking at his brother who grinned.
“She’s doing fine. So far it’s working out I guess.” Fíli raised his head looking at the stars for a bit before turned back to Kíli with a smile on his face. “She’s still as amazing as always, I count my blessings everyday, I just can’t believe it took us so long to get together.”
“You say? Jesus it took you both ages. Everyone knew you guys liked each other except you yourselves. It was pretty hilarious to watch really.” Fíli let out a loud laugh.
“And you didn’t say anything?”
“It was more fun this way.”
“It was fun to see me stressing out about finding a way to ask her out without knowing she liked me?”
“Oh definitely!”
“You have a strange sense of humour.”
“I will admit though, had it taken even longer I would have stepped in.” Kíli laughed as he remembered how he had pushed his brother into asking out the beautiful curly blonde Fíli had liked since he practically saw her. That had been almost a year ago and they had been dating ever since. “It’d be nice if you visited more often, mum misses you.”
“I know, I’ll try my best, it’s just been busy lately.” Kíli said and he saw his bus approaching.
“There’s my ride.” He turned and hugged his brother and as they broke apart grabbed each other’s hands into their own handshake. The bus had stopped and doors opened.
“You should follow mum’s advice.” Fíli said and Fíli turned, raising an eyebrow.
“What?”
“Bring the girl along sometime.” Fíli winked and Kíli felt his cheeks colouring.
“Wh…what?” he stammered.
“Don’t play stupid. The girl you met, you like her.” Fíli laughed and Kíli stepped into the bus before his brother called behind him. “What’s her name?”
Kíli turned back looking into his brother’s grinning face.
“Tauriel.” And with that the doors closed and Kíli quickly jumped into a seat. He looked out the window and saw Fíli waving. He waved back as the bus drove away into the night.

Twenty minutes later his bus pulled up at his stop right outside his apartment. It was located in the centre of Dale, a city bustling with life. As few streets away was the café at which he worked at. There was a nice shopping street around the corner and one with plenty of restaurants and bars that Kíli visited often. A gym lay close by, as did the university from which he had graduated a few months ago. But the perfect location didn’t appeal to Kíli right now and with effort he climbed the few stairs to his home.

The apartment was on the top floor of an old but pleasant building. His neighbours were nice people who he got along with quite well. He did have to warn them though whenever he had a group of friends or family over, they tended to get quite loud.

His apartment itself was spacious, airy and light. He stepped into a small hallway that contained three doors. The first door on the right was that of the toilet. The second went to his large bedroom with adjoining bathroom. The final door led to his living room. It was Kíli’s favourite part of the apartment, except for the roof and balcony. Large French windows looked out over the park outside, which during the day flooded the room with sunlight. The walls were white but covered with photographs of family, friends, and scenery. His floor was covered with dark blue carpet that felt soft beneath his bare feet. He didn’t have much furniture but that didn’t bother him. He had a large couch and two comfortable chairs, which his mother had supplied an endless amount of pillows for. There was a coffee table, which was generally covered with books, his laptop and beer cans or a good bottle of wine. He had a TV on the wall with all other necessary electronics such as a DVD player, radio, and of course his XBOX. He owned a small dining table that he hardly used, with four chairs that currently served as bookcases. He had an open average sized kitchen that he quite enjoyed.
Although he could easily eat frozen pizza for a week, whenever he had the time he did like to prepare himself or others with a nice meal that generally included a lot of meat. The most surprising aspect about the room was the instrument standing in the far right corner of the room against one of the windows. An elegant large black piano stood in sharp contrast to the rest of the cozy but nothing fancy apartment.

Kíli parents, and later on Thorin as well had encouraged him and Fíli to learn to play an instrument. The Durin family was a lover of dance and music, something that was passed down from generation to generation. Fíli had chosen for the guitar but had also become a player of base and even violin. Kíli however had always enjoyed the sound of the piano. His mother could play exceptionally well and she would do so often with Kíli sitting right beside her. He loved seeing how her fingers effortlessly seemed to glide over the keys. She had taught him how to play and he had even had a teacher back in high school. Nowadays he would play in the mornings during the weekend. With a freshly made cup of coffee he’d enjoy the feeling of sunlight starting to brighten up the room as he played some of his favourite tunes.

But sleep was currently the only thing on Kili’s mind. He sent his mother a message that he’d arrived home, brushed his teeth and let himself fall on his double bed. He didn’t even bother to shut the curtains. But right before he let sleep take him away, a pair a bright green eyes flashed through his mind and he smiled.

The next morning Kíli awoke to sunlight streaming into his bedroom. He checked his alarm clock and groaned as the clock showed 6am. It would be another three hours before his shift started. He sat up and reached out to close his curtains. It didn’t help much so he pressed a pillow to his face to catch another hour of sleep.

He drifted of again before his standard alarm clock went off at 7am. Had it been a normal day Kíli would have ignored this wake too but his body was sore and he desperately needed a long hot shower. He made his way to his bathroom and turned on the hot water. Blissfully he let it work its magic as he massaged his shoulders. Satisfied and feeling slightly more relaxed he grabbed a towel and examined the damage to his body. He could understand his mother’s concern as he saw the amount of blue and black bruises covering his strong chest and trained abdomen. He smirked because as much as it hurt, the pain also made him feel alive. He had pushed his body to a limit and overcome it, which made him proud.

By the time Kíli came into his living room dark clouds had replaced the sun. Heavy rain clattered against his windows. Kíli didn’t consider himself to be a moody person, but if there was one thing that could ruin his day, it was rain, heavy rain to be exact. Of course it hadn’t helped that his father had died in a car accident during terrible weather. A truck driver in front of him had lost control of his vehicle due to rain and wind. He had slipped and fell on its side, crashing into Kíli father’s car and dragging it to the side of the road. While his father hadn’t immediately died, in the hospital it became clear that he wouldn’t survive his injuries; he’d practically been squashed to death. Not that Kíli could remember what had happened, he was only seven at the time, and he could hardly remember his father at all. Fíli however could clearly remember Kaelin and to this day he had a fear
for thunder and rain.

Kíli brewed himself a strong cup of coffee that he used to wash down a few pieces of toast. Once ready he decided that he might as well go to the café even if he was an hour early. Throwing on his hood and zipping up his jacket all the way, he braced himself for the storm. It was only a ten-minute walk, but when he arrived at Café Bree, he was soaked. That wasn’t going to help rebuild his immune system. Inside he was greeted by his boss Dori and two employees behind the counter, Meriadoc and Pippin. The two were the most hyperactive people Kíli had ever met, but they were also one of the friendliest. They tended to do early and night shifts and always managed to cheer up all the customers. Their shift would end in an hour and then Kíli would be joined by Rosie to take over.

The café was quite large, which was necessary because it was perfectly located on a busy shopping street in line with the university. It had two floors, both of which were large perfect circles. On the far end of the first floor was the counter, shining with all the machines. On the right side they had created a small lounge area with comfy chair. This continued on the entire second floor. The rest was covered with multiple chairs and tables, with seats at the windows. The main interior was a palette of browns but with red and blue accents. Kíli loved the place. Although it was hectic at times, he also found it very relaxing and he enjoyed the work.

He helped Merry and Pippin wash off and prepared for his own shift. Rosie greeted him happily when she arrived. A group of professors and students came in waves, quite a few of them regulars, thus Kíli had practically memorised their working times and lecture schedules. Rain still fell down heavily as he and Rosie quickly and effectively worked their way through orders. After half an hour the seemingly endless stream of customers ended. Rosie retired to the back to clean up while Kíli stayed behind the counter. There were only five people drinking their coffee while reading or working.

He was just refilling the water to one of the machines when a girl burst through the door. She was soaked. She wore brown ankle boots paired with tight faded jeans. Her black jacket was dripping and as she slightly unzipped it he saw a green sweater. She had turned her back to close the door, but Kíli knew whom it was, her long red hair being a dead giveaway.

Tauriel turned and looked into his grinning face. Her own looked panicked but softened when she recognised him and smiled as she made her way over.

“Well hello again.” Kíli winked. Tauriel laughed and pushed strand of wet hair behind her ear.

“Hi! I didn’t know you worked here.”

“Well I do.”

“Yes I see. I don’t come here often, so um… that’s probably why I don’t know.”

“What brings you here?” Kíli asked and upon answering Tauriel seemed to remember that as well. “I am late, very late!” She said panic rising in her voice as she checked her silver watch.

“What can I make you then, I promise I’ll be as quick as I can.” He told her and she smiled.

“Thanks. I um… I’ll have a caramel macchiato please.”

“Sure! What are you late for?” Kíli asked as he went to work. It had become so automatic that he didn’t even have to think about making the coffee.

“I am supposed to have a lecture now. I can’t believe I am late; I am never late! This stupid weather.” Kíli laughed agreeing.
“What lecture?”
“Oh I am studying medicine at the university.” And she smiled as he whistled lowly in awe. “It’s hard but also a lot of fun.”
“Judging by the way you shoot, I’d expected you to like killing things over saving them.” He winked and Tauriel laughed.
“I can be both, a killer and a healer.” Kíli had finished the coffee and handed it to her. Their fingers touched and their eyes met.
“Thanks.”
“You’re welcome.” She didn’t move from her place as he had expected her to.
“Don’t you have a lecture to catch?”
“Nah, once I am there it’ll practically be over. My next class is in an hour. Would you mind if I stay here?”
“No, of course not!” Hell yeah! “Feel free to stay as long as you want.” He smiled happily and she returned a thankful one.
“Thanks Kíli.” He felt a shiver go through him as she said his name. It flowed so nicely from her lips.
“What about you? Did you study?” She brought the coffee to her lips and drank. Her eyes widened and a smiled formed. “Wow! This is amazing! It’s been a while since I’ve had such a good macchiato.” Kíli grinned happily and made a mocking bow.
“At your service m’lady!” They both laughed.
“I studied politics at university, graduated before the summer.” He continued.
“And now?”
“Now I work here. I don’t know what I want to do. I figured taking some time off would clear my head a bit.”
“Has it worked?”
“Nah.” He smiled and she happily sipped her coffee.

They talked non-stop. He told her about the Erebor Company and his family. He told her about his father and other things he hardly told anyone. She talked about her life, how she wanted to become a doctor and how shooting had been a hobby she and her adopted brother shared, which had grown into something bigger than they had expected.

“My parents were killed in a car accident when I was four. I didn’t have any living relatives close by that could take care of me, so my father’s friend and employer took me in. He practically adopted me. I guess I was the daughter he always wanted.” Tauriel had finished her coffee but was toying with her empty cup as she told her story.
“Do you miss your parents?” he asked her.
“I can’t really remember them. I have vague memories of my mum’s hair, which is just like mine. I have a photo of them but when I try to picture them, especially my father, only Thranduil comes to mind.” Kíli’s jaw dropped and he almost dropped the cup he was holding.
“Thranduil? The Thranduil? Thranduil of Greenwood?” Tauriel laughed at his reaction.
“Yes, the one and the same. Why this reaction? Do you know him?”
“I um… well my uncle knows him. I eh… guess they aren’t on friendly terms.” That was an understatement of the century.

Thranduil of Greenwood, who just like the Durin family came from royal ties, was the head (king) of the Mirkwood Trade Company. It was a very successful business, dealing in mostly luxurious products, such as high quality furniture, jewellery, clothing, and wines. Thorin and Thranduil had started up a business proposition together. Erebor would help with the creation of elaborate jewellery
pieces that Mirkwood would auction. But it was a risky proposition especially with several investors trying to hinder the deal such as firm Smaug who tried to monopolise the trade for themselves. With the demand being so low and high risks of bankruptcy, Thranduil decided to back out of the deal. This backing out hit the Erebor Company badly, with Thorin needing years to rebuild it to its former glory. He had refused Thranduil to keep the jewellery and ever since the two had been on very unfriendly terms. Thorin had sworn an oath to never do business with the likes of Thranduil again. Kíli hadn’t been born yet at the time but he’d heard the story like one hears bedtime stories. And now this beautiful girl in front of him, who made his heart beat quick, was raised by his uncle’s sworn enemy. Brilliant.

But either Tauriel didn’t know this history or choose to ignore it, because she didn’t behave any differently. She merely smiled at him.

“So, are you sore?” She asked and Kíli raised an eyebrow playfully.

“You could tell?” And he wiggled his hips suggestively, ignoring the pain it caused. She burst out laughing.

“Maybe.” She winked, “the endurance training seemed pretty gruelling.”

“You watched?” Kíli asked surprised. She nodded.

“Yeah, Legolas had training after me, so I had to wait anyway.”

“Don’t you train together?”

“We normally do, but he couldn’t make it this time.”

“You do a lot together then?”

“Well yeah, he’s my best friend, we grew up together.” Kíli felt jealously grow in his chest, the beast grumbling. He made a mental note to Google this Legolas of Greenwood as pathetic as it sounded. He’d never Googled anyone before.

“When’s your first training?” She asked.

“In two days, and you?”

“Same, but since you’re a beginner your training is earlier.” She said, a smirk growing on her face. Kíli laughed.

“You enjoy calling me a beginner?”

“Of course!” She grinned, “but I can help you with practice if you want?” her eyes locked with his and he saw golden flecks in her green eyes like the autumn leaves. He stood mesmerised for a few seconds before replying.

“I’d like that.” She smiled.

“Great!” She checked her watch and stood up. “I do have to get going now before I miss another class.” She slipped into her jacket and eyed the rain outside. Kíli followed her gaze.

“Why don’t you use one of the umbrellas? You can come by later today or tomorrow to bring it back.” He offered and her face lit up.

“Really? Oh that would be amazing, thank you!”

Kíli smiled and walked her to the door, handing her one of the café’s dark umbrellas. He opened the door. The looked at each other silently, judging the best way to say goodbye. She took initiative and gave him a friendly hug. He couldn’t resist sliding a hand over her soft hair. She smelt fresh like the earth in the early morning but with a sweet hint of vanilla and coconut. He’d never forget that smell. She looked at him, eyes twinkling.

“Thanks for the coffee and everything. I really enjoyed our time together. And I’ll bring this thing back tomorrow.” She said looking at the umbrella. Kíli smiled.

“No problem. There’ll be a caramel macchiato waiting for you.” He winked and she laughed. She walked outside. After a few steps she turned and did a small wave, which he returned. Then she turned and disappeared into the rain.

With a huge grin on his face he returned to the counter where Rosie was standing. She laughed
cheekily when she saw his face.
“Well look who is in love! I have to give it to you, she’s a beauty.” She looked at him from the
corner of her eye. “But maybe a bit too tall?” Kíli hit her with a towel and grumbling told her to shut
up. They fell into a fit of laughter. As they worked their shift, nothing seemed to be able to take away
his smile and Kíli happily stared outside at the terrible weather.

Who knew rainy days could be fun too?
Tauriel hurried through the rain. She was so grateful for the umbrella that Kíli had given her. Kíli… she blushed. He was so sweet and friendly and very attractive, which surprised her. He didn’t look like the men she usually fell for. But she had a hard time forgetting those shining dark brown eyes that twinkled like the stars. She liked his dark wild hair and 5 o’clock shadow, it gave him a rough edge, and she liked anything wild and rough. She hadn’t been able to believe her luck when she saw him at the coffee counter. He’d left quite the impression on her during the training at Lothlórien Academy and she’d hoped she would bump into him again there soon. But knowing she could literally see him everyday made her heart beat quick.

She arrived at campus and ran down the hall to her classroom. Once inside she was relieved to see she wasn’t late and that quite a few students were absent, but thankfully not her friend. Arwen Rivendell sat at their usual spot, her face buried in a book. Sensing someone approach her, the raven beauty lifted her head fixing her bright blue orbs on Tauriel. She smiled looking relieved.

“You nearly gave me a heart attack! You weren’t there at the lecture and I was worried! Why didn’t you text me?”

“I am sorry!” Tauriel replied, throwing her bag and umbrella beside her as she sat down and got out her books. “I woke up late this morning. Legolas and Thranduil had already left so I took the bus. But it was late too and went so incredibly slowly because of the rain, I figured it’d be faster if I walked.”

“You walked through this weather? Why aren’t you soaked?” Then Arwen’s eye fell on the umbrella, the name Café Bree curving in white along the edge. “And where did you get that?” She got a look on her face that told Tauriel she had to tell her friend every single little detail, well almost all of them.

“So I ran, getting completely soaked, and after a while I realized I was gonna be late anyway so I might as well grab a coffee in a café to warm up a bit. The guy at the counter was really friendly. I’d actually met him at the Academy yesterday he was there for try-outs. So I decided to stay until this class would start. He let me use this umbrella for the remainder of the way. I am bringing it back tomorrow.”

Arwen raised a perfect eyebrow.

“You just happened to run into a random café and he worked there?” She smirked getting a mischievous grin on her face and Tauriel knew she was doomed this girl was practically a mind reader. “Is he hot?” Tauriel felt her cheeks turn scarlet but tried to ignore it and waved her hand dismissing the idea.

“No…” She choked out, “He’s actually quite…short? But Celeborn was impressed with him. I’ve never seen your grandfather so happy to accept someone in the Academy.” She told her, trying to stir the conversation away from Kíli. Arwen leaned back into her chair at the mention of her grandfather. Celeborn and his wife Galadriel were Arwen’s grandparents from her mother’s side, Celebrían. The parents of her father Elrond, Eärendil and Elwing, lived far away, and thus Arwen hardly saw them. But she had grown very close to Celeborn and Galadriel, even though she herself didn’t care for archery and other fighting sports.

“What’s so special about this boy then if granddad likes him so much?”

“He was able to hit my target.” Tauriel admitted, feeling slightly ashamed of the fact.

“You target? Did training go terrible yesterday or something?” Arwen asked looking surprised.

“Yes it went terrible.” Tauriel replied moodily and her friend laughed.

“Let me guess, you missed the centre of one target out of god knows how many.”
“Yes, and it’s very frustrating, especially when some good looking rookie is able to hit it in one go!”
“So you do think he’s good looking!”
“Wh…what? No I didn’t say…” Tauriel tried to protest but the damage was done.
“Yes you did! Don’t lie to me!” Arwen laughed looking way too pleased with herself for Tauriel’s liking.
“Ok, I admit he’s good looking.”
“And does Mr Good Looking have a name?
“Kíli…” Tauriel almost whispered and Arwen’s mouth fell open.
“Kíli? Kíli Durin?”
“Yes?”
“From Erebor?”
“Yes Arwen, Kíli Durin from Erebor.” Arwen fell back into her chair gazing out of the window not having noticed Tauriel’s irritated reply.
“Wow.” She said and then smiled.
“What?” Tauriel asked finding her friends reaction very out of place for the normally very composed girl.
“I just find it funny, how after such a long time, when you finally like someone again instead of the other way around, you choose Kíli Durin.”
“Why is that funny? Because of Thranduil?”
“Well he definitely won’t be pleased.”
“I don’t care if he’s pleased or not. I can decide who I like or not.”
“So you like him?” Arwen flashed her a smile. Tauriel felt herself turn red and waved her friend away.
“Can you just stop? I just think he’s cute, that’s all.” She opened her book and ignored her friend laughing. Their tutor walked into the classroom and they began.

Tauriel tried her very best to concentrate in class, but with Arwen poking her from time to time whispering Kíli’s name it became very difficult. She also had to admit that yesterdays and especially today’s encounter with the handsome brunette kept replaying in her mind. She sighed in frustration, annoyed that someone could so easily distract her. It was one of the reasons she always avoided liking someone too much. She liked being focused on everything she did and didn’t want any distractions, but apparently she hadn’t been able to protect herself this time. Stupid Durin.

She was glad when class was over. Arwen had gotten a text from her older brother Elrohir that he was close by with his car and that he would pick them up. They had to work on a big project together and Arwen had offered her place to work. Elrohir and his twin brother Elladan had turned 30 a few weeks ago. They both worked with their father but generally doing different jobs. They were beautiful men with lots of humour but also a sense of seriousness. They were fiercely protective of their six-year younger sister but also pestered her constantly, making some think Arwen was actually the oldest of the siblings.

A dark blue Mercedes was waiting outside the campus for the girls and Elrohir rolled down his window smiling at his sister and Tauriel. Although the twins were almost 10 years older than Tauriel, she got along with them very well.

“Good day ladies! Who of you radiant sunshine’s ordered this weather?” Elrohir had long raven hair like Arwen that was currently held up in a ponytail. He had chiselled features, a wonderful smile, and shining grey eyes. He was married to a woman called Elendiel and both were trying to cope with their three-year-old twin sons Elrohan and Elrodal. The young boys were currently driving everyone insane, except for their grandparents who couldn’t get enough of them.
Arwen gave her brother a kiss on his cheek before telling him he looked terrible, and Tauriel couldn’t say she was wrong. Elrohir laughed.

“Thanks sis. Just some advice both of you, don’t get kids or at least not twins.” The girls laughed as they got in the car.

“Well knowing my luck, all my children will be twins.” Arwen said laughing, “We have a long history of twins. My lovely nephews, my brothers, dad is also a twin and so were his uncles.” She said counting down from her fingers and Tauriel laughed.

“I am going to bet that your first child won’t be a twin, but the rest will.” Arwen laughed and winked.

“Deal!”

“You shouldn’t even been thinking about having children.” Elrohir said looking at them from his car mirror, his intense eyes boring into his sister. “Aragorn hasn’t been talking about it has he?” Aragorn Strider was Arwen long-time boyfriend and a good friend of the family. But he was four years older than her, making her brothers at times, especially with topics like marriage and children, very protective. She tended to make fun of them when they seemed to believe she and Aragorn were still only holding hands and could launch into rather descriptive stories of her sex life, not only embarrassing them but Aragorn as well.

They arrived at the Rivendell Estate. Of course Tauriel had grown up on that of Greenwood, which was just as impressive but she always marvelled at this place. It was so open and airy with fantastic scenery. It was very calming and she spent a lot of time here. While Thranduil loved her and took good care of her, Tauriel sometimes felt he had too many expectations of her, and at times their personalities and worldviews clashed and then Rivendell would be her refugee.

After grabbing some food and tea from the large kitchen and greeting Celebrían who was in the main living playing with her grandchildren the two girls went upstairs to Arwen’s room. Palace mansion was so large that each member of the family could have their own wing. Walking through the hallways they passed the working room of Elladan, Arwen’s other brother, the oldest of the twins. The door stood slightly ajar and music was following out.

“Your time will come if you wait for it, if you wait for it. It’s hard, believe me…I’ve tried.”

Tauriel stopped walking and kept silencing. She liked it. The sound of the instruments, the singers voice it all blended together rather nicely. She surprised herself because it wasn’t the type of music she was usually attracted too. Why did it all of a sudden sound so nice and familiar to her? She didn’t have to think long. With the coming of a new verse she knew why as a pair of chocolate brown eyes filled her mind. No way! She wasn’t going to like some piece of music, just because it reminded her of Kíli, she was not that type of girl, and there was no way she was going to become one! The song changed and Tauriel wanted to walk away, but she was curious. She had never heard these songs before, but if she did like them with no affiliation to Kíli? She could always just ask. She pushed the door open and leaned against the doorframe. Elladan was sitting at his desk full of paper work. It was now or never.

“Elladan?” Tauriel asked and the raven turned his handsome face to her.

“Yes?” He questioned an eyebrow raised. When he saw her he smiled, “Oh hey Tauriel, what’s up?”

“What’s the band you’re listening to called?”

“Your time will come if you wait for it, if you wait for it. It’s hard, believe me…I’ve tried.”

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“Elladan?” Tauriel asked and the raven turned his handsome face to her.

“Yes?” He questioned an eyebrow raised. When he saw her he smiled, “Oh hey Tauriel, what’s up?”

“What’s the band you’re listening to called?”
“Imagine Dragons. Why?” he looked at curiously before smiling almost disbelieving. “You like them?”
“Yeah I do, never heard of them before. That a bad thing?” Elladan laughed.
“No not at all. I just didn’t think it was something for you. But here,” he said and handed her their CD. “I have them on my computer, so keep it.” Tauriel looked at him in disbelieve.
“Really? You’re sure?”
“Yeah positive.”
“Thank you so much!” She said overjoyed and bent down to kiss his cheek. Elladan laughed and waved her away.
“It’s nothing. Now get out I have work to do.” He winked and she laughed giving him a mocking salute before closing the door behind her. Holding the CD out as if it was a precious treasure she went to Arwen’s room.

Her friend had already positioned herself in her comfortable chair beside the window. She had her laptop and a few papers on the table in front of her. She looked up at Tauriel.
“Where did you go, and what is that?” She asked as Tauriel dropped herself in the other chair. “I liked the music coming from Elladan’s room so I asked him who the band was. He seemed so happy I liked them he gave me their CD.” Arwen looked at her in disbelieve.
“He, Elladan gave you his CD? Wow girl, you seemed to be having a great day with all these gifts. First an umbrella and now this.”
“Hey! The umbrella isn’t a present, and I am not keeping this either. I’ll put it on my laptop and give it back.”
“Sure.” Arwen said, rolling her eyes at her friend before laughing. “Come on, let’s ace this project!”

They worked diligently for about fifteen minutes until Arwen’s father Elrond interrupted them to say hello. Another while later Celebrian came up, checking if they wanted more tea and that she was starting to prepare dinner. Then they heard the squealing of two toddlers running around the estate with Elrohir’s footsteps and cursing following them. The naked boys burst into the room full of giggles. Elrohir apologised repeatedly as he tried to herd them out again, blaming the ever so terrible bath time. An hour hence and they weren’t much further when Celebrian called for dinner.

Arwen sighed heavily, putting her head in her hands, groaning.
“Why can we never work here in peace?” Tauriel laughed and an idea popped into her mind.
“I know a place where we can study next time.”
“Where?”
She looked at her friend, with a smile on her face.

“Café Bree.”
The next day was a sunny one. The sun had decided to bestow its grace for a little longer, warming up the earth before heavy and cold winter would descend. Dale was bustling, even early in the morning people were walking about, taking their time instead of their usual rush, because warm sunlight was precious.

Kíli was staring out of the window of Café Bree dreamingly. He’d much prefer to be outside right now. Apart from the fact that he wasn’t allowed to do that because it was his shift, he was also afraid that if he did, he’d miss her. He felt nervous for her coming back. Yesterday he didn’t know and he’d had no time to prepare himself seeing her. Not that he prepared himself today either. He had just felt like wearing a dress shirt today, she wasn’t the reason he had chosen the dark blue one that his mother said looked great with his eyes. And so what that he had clipped his hair back more neatly than usual or had trimmed his beard (stubble as Fíli would call it). It all had nothing to do with her. Why was his hand trembling and did he feel so disappointed every time someone walked in and it wasn’t her? This was pathetic! He didn’t like her. She was beautiful for sure and that didn’t leave him cold and he could flirt with her right? Flirting never hurt anyone. Love at first sight didn’t exist. Even Fíli hadn’t actually loved Arild when he met her, he just thought she was pretty and then they became friends. Kíli really wouldn’t mind being friends with Tauriel. That was it! She was his friend! He just dressed up a bit more for his friend, he’d done that before, and there was nothing wrong with that or even slightly romantic…

The door of the café opened and Tauriel came floating in. Her long red locks were tamed into a side fishtail braid that was draped over her shoulder. She wore a dress with a white lace top with quarter sleeves and a flowing dark green skirt that reached just above her knees. There was a golden belt highlighting her slim waist. Her bag hung on her shoulder, her leather jacket laying over it. The café umbrella she held in her other hand. She stood there by the door, smiling as sunlight streamed into the café. Kíli felt his mouth hanging open and quickly closed it before slapping himself mentally. Ok! Screw it! He liked her romantically. Tauriel 1, Kíli 0.

She placed the umbrella back in the rack before walking over to Kíli, who was now busying himself with her coffee. Reaching the counter she took a seat on one of the chairs there.
“Good morning!” She said happily and Kíli couldn’t resist smiling back.
“Good morning. Did you get to your class on time yesterday?”
“Yeah thank god. Many people ditched though.”
“I can’t blame them.” He laughed and she looked at him slyly.
“Were you one of those people who’d ditch everything possible?” She asked.
“Nope, I attended every class. I wasn’t allowed to ditch.” He said and laughed when she raised a questioning eyebrow. “My mother would have killed me if she ever found out. Actually my uncle too probably.”
“So you were too afraid?” She giggled.
“So would you if you knew my mother. She might be disadvantaged height wise, but she can still be very terrifying, believe me, I know.” He defended himself and she kept on laughing, clearly enjoying herself with this new information.
“Let me guess, you were a rascal when you were younger.”
“I still am.” He told her, raising an eyebrow suggestively and she smirked.

He finished her coffee. As he handed it to her, a ray of sunlight hit her face and that’s how he saw
them. Perhaps two dozen light freckles highlighted the bridge of her nose and sprinkled her cheeks.

“You have freckles?” He heard himself blurt out in surprise. Why had he not seen them before?

Tauriel looked at him slightly annoyed and raised an eyebrow daringly.

“Yeah. What of it?”

“No, nothing. I just hadn’t noticed before that’s all.” Kíli said, taken back by her aggressive reaction.

“Why so angry?” Her expression softened at his words and she looked guilty.

“I am sorry. It’s just I’ve never liked them. Kids used to tease me because of them.” She admitted, avoiding his eyes. He reached out for her hand and her head shot up, their eyes locking. He smiled at her.

“Those kids were just jealous. They look very cute.” Tauriel smiled before looking at their hands and blushed.

“Thanks, I um… No one has ever complimented me on my freckles.” She laughed, as did he. He reluctantly let go of her hand and she drank her macchiato.

“Still as great as last time.” She told him and winked.

“Thanks! I make the best ones here, especially for beautiful freckled girls.” He said grinning and she burst out laughing. He loved the sound of her laughter.

“Aren’t you the charmer?”

“I try milady.” He winked. She smiled and looked at her watch. Hurried she threw on her jacket.

“Gotta run! But I am coming back later. I have to work on a project with my friend.” She told him. With her coffee in one hand and bag in the other, she had just turned around when she changed her mind. She twirled back to him and gave him a swift and soft kiss on the cheek. Kíli felt blood rushing to his face and looked shocked.

“Thanks Kíli.” She said with playful laughter in her voice. Then she turned around and within seconds she’d disappeared.

Rosie looked at her friend and smirked. He was completely red, his mouth hanging slightly ajar. He stood like a statue and there was a far away look in his eyes mixed with utter disbelief. Slowly he moved his right hand to his cheek were Tauriel had kissed him. Then a huge grin started to appear on his face. His eyes twinkled with glee and he leapt into a small victory dance behind the counter. He froze when he saw Rosie standing a few feet away from him, arms crossed with a mischievous grin pasted on her lovely rosy face.

“I should really have filmed that.” She told him. Kíli coughed and straightened himself, composing his face into a mask of innocence that could have fooled anyone (except his mother) had they not just caught him celebrating. Rosie laughed. “Come on goofy, let’s get to work.”

A few hours later there was a tsunami wave of customers streaming into the café. Most classes at the university had ended and many here desired a coffee and snacks. Counting the amount of people in line was useless so Kíli focused himself on the cup in front of him. He and Rosie stood next to each and became an efficient machine. Rosie took the order, writing it on a cup and putting it in line with the waiting orders. One by one Kíli worked his way through them and praised god when the majority only wanted a regular coffee or cappuccino instead of a tall, double shot, non-fat soy milk latte. Why would you even order coffee if you wanted that? He would happily invite those people to come make their own damn drink themselves.

Within the stream of people, Kíli saw Tauriel and her friend come in. Seeing the line they, quite wisely, decided to occupy a set of chairs and table, waiting until the line died down. He looked at her friend. She was a very beautiful lady, perhaps two years older than Tauriel. She had long black wavy hair that reached her hips. Her face, like Tauriel’s was delicately formed with high cheekbones and a slim nose. Her eyes brilliant blue eyes were large, framed by dark lashes. She wore a wide high-
waist cream coloured skirt that reached her knees. Her crop sweater was a light grey colour, lined with gold thread that sparkled in the light. Though both were very beautiful and tall, they contrasted each other as well. The friend was cooler, seemingly more composed, whereas Tauriel gave off a warm vibe, full of life, fun, and recklessness. He grinned when he caught her green eyes and she gave him a small wave.

The girls got out their papers and started to work. Kíli didn’t mind as he now had an advantage point of being able to watch her. He smiled as she cutely started to nibble on the end of her pen in deep concentration. His hands kept moving along the counter until to his surprise there was no waiting cup for him and he needed a second to register that they’d finished. He looked at Rosie who smiled in relief and gave her a high five. He then turned his attention back to the two girls and walked over.

“Ladies, can I get you anything?” He asked and Tauriel looked up smiling.
“Hey. Kíli this is Arwen, Arwen Kíli, this is the guy your grandfather just loved.” Both Kíli and Arwen looked at each other curiously.
“Wow,” Kíli said looking slightly in awe and stuck out his hand. “It’s an honour to meet you. Your grandfather is fantastic.” Arwen shook his hand with a smile.
“Likewise, my grandfather doesn’t easily get impressed by people, so you must be great. Tauriel thinks you are anyway.” There was a soft thud sound from under the table and she suddenly squinted in pain. She gave Tauriel a glare but her friend looked at her innocently.
“At archery, you great at it.” Tauriel said smiling and Kíli smirked.
“Well it’s great to meet you Arwen.” He said amused. “Anything you want to drink?” He asked, looking Tauriel in the eyes.
“Hmmm a cappuccino would be nice, can you handle that?” She asked.
“Will I get another kiss for it?” Kíli replied boldly, his eyebrows raised suggestively. Tauriel heard Arwen gasped for breath and heard a squeaky ‘what?!’ But she was rather undaunted by his flirting. Resting her head in the palm of her hand she challenged him.
“Is your cappuccino as good as the macchiato?” She asked.
“Of course!” He proclaimed grinning.
“Arwen will judge too, you think you’ll convince her? She has excellent taste.” Kíli’s eye fell on the pretty raven-haired girl, who was currently looking between the two in shock. He smiled.
“Yeah, I will.”
“Then you might.” Tauriel said winking. He winked back and gave her his signature Durin smile before heading of to the counter.

Once he was a few feet away Tauriel turned to her friend who seemed to slowly regain her composure back. Arwen raised her eyebrow accusingly.
“Did I miss something? Since when are you handing out kisses… to him?” She asked, waving her hands at Kíli’s back adding some extra drama. Tauriel couldn’t help laughing at her friend.
“Since this morning actually.” She said calmly before turning to her with a mocking concerned face.
“Don’t get too stressed out darling. It’ll only make you grey and wrinkled.” She said teasingly. Arwen didn’t find it very hilarious and gave her a murderous glare that could wipe out an entire army. After a few seconds she whispered.
“Did you really kiss him?”
“It was just a kiss on the cheek.”
“Why?”
“I thanked him for my coffee and…well…” Tauriel stopped and felt her ears turn red.
“Well what?” Arwen urged her. Tauriel didn’t look her in the eye.
“He complimented me on…on my freckles,” she said, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. “He
said they were cute.” The blush had reached her face, her cheeks burning. Arwen looked at her friend. She had never seen her so fragile yet very happy. She had to admit she liked the guy. He was very charming and flirtatious but obviously also very kind. They probably had a similar temperament. And Thranduil would have a fit, which would make it so much more worth it. She leaned back in her chair, Tauriel’s green eyes following her.

“I like him.” Arwen told her, eyes twinkling. Tauriel blinked, not sure if she heard her friend correctly.

“You like him?”

“Yeah I like him, for you obviously.” She raised an eyebrow. “What, you didn’t think I would?” Tauriel looked at her guilty.

“I don’t know. He’s very different from the rest.” She said referencing all the other boys and men that had been presented to them. They were all gorgeous and smart men with tall and lanky frames and perfect manners. But even with all their obvious virtues and the fact that Tauriel could trust them indefinitely, they just weren’t her type. They were too perfect, too high and mighty. She wanted someone more down to earth, someone perhaps less perfect, but kind and caring, without any pretence. She wanted someone who understood her longing for adventure and travel and wanted to go with her.

“So?” Arwen shrugged her shoulders, ‘so is Aragorn. No one is complaining about him.”

“Not anymore no, but if I remember correctly, your father wasn’t too damn pleased when you told him.” Her friend waved her hand.

“That was ages ago. Ada is quite fine with it now. Actually Kíli reminds me of him, though he’s a lot shorter.” Tauriel had to agree. Both men were well built with a full head of long dark brown hair and a slight beard. If it weren’t for their different eyes and obvious height difference, they could have been related.

“How’s Aragorn?” She asked.

“He’s fine. He’s currently in Botswana helping with a malaria outbreak. Apparently it’s going well. He’s coming back next week.” Arwen said looking proudly. Aragorn was also a doctor, he graduated a few years ago and had signed up to work with Doctors Without Borders. He travelled often all around the world. Arwen worried about him but she knew that this was what made him happy and she supported him with it. He did have plans to settle down at one point and take over his family’s hospital Gondor though.

“That’s great, I haven’t seen him in a while.” Tauriel said. Arwen leaned over and whispered as Kíli came over with their coffee.

“We should go on a double date.” She winked and Tauriel felt a blush rise.

Kíli reached their table and set their cappuccino’s down.

“Here you go ladies. Enjoy!” He said smiled and they thanked him happily. He looked at their papers. “Hard project?” He asked and Tauriel nodded.

“Yeah kind off. Well it’s not too hard; we just have to elaborate a lot. It’s about the different cures to a lung infection and we have to conclude which method we think is the best, and the ways of prevention and such.” She looked at him and saw he was curiously reading their writing, genuinely interested. She smiled. He straightened and looked at them.

“Well, I’ll leave you to it, if you need anything just come over.” He winked and left.

They worked furiously for several hours, Kíli being a constant supplier of coffee who was very amused by them. Several times he and Tauriel would catch each other eyes before being brought back to reality by either Rosie or Arwen. But they couldn’t stop it from happening every so often.

The sky darkened and it was close to eight at night, when they were finally done and packed up their stuff. Kíli and Rosie were doing the same as Merry and Pippin came in for their shift. The girls paid
for their drinks and Kíli walked with them outside while Rosie was picked up by her boyfriend Sam. “I told mum we’d be at the crossing.” Arwen said having texted Celebrían. She stuck out her hand again to Kíli who shook it. “It was nice to meet you, and thanks for today. Tauriel, I’ll go stand there, come soon, mum can be here any minute.” She said and walked away to the place she’d pointed out to give the two some privacy. Tauriel looked slightly awkward which mirrored Kíli’s feelings. “Well um… thanks again.” She said slowly twisting a ring on her fingers.

“No problem, you’re always welcome here.” He said looking at her. The lanterns outside highlighted her flaming hair. “I’ll see you tomorrow?” Her head shoot up and she stared into his beautiful dark eyes that shined so hopeful. She smiled.

“Yes, of course. I’ll be at the academy the whole day practically. There’s a garden downstairs, should we meet there? It’s not as hectic as the rest.” “Sounds great!” he smiled broadly. Then his mind went to the package that arrived this morning. “My uniform arrived today.” “Oh really? And? Does it fit alright?” She asked before blushing as he gave her a cheeky grin. “Wanna find out?” He winked and laughed as she hit his arm. He then turned serious. “I am afraid it’ll look completely ridiculous.” Tauriel laughed.

“No it won’t, and otherwise we’ll all look ridiculous so it won’t matter.” And he smiled at her. They heard Arwen call for her.

“Well then bye.” She leaned forward and gave him his promised kiss on the cheek. “See you tomorrow.” She was about to walk away before Kíli grabbed her hand and turned her around. With wide eyes she looked at him as he bowed over her hand giving it a soft kiss. He straightened and looked at her with twinkling eyes. “See you tomorrow.” Heavily blushing she walked away, giving him a final wave before catching up with Arwen who was getting into her mother’s car.

With a stupid grin on his face Kíli walked home. He eyed his uniform he’d laid out on his bed. The silver material shone at him. He’d never thought he’d ever be glittering in some weird shirt, and it hurt his masculine feelings. Fíli was never allowed to see this or he’d never hear the end of it. But for Tauriel he wouldn’t mind wearing it.

The next day he got out his silver Suzuki GSX-R1000 motorbike. It was his pride and glory and he had saved his money up for almost two years to be able to buy it. He loved the feeling of wind rushing past him, the feeling of freedom as he drove through the country. His mother had been opposed to the idea of him getting it, thinking it dangerous and him reckless. But it was one of the few things his Uncle Thorin had talked her around, being quite amused by his nephew’s choice of transport. If Thorin was honest with himself, he’d always wanted to drive such a vehicle, but his own father Thrain had always prevented this. Thus when Kíli told him he was saving up for it, he had no problem supporting him.

Kíli packed his uniform in his duffle bag, threw on his leather jacket and helmet and drove off. The Academy lay in the further outskirts of Dale, on the border of the Lórien Forest. It was cooler that day with a soft but steady breeze. Clouds covered the sky, though at times the sun found an opening to shine some light. After a forty-five minute drive he finally reached his destination. He parked his bike and with his helmet under his arm he walked into the Academy.
He was still amazed by the beauty and elegance of the place. It breathed sophistication, but at the same time there was a feeling of nature, like something that was build high up in a tree but still had connections with its roots in the ground. Kíli had always preferred the ground and underground against something high up in the air. He wasn’t scared of flying, but he always felt extremely happy when he’d landed. Given the choice between climbing a mountain and exploring the caves, he’d definitely go for caves with all their shining glory.

He changed into his uniform and looked in the mirror. It wasn’t as bad here as it had looked at home, probably because he was supposed to blend in here. He gathered his wild hair into a ponytail to keep it out of the way as much as possible. Relatively satisfied he walked over to the garden Tauriel had talked about. To his surprise she was already there, her hair once again in its thick braid falling along her back. He took a moment to admire her as she stood looking out over the vast fields and stretches of forest. From the corner of her eye she sensed him walking towards her. He joined her standing against the low fence that indicated the end of the garden. The sun broke through the clouds lightening up their view. They stood side by side in a pleasant silence as they admired the view.

After a few minutes Tauriel broke it.
“I always love coming here. It’s so calming. As a child I used to live on the borders of this forest and would play in the fields for hours on end. After my parents died Thranduil would insist on bringing me here every weekend so I wouldn’t feel homesick. He even drove Legolas and me here when his wife was sick. He changed a lot after she died, but I think this place became special to him as well. It’s where he can truly relax and forget all his worries. It reminds him of her.” She looked over at Kíli who was looking at her and smiled. “It’s why we started to shoot here, because of the view.” She made soft laughing sound. “It sounds rather weird saying that out loud.” Kíli shook his head.
“Now… well a little, but it makes sense. Everyone has their own motivation of coming here.” She nodded in agreement.
“What’s yours?”
“My father been teaching me how to shoot right after I could walk. Mum wasn’t too happy about it first. But I enjoyed it as a kid. When he died it was a way to let out my emotions. It felt like when I was shooting he was there with me, it still does at times.” He admitted and Tauriel smiled at him. They became lost in each other’s eyes, the earthly brown and leaf green mixing. Vaguely Kíli registered a bell ringing and stepped back.
“That’s me.” He said grinning sheepishly. “You’ll be here later?” She nodded.
“Yeah I will. Good luck!”
“Thanks.” He said and started to walk back inside. Tauriel called after him.
“Oh and Kíli?” He turned
“Yeah?”
“It suits you.” She said grinning about his uniform. Kíli flashed her a wide grin and winked before heading up to his class.

If Celeborn had feelings of favouritism towards Kíli, he didn’t let it show, but drilled his students for perfection. The targets were hard and Kíli lost count on how many arrows he had shot, his fingers started to hurt. He used the same bow as Celeborn had presented to him last time and so far the Blue Mountain had done its job perfectly. There were different arrows that they had to shoot with, which all required different measurements and stances in order for it to hit their target correctly. Sometimes they had to used multiple arrows at once, either of the same type or all completely different. Celeborn also taught them different styles of shooting, which they practiced outside in the forest. Instead of drawing each individual arrow from the quiver, he told them to hold three in their bow hand and use them from there. It was a lot quicker and efficient. In order to reach intermediate level they had to perfect this skill and also be able to shoot when holding the arrows in their drawing hand. Kíli found
it all incredibly difficult but also exhilaratingly fun. The two hours flew past and soon enough he found himself walking back to the gardens after a quick shower.

With a huge smile he walked on to the patio but it quickly disappeared and a stone dropped in his stomach. Tauriel had not moved from her spot but now next to her stood a blond man, his arm draped over her shoulders. His light golden hair was long, reaching his shoulder blades. He was tall with broad muscular shoulders yet still retained the slender form that was overly present here. The jealousy beast in his chest awoke and started to grumble. Kíli made a coughing noise to get their attention. They turned simultaneously and he saw the man’s face. It was pale with high cheekbones and a chiselled jawline. His long straight nose was fitted perfectly in the middle of his face. He had thin lips and his dark eyebrows stood in contrast with his light hair. His light blue eyes looked Kíli up and down with a questioning gaze. The two men made eye contact and entered a stare contest that was quickly broken my Tauriel.

“Oh you’re back! How did it go?” she placed a hand on the man’s shoulder and he looked at her. “Legolas this is Kíli, Kíli this is Legolas Greenwood.” She told them. Kíli looked at Legolas again and could now see the similarities the heir of Greenwood shared with his father. Legolas looked at him ever more sceptical.

“Kíli? Kíli Durin?” He asked and Kíli stepped into a defensive stance, crossing his arms.

“What of it?” he challenged and he saw a panicked look arise on Tauriel’s face, mixed with annoyance. Damn it, what was wrong with him, he didn’t want her to get upset with him. The Greenwood heir surprised him though by extending a hand. He took it. They shook hands albeit both decided to squeeze just a bit harder than usual.

“Pleasure to meet you.” Legolas said, his voice lacking enthusiasm.

“Likewise.” Kíli replied with equalling his tone.

A silence arose, this one rather unpleasant.

“How was practice?” Tauriel asked him, her eyes begging him to reply normally.

“It went fine.” Kíli answered trying to pretend the blond wasn’t there. “It was difficult and I think my fingers have blisters but it went great. It was good fun. Celeborn is a great teacher.” And Tauriel smiled at him. The bell rang again, this time signalling her turn. Legolas said a good bye to Kíli before walking back inside obviously expecting Tauriel to follow him. She gave Kíli an awkward smile.

“I am sorry about him, he’s usually not this tense at all. I don’t know what’s wrong with him.” She said looking at the door. Kíli shrugged his shoulders.

“Maybe he’s just having a bad day.” He offered but he knew well enough what was wrong with this guy, Legolas felt incredibly threatened. It surprised him because as Tauriel described them, they seemed to have grown up like brother and sister, but apparently Leggy hadn’t gotten the memo. Then again Kíli was surprised by his own reaction. He barely knew her and even less of this guy. Why did he feel so jealous and uncomfortable? He sighed, feeling exhausted and wanting nothing more than to go home.

“I am heading off, and so should you, or does Celeborn allow you to come in late?” Tauriel smiled.

“No I should get going too.” Her eyebrows furrowed together. “You don’t need a ride home?” She offered and Kíli grinned, waving her offer away.

“Nah it’s fine, I’ve got my bike.” She eyes widened in disbelieve.

“You have a motorbike?”

“Yep, I’ll have you know she’s a beauty.” He said teasingly and she looked in awe.

“I’ve always wanted to drive one of those.”

“Well if you want, I can give you a ride some time.” He said winking and she laughed.

“I’d like that.” She winked back and then kissed his cheek good bye.
“Good luck today.” He told her and she thanked him, waving before walking to her class.

As he drove back home his cheek as still burning with her lips. He definitely didn’t mind this type of good-bye but he also couldn’t wait to return the gesture to her, but properly next time, on her lovely lips. And he really wouldn’t mind kissing those adorable freckles on her face either.
Kíli and Tauriel had been seeing each other everyday since they met at the Lothlórien Archers Academy two weeks ago. They would watch each other when they trained and help each other out. But during that time Legolas was generally present as well and while the two men were relatively friendly towards each other, there was tension between them. Although Legolas seemed to be protective of Tauriel out of a brotherly sense, Kíli could tell it was rather borderline leaning more towards romantic feelings than anything else. Either way Tauriel hadn’t noticed or had decided to ignore it by not mentioning it, but she was always very eager to meet up at Café Bree with Kíli alone. It was their sanctuary where they spend hours amusing each other. They never seemed to run out of things to talk about. He tried to help her with her essays while she helped him singling out a few masters that he found interesting. Meanwhile she could make him and even some of the customers, terrific cappuccinos, pouring her artistic talents into latte artwork.

At the Academy Kíli was improving fast and Celeborn had told him he would be joining the blue bands or intermediates, as Tauriel liked to remind him next session. In order to celebrate they went to a pub with the brothers Haldir, Rúmil, and Orophin, who Kíli had befriended. They all had a great evening but Kíli was glad when the brothers left. He had gathered all his courage together, with the help of a few pints of bier and glass of scotch, and asked Tauriel on a date. To his great surprise and immense happiness she actually agreed.

The day after that he became an emotional wreck when trying to think of and organise a great date. He did what any logic man would do; he called up his brother.

“Fíli?”
“Hey Kíli, how’s everything? You doing alright?”
“Fee, I need your help.” Kíli blurted and there were a few seconds of silence on the other end of the line.
“Help with what?” His brother finally asked amusement lining his voice.
“I made the biggest mistake of my life.”
“Oh dear and what’s that?”
“I asked her out.”
“Who?”
“Tauriel, the girl I like, she’s from the academy.”
“And why is that the biggest mistake of your life? You like her.”
“Yeah but…”
“Did she refuse?”
“What? No, no she accepted.”
“Then I don’t see a problem.”
“It’s a date Fíli! I don’t know what to do on a date! I don’t know what she wants to do, in fact I don’t even know what I am doing right now!” Kíli burst.
“Okay, first of all calm down, it’s not the end of the world. The fact that she agreed to go on a date with you is already a miracle.”
“Thanks, I needed that.” Kíli grumbled sarcastically and he heard his brother laugh.
“You know what, why don’t you come over? I haven’t seen you for a while actually no mum hasn’t seen you for a while, so you can’t refuse. And besides, uncle’s birthday is coming up and we promised we’d help organise something. You up for that?” Kíli thought about it and agreed.
“Yeah alright, probably better than on the phone anyway. I’ll be there soon.”
“Alright see you then bro.”
“See ya.” And Kíli hung up. Though it hadn’t helped him feel any calmer, his brother had made him feel a bit better.

Half an hour later he parked his bike in the garage and rang the doorbell. His mother opened up smiling, engulfing him in hugs and kisses as if she was afraid it’d be the last time she’d see him. “I am glad you’re here baby. You’re uncle is away on business so we don’t have to talk quietly.” Kíli grinned. “Mum don’t you think he knows we’re planning something? We always do anyway.” “Yes but he doesn’t know what.” Dís smiled and then smiled at him slyly. “So, Fíli tells me you’re bringing a date, elaborate on that?” And Kíli felt himself go completely red. He shouldn’t have trusted his brother. His mother’s question was more of a demand and she looked at him expectantly. He sighed. “Mum, I am just inside, can we talk about that later?” Dís happily agreed and walked through the house humming, knowing fully well that by the end of the evening she would know everything.

In the living room his brother was sitting on the couch but jumped up when Kíli came in. The golden man smiled and the two brothers hugged each other. They touched their foreheads together, enjoying the familiar sensation. They would trust and protect each other with their lives. Kíli dropped himself next to his brother on the couch and their mother came in with ale. He looked at her with a smile. “Thanks mum.” She smiled back and he took a big gulp. “So about the girl….” and Kíli choked, spurting out the remaining ale in his mouth and coughed. Fíli was rolling along the floor with laughter and even his mother who was so kind to pat his back was laughing with mirth. He shot both an angry glare. He whipped his mouth with the back of his hand, put his ale on the table and sat back, arms crossed. “Well, what do you want to know?” He huffed as he saw his brother regain himself, whipping away tears.

“Everything of course!” His mother exclaimed, blue eyes twinkling, “You can’t keep all of us in the dark. She does have to go through screening if you want to bring her to your Uncle’s birthday.” “Screening? Your screening?” Kíli asked, his eyebrows raised. “Of course! She might become my daughter-in-law, and what if she’s not good enough for you?” “First of all,” Kíli sat up counting on his fingers, “we’re not even dating yet; in fact I still have to try and plan a date. Secondly, of course she would be good enough. And thirdly… you never screened Arild.” His mother laughed shaking her head. “You’ll plan a great date. But only a mother knows who’s best for her son, and of course I screened Arild.” “You did?!” Both brothers asked, Fíli face in shock at his mother revelation. She chuckled. “Yes of course. I knew for a long time, maybe even before you Kíli that they might be something. I wouldn’t have encouraged you Fíli if I didn’t think her good for you.” Kíli looked at his mother in a mix of awe and fear. “Ma, I love you, but that’s just creepy.” But Dís only smiled at him. “Just wait until you have kids of your own, and heaven forbid daughters. You’ll be as if not more protective of them then I am of you. But you still haven’t told us anything.”

At his mothers urging Kíli finally told them everything he knew about Tauriel. “She’s very tall and athletic. She’s got the most amazing hair I’ve seen, and her eyes are like stars. She’s incredibly smart as well, studying to be a doctor and she’s so gifted at archery, it’s unbelievable really, well actually she’s good at everything she does. She makes me happy.” He admitted feeling himself go red. His brother looked at him with their mothers sparkling blue eyes. “Kíli is in love.” He sang with a huge grin on this face.
“Shut up!” Kíli shouted and smacked him with a pillow before Dís interfered stopping both of them. “What’s her last name?” She asked and Kíli gulped. Now this might be a shocker. “Greenwood, Tauriel Greenwood.” He mumbled looking at their pale faces. “I didn’t know Thranduil had a daughter…” His mother said with concern growing on her face. “She’s not, well not biologically anyway. Her parents died when she was very young. Thranduil took her in and raised her. She chooses to carrying his name.” He told them, eyeing his ale. He definitely needed a drink. His mother sat down and both she and Fíli took healthy gulps of their own ale, Kíli followed their example. There was silence for a while. Then he heard his brother start to laugh beside him. He looked into Fíli’s smiling face. “Uncle’s gonna love this.” And Kíli felt a sudden fear. He hadn’t really thought of that, but now he did, there was no way his uncle would accept a daughter of Thranduil, whether biological or not. His mother huffed. “Thorin can say and think what he wants, I like her.” Both her son’s looked at her with surprise. “You do?” Kíli asked, his eyes wide. “Well I haven’t met her yet of course, but I like what I am hearing and have a good feeling about her.” She winked, “Besides I can just imagine your uncle and Thranduil’s faces.” And she laughed.

Kíli smiled back, taking another sip of his drink. “But I still don’t know what to do for a date.” He sighed. “What does she like to do?” His brother asked and Kíli shoot him an annoyed look. “If I knew that, I wouldn’t be sitting here.” “Well then, what do you like?” Fíli asked and Kíli frowned. “I don’t know!” “Why don’t you go dancing?” Dís offered. “Dancing?” “Yeah. You like dancing and are quite good at it too. I am sure any girl would like to dance with you.” Kíli smiled at his mother in awe. That was it. He was all right at dancing, ok quite good actually and he knew a good club in town. If it was a good evening he could even take her to the hill! He leaning over and kissed his mother on her cheek. “Thanks mum.” He turned to his brother, “you too.” Fíli smiled putting his hand on his shoulder. “No worries mate.” “Now,” Dís stood up clapping her hands together. “Let’s get busy. I want ideas and guest lists for Thorin birthday. Where should we hold it this year?”

With renewed enthusiasm Kíli and his family threw themselves into party planning. So far every single year had been a success, now they wanted it to be absolutely amazing, a night to be remembered for years to come.

Kíli had driven himself and Tauriel to the restaurant on his bike. She’d insisted that she’d come to his place by herself. From there they’d gone into town. The meal at the restaurant was great and there hung a relaxed atmosphere. But to be honest he hadn’t really been paying attention to the food. His eyes were fixed on her. He had not seen her look as gorgeous as she did now. She wore a burgundy top, on top of which she wore a short white denim coat. She wore a short tight black skirt that highlighted her lovely hips complete with sheer tights and heels matching her top. She’d applied some darker eye shadow along her normally bare eyelids, which made her green eyes sparkle even more than usual. Her insanely long red tresses hung down in loose curls around her. He all found it a very becoming sight. He himself had opted for black jeans and his nicest blue shirt. Any attempts to tame his hair had been fruitless. But apparently she didn’t mind because their eyes hadn’t felt each other.

They walked to the club hand in hand. He’d told her about the club and she’d seemed excited to go
dance, though admitting that she wasn’t very good. He’d felt confident about it before, but now as they got closer he started to doubt himself. He so didn’t want to screw up. Would it have been better if they’d just stayed in the restaurant or just gone to a movie?

They reached the club and he led her downstairs into the huge basement. It was fancied than most, one of the reasons he’d dared to bring her here. It had a high ceiling that was held up by round pillars. The sidewalls were covered with large mirrors making the space appear even greater. The bar covered the entire length of one of the walls, the counters shining with all different bottles of booze. It was busy on a Saturday night, the club already beginning to feel crowded. Kíli looked over at Tauriel as they handed their coats to the wardrobe personnel, trying to find any traces of discomfort, but instead she seemed to rather enjoy all of it.

She’d hardly been to clubs, her friend generally preferring less crowded and more elitist places to hang out. But she had always had a fascination towards them, liking the relaxed atmosphere where you could do anything and not feel out of place. She took his hand and squeezed it happily and he smiled at her, looking relieved. They went to order some drinks. At the bar they stood and talked for a while as more people kept streaming in. DJ’s were changing the music into more upbeat and people started to fill out the dance floors. They watched them dance, sipping their drinks. At times they would point out couples to each other, some were amazing dancers who drew attention, small crowds forming around them. Others just seemed lost, awkwardly bouncing up and down to at least move themselves albeit complete off beat. Kíli and Tauriel looked at each other and laughed incredibly amused. They stood for a while until they finished their drinks and Kíli decided it was time to dance. DJ Theodred, as if sensing this, started to play some if his favourite dancing songs.

The beat went through the dance floor, loudly with a hard base. Tauriel felt it go through her whole being. Packed between hundreds of hot, sweaty bodies she felt exhilarated. In front of her Kíli had closed his eyes enjoying the music and swaying his body. As if he sensed her eyes on him he opened his own and grinned at her holding out his hand, inviting her to join him. She took his large hand and he pulled her close, one hand holding hers and the other on her waist.

“Close your eyes.” He told her and she obliged. She felt her body relax, feeling comfortable with their closeness. The music seemed to be calling, calling for her to move, begging her. And she let go.

Her hips seemed to move on their own, swaying side to side and up and down with every beat. She rolled her body accompanying the movement of her hips. She lifted her arms, Kíli letting her go. She felt liberated, like chains breaking loose. She didn’t control her body, the music did, it commanded and she followed. A smiled spread over her face but she didn’t dare to open her eyes, not wanting the magic to stop.

Kíli watched her grinning and looking proudly. He enjoyed seeing her like this. He had known quite quickly that she could dance, even if she hadn’t known it herself. Her tall slim body seemed like water, flowing through the music, hitting every beat with deadly accuracy. Her red hair hung loose and swung around her, like a fire waterfall. Her face seemed so peaceful and full of enjoyment he became warm inside. She looked like a goddess as she danced along the dance floor. Damn that woman was going to be the end of him! He noticed the understandable stares she was getting, girls looking with envy and respect, guys with lust and amazement. But she was his and he let them all know with just one look.

The song changed to another dance track filled with life. Kíli moved back to Tauriel and lightly held her hand. Slowly she opened her brilliant green eyes and smiled widely realizing her dream hadn’t
“I knew it.” He told her placing his hand back on her waist and another on her shoulder, his fingers lightly tracing her hair.

“Knew what?” She asked laughing.

“I knew you could dance. You’re even better than I thought you’d be.”

“You flatter me way too much!” She replied, eyes twinkling.

“No way, you can ask anyone here and they’d they agree with me.”

“Well you’re not too bad yourself Mr Durin.” She said winking and Kíli winked back.

“How of course, but I had lots of practice.”

“Show me some of your moves then.” Kíli grinned and looked her straight in the eyes. Their eye contact didn’t break as he pulled her closer, their hips locking. He swayed her from side to side, her hips moved against his and he followed her. They rolled their bodies simultaneously rocking to the beat. He let his hand travelled her body from her ribs to her lovely hips. Reaching them he held her and spun her around. Laughing she faced him again tangled their hands together. Holding them out to the side they pressed their bodies closer. She pushed her torso out and rolled it against him, like a wave crashing on the rocks. She was looking down through her eyelashes at his shoulders and collarbone. He took his time to admire her face with special attention to her lips.

How he loved those lips. They made her smile, laugh and speak in her excited and bubbly way. He loved it when she was silly and joking around, he loved it when she was interested and serious. He loved it when they talked about everything until well past midnight, or when they had heated debates. There were so many different layers about her. He had discovered many and still there were so many more to explore, for her to show him. He wanted to know, he wanted to know everything about her, and yet he wanted to forever keep exploring. He wanted her to be his best friend, and his lover, his everything. But did she want that too? She seemed like she was a star in a different universe, one that he could see and admire but never reach. Would she even be able to love someone like him?

Their eyes locked and neither bothered to hide the intense and burning longing they felt towards each other. She couldn’t get enough of that dashing smile, his thick wild hair and the roughness of his stubble. She wanted to be held in his strong arms with sculpted shoulders, to hold his warm hands and to forever look into those brown eyes that seemed to stuck her in every time. She wanted him with her entire being. She loved the way he talked and that he anyways made her laugh. He was one of the nicest people she’d met and in him she saw an equal. It scared her that in such a short time they had grown so close, practically inseparable, and she didn’t mind it at all. Kíli Durin had become part of her life, without him she felt lost.

His lips moved to her ear as he whispered.

“Come, let’s go outside.” She didn’t have to hear that twice and they made their way through the army of bodies blocking their path. Having retrieved their jackets they went up the stairs out of the overheated club and were greeted by the cold evening air. He took her hand and began leading her through the streets. She laughed, enjoying the warmth of his hand.

“Kíli, where are we going?” He turned his head and winked at her.

“It’s a surprise.” He told her and weaved them through a maze of streets that Tauriel thought she’d never seen before. They reached a steep hill and climbed it. Right before they reached the top however Kíli told her to close her eyes. She looked at him sceptically but did what he asked.

“And no peeking.” He warned and she laughed. His strong hand pulled her to the top. She felt she was walking on flat ground, through the grass. Then he made her sit down helping her into the soft grass. She left him sit beside her.
“Ok, you can open your eyes now.” She did and gasped.

They were sitting on a small patch of grass, surrounded by trees but with a view over the forests of Dale. But her attention was drawn to the night sky that was filled with stars. Thousands if not millions stars of all shapes and sizes sparkled down on her. On the right side she even saw the outline of the Milky Way. She turned to Kíli who was looking at her instead of the sky spectacular display. “Kíli,” She whispered tears of joy filling her eyes, “it’s beautiful, no I… I can’t even describe it.” He smiled and put his hand on her cheek.

“No as beautiful as you are. When I see this, they remind me of you. Sorry for sounding so incredibly cheesy but you are like the stars to me.” He looked slightly embarrassed but Tauriel smiled at him.

“No one has ever said or done this for me, thank you.” She said softly. Their eyes locking, he saw the stars in her eyes. Their faces moving closer and softly he captured her lips.

He felt a shock in his gut that seemed to travel through his entire body, leaving a tingling sensation from the crown of his head to his toes. Instinctively he brought her closer. He was kissing her softly and she responded with soft kisses in return. The more kisses the more desperate they became, clinging to each other, fingers tangled in each other’s hair. They were hungry for passion, licking, biting, nibbling and tasting. Tauriel didn’t know exactly when they starting rolling on the ground, her attention so solely on Kíli and the happiness that surged through her body. His touch was warm and burning, trailing fireworks all over her body. At times they broke apart, smiling, giggling, and blushing before diving back in.

Her fingers swept along the ends of his shirt, sliding underneath to felt his muscled abs. His whole body radiated a heat she’d never felt before. She sighed as he kissed her neck, nibbling his way down to her collarbone. Although he generally seemed careful, some times his bites would be harder, but she didn’t mind. The marks would show his touch, and she enjoyed the feeling that he claimed her and rolled over to give him the same treatment.

They became exhausted after a while and a colder wind started to set it. They lay on their backs, both breathing hard, the stars dancing above them. But the two lovers didn’t look at the stars but were too engrossed with each other. Kíli looked at Tauriel lovingly. He couldn’t believe his luck being able to be here with her. He decided that starlight was very becoming of her. He smiled before leaning over and kissing every single freckle on her nose. She giggled with every kiss he placed. She softly tried to stop him but he wouldn’t budge. Once done, he grinned at her with a smile full of satisfaction. “I’ve wanted to do that ever since I saw them.” He said and she smiled blushing. She placed a hand on his rough cheek and softly pulled his face to hers kissing his forehead. Rubbing their noses together his kissed forehead touched her, and they lay like that what seemed for ages. Finally Kíli rose and helped her sit up.

“Come on, I’ll bring you home.” He smiled.

Kíli stopped his bike in front of the Greenwood Estate gate. He turned to Tauriel.

“Do you want me to stop here?” She nodded.

“Yeah that’s probably the best place, we might wake the rest on this thing.” She said and he laughed. She got off, pulling of his helmet from her head. He smirked at her dishevelled hair. Reaching forward he pulled out a small twig and grinned.
“There, wouldn’t want you carrying the forest back home.” She laughed. They grew silent grinning at each other like fools, their blushes returning to their cheeks.
“Well I… I am glad you agreed to come.” He said lamely.
“As am I. I had an amazing night Kíli, enjoyed every single part of it.”
“Thank god, me too, especially the last part if I am honest.” He smiled. He stuck his hands further in his pockets. “Well, I’ll see you tomorrow then?” She smiled shyly tucking a strand of hair behind her ear.
“Yeah, I’ll see you tomorrow.” She leaned over to touch his arm and he looked up. Softly she kissed him. He responded and wrapped his strong arms around her. They kissed for minutes that felt like individual days. Finally they broke apart.
“I should go.” Tauriel said reluctantly and he grinned.
“Yeah you should.” She took a step backwards but still held his warm hand.
“Good night Kíli.” She said and a cheeky smile crept onto his face. He bowed his head down, kissing her hand. He looked at her, letting go of her hand and getting back on his bike. Helmet in hand he looked into her eyes.
“Good night Amrâlimê.” He smiled once before and then put on his helmet and started his bike. Tauriel looked at him shocked.
“But… what does that mean?” She asked but he just waved at her and drove off into the night. She grinned, slightly shaking her head.

Rascal.
The drive way was lit with large decorative lampposts shining on the Greenwood Estate’s large magnificent entrance. Carefully Tauriel unlocked the carven door as quietly as she possibly could. Her cheeks were burning and a smile danced on her face. She was about to ascend the stairs when she noticed light burning from the living room. Curious she walked inside. On the dark leather couch by the large fireplace sat Legolas. He was reading with a glass of red wine in his hand. His long light blond hair caught the golden light of the fire making his look like the angel Gabriel in his full stature and elegance. He looked up when she came in. She was relief pass along his face, but his usually sparkling eyes seemed dead.

“Where were you?” He asked his tone rather harsh.

Tauriel raised an eyebrow at him as she took in his appearance. Like his father, Legolas liked looking good, which wasn’t very hard since even Tauriel had to admit he was very attractive. But while his father enjoying suits and dress shirts, Legolas preferred good fitting jeans and nicely tailored, but comfortable sweaters, one of which he was wearing right now. The grey sweater brought out the blue of his eyes and made his golden hair shimmer. But Tauriel could look through his handsome appearance and see he was tired. Dark circles were starting to form under his eyes and his shoulders were tense. She walked over him and positioned herself next to him on the couch.

“I was out.” She told him resisting the urge to blush. He didn’t reply but continued watching her move. His eyes travelled to her neck and a look of confusion appeared on his face. Slightly mortified Tauriel tried to hide the love bites Kíli had made with her hair but the damage was done. Legolas leaned away from her, taking a healthy swing of his wine.

“Who were you out with?” he didn’t look at her, finding the red liquid suddenly very fascinating.

“Kíli took me out.” Tauriel confessed as she started to play with a strand of her hair. A deadly silence followed but was only broken by Legolas’ soft reply.

“Hmm I see.” And he continued drinking his wine faster than usual. She turned to him.

“Mellon what’s wrong?” She wanted to add he looked tired but decided against stating such an obvious fact. He turned his blue eyes to her.

“You ask me what’s wrong? What’s wrong with you? You’ve been avoiding me, and don’t deny it Tauriel.” He told her as she opened her mouth to protest. “I thought you trusted me, yet these past few weeks you hardly talk to me, you sneak of and go on dates that I don’t know about. How long have you known this guy? Two weeks? Yeah and look at you, you’re already covered.”

“I don’t have to tell you everything, I have my own life you know.” Tauriel told him her voice rising, catching in her throat. Legolas seemed enraged.

“I am FINE with you going on dates, in fact I am happy you are, but don’t go behind my god damned back. What if something happened? What if he took advantage of you? No one would know where you are.”

“Kíli would never do that!”

“Oh no? How well do you know him? And I mean really know him! Can you trust him with your life? Can you Tauriel?” He’d stood up pacing up and down, wine glass in hand.

“Of course I know him, I am not stupid.”

“But can you trust him?” Tauriel looked at him pondering on his question.

“Yes, I think so.”

“Thinking so isn’t enough!”

“What does it matter? Nothing bad happened in fact I had a great evening, thanks for asking by the way. And besides, Arwen knew about it!” Legolas came to a halt his blue eyes piercing through her.

“Arwen knew about this?”

“Y…yes.” Tauriel admitted and she felt a wave of guilt flood her. Why hadn’t she told him? She always had, they never had any secrets for each other. She’d always felt good about telling him, then
why hadn’t she told him about Kili? She’d hurt him and she could see that now. He’d turned his
shoulders away from her as if shielding his wounds from her. But his eyes looked at her full of pain.
Tears started to well up in her eyes.
“You told Arwen, but not me.” He said, his low voice seemed to shake a bit and she was afraid he
might crush the glass he was holding. He gulped his wine down and picked up his book before
marching away. Tauriel stretched out her arm to stop him.
“Legolas! Lego! I am sorry!” But he didn’t turn and made his way upstairs.
Falling back onto the couch, Tauriel curled herself up and listened to his door slam closed behind
him. Tears started to roll down her cheeks. With her fingers she swept along her neck passing every
place Kili had kissed. Though the memory still burned beneath her fingers, she currently felt hollow
inside. She’d had not meant for this to happen. As much as she liked Kili, she didn’t want to sacrifice
her bond with Legolas, a bond that ran deeper than friendship, it was one of love, family love, but
still love. In the end it was that love that had saved her so many times. When her parents died it had
saved her. Every time some guy had broken her heart or apparent friends decided to ditch her, it was
this love that helped her back on her feet. So much as she liked Kili and knew quite a bit about him,
she still didn’t know him as well as she wanted to. She could predict Legolas’ every move, while she
hardly knew what Kili liked to eat in the mornings.
Tauriel sighed and made her way to bed with a heavy heart, she had a lot to think about.

The next morning Tauriel sensed all was not well as she came into the kitchen. Legolas had left for
work. As a journalist he would often work during the weekends as well, but Tauriel knew it was not
coincidence he was working today. Thranduil was currently pouring himself a strong cup of coffee,
his long platinum hair resting perfectly on his back. He was wearing his favourite white dress shirt
with dark blue stripe. He had his black trousers on and Tauriel saw a silver tie, meaning he probably
had a business meeting at some point today.

“Good morning.” She said standing next to him to grab herself a mug and turn on the kettle for a cup
of tea. Thranduil turned around, leaning back against the counter and watched her as he took a sip of
coffee.
“Good morning Tauriel.” His intense blue eyes pierced through her. She looked at her teabag that
currently floated on the hot water.
“Do you have a meeting today?” She asked.
“I do. I am meeting Bard Bowman this afternoon for business.” A silence settled between them.
Usually this was a pleasant silence, but today was different. After a few more sips of his coffee,
Thranduil spoke up.
“Tell me Tauriel, what is the matter with Legolas? Tauriel sighed causing Thranduil to smile slightly,
he always found it very amusing to see his children feel awkward.
“It’s stupid.” She told him and he raised his thick intimidating eyebrows at her.
“I think I’ll be the judge of that.”
She stared at her mug steaming tea for a while, trying to formulate her words.
“I am seeing someone and I didn’t tell Legolas about it, so now he’s angry at me.”
“Hmmm odd for him to get that upset about it.”
“How did you even know he was upset? Did you hear us last night?”
“Last night? No, I did not hear a thing. But I am his father Tauriel, I know exactly when he’s upset.”
He paused slightly, “He’s just like his mother.” Thranduil’s eyes flashed towards the portrait of
Lemaril Greenwood, his late wife, hanging in the living room. Her golden hair fell in waves over her
shoulders and she had a kind face, her bright grey eyes smiling, lighting up the room. Thranduil
turned back to the conversation.
“So, who are you seeing then?” Tauriel cursed the heavens for making him ask the question though she hadn’t expected anything different from him.

“Kíli.” The cup Thranduil was in the process of bringing to his lips stopped half way.

“Excuse me?” He asked still looking at his coffee.

“Kíli Durin.” Tauriel repeated anxious for his reaction.

“You really mean the Kíli…”

“Yes, yes! The Kíli Durin, nephew of Thorin Durin from Oakenshield Company.” She interrupted him, feeling annoyed. Thranduil looked at her, his eyebrows furrowed together. He seemed at a loss of words before finally replying.

“Are you out of your mind?” His harsh words hurt her. Like father like son.

“No, I am perfectly sane, thanks. You know, he’s a lot better if you get to know him.”

“Are you telling me, that you’re dating Thorin Durin’s nephew?”

“Yes.” Thranduil laughed, but it wasn’t a nice laugh, it was rather dismissingly.

“Impossible.” He told her walking away from the kitchen towards the couch.

“Actually it’s not.” Tauriel called after him. Thranduil spun around, his eyes flashing with anger.

“No it’s impossible! I am not allowing you to date him!”

“What?! Since when do you get to decide who I date or not?”

“As of now!”

“This is ridiculous! Just because you and Thorin are is some ancient stupid fight doesn’t mean Kíli and I have to stop seeing each other. That’s just Shakespearean bullshit!”

“Language! And that is exactly why you can’t be with that boy. I know what his family is like, they can’t be trusted!”

“You don’t even know him! You have no right…!”

“I have every right young lady!”

“You’re not my father!” Tauriel shouted and Thranduil halted his approach to her, pain, grief, and anger flashing through his ice blue eyes.

“I might not be your father in blood, but I am the father that raised you.” He said slowly and clearly.

“Therefore if I say you won’t date this boy that’s final!”

“But I like him! God since when is that a crime?” She protested.

“You like him?” He asked mockingly.

“I love him.” She retorted back, surprising herself with her words.

“You love… him? You don’t even know what it means to love someone!” He crept closer and she had to look up to him now, something she hated doing. “Tell me Tauriel, how long have you known him? How well do you know him? Do you know his wishes and fears? Do you know his good sides and bad? Can you trust him?”

“Why shouldn’t I trust him?”

“Because he’s a Durin! They are lazy, arrogant liars who can never be trusted!”

“But you don’t know him!” She shouted.

“But I know Thorin and I know you!” He told her, his hands on her shoulders. They were both breathing heavily. Slowly he seemed to calm down and tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. “I know you Tauriel. You’re an intelligent and strong woman, but you’re also naïve, afraid to see a darker side in people. I don’t want you to get hurt.” Tauriel pushed herself away from him.

“And you think this is not hurting me?” She asked before heading to the stairs.

“Where are you going?”

“Training!”

“Tauriel?” He called after her and she stopped halfway on the stairs.

“Why did you hide this from Legolas and I?”

“Because I feared this reaction.” She told him listening for Thranduil’s reply.

“If it was true love, then you would not have feared it.”
Arrow after arrow she shot, every single one missing the centre making Tauriel feel even more frustrated than she already felt. Before she came into the shooting range Kíli had send her a sweet and adorable text:

“Hey good morning! Hope you slept alright. Just wanted to say that I had a greater time last night. Hope you did too☺”

It made her happy to read it, and yet she had never felt so conflicted in her entire life because Legolas and Thranduil were partially right. How well did she know Kíli? What if he just liked her because of her looks and would leave after they became more intimate. It wouldn’t be the first time that had happened to her. It was one of the reasons why she kept boys at bay. But with Kíli it felt different somehow, yet right now she couldn’t decide whether that was a good or bad thing.

One thing she did come to realize after several more hours of shooting and clearing her mind in the forest was that she needed to slow down and take a step back. She figured he would be ok with her not immediately replying to his texts right away. He would be busy himself anyway.

Kíli had been busy that day, or at least he should have been productive. He met up with his brother to plan out his uncle’s party. There were many things to organize, things that had to be made, people that had to be called and just general chaos. However he felt he’d been staring at his phone for most of the time. He was kicking himself mentally about it. Sending the text in the morning seemed very logic and impulsive, but the later it got, with still no reply, he started to feel like a fool. It had gotten to a point when even Fíli got fed up and had taken away his phone with great protest.

“Just chill out alright? It sounded like you guys had a great evening, so don’t worry about it. She might just be busy, just like you should be! I need you to focus here bro.” Kíli raised his hands in defeat but immediately brought them back into his hair, tugging it.
“But it’s the weekend, she’s supposed to be free. She’s never been this slow with answering.” Fili raised his eyebrows smirking.

“Oh no! You’re not timing her are you?” Kíli glared at him angrily.

“Don’t give me that crap! You’d completely panic if Arild hadn’t texted you back within 5 minutes.”

That was very true and Fíli admitted it. He lay down the papers he had been holding and sat down next to his brother.

“It’ll be fine, I am sure, just don’t freak out. How long has it been?”

“7 hours.” Kíli told him looking at the blonds face to see his reaction.

“What’s been 7 hours?” A woman’s voice called out. Arild came into the apartment she shared with Fíli. She walked in with bags of groceries weighing her down. Fíli shot up to help his girlfriend, stealing a kiss along the way. Arild had a mass of light blonde curls, large soft brown eyes and a hearth laugh. She was small but curvy and moved around with a skip in her steps, something that had caught Fíli from the first moment he saw her.

“It’s nothing…” Kíli started but his brother cut him off.

“It’s been 7 hours since Kíli texted the girl he went out with last night, and she hasn’t replied yet.”

The blond smirk and Kíli shot him a glare. Arild looked amused and surprised.

“Don’t tell me you guys time as well?”

“But of course. It’s driving him insane.” Fili laughed.

“I am still not as insane as you were! Arild let me tell you, you’re dating an idiot.” He called out.

“But an adorable idiot.” His brother pleaded receiving a small peck from Arild.

“You’re a fool.” She told him before hitting him softly. “And be nice to your brother. Kíli do you
want tea or a beer?"
“Give him some green tea to calm his nerves.” Fíli told her with a wink before grabbing a beer for himself.
“Asshole!” Kíli cursed him before adding: “A beer would be lovely, thanks Arild.”
Laughing she handed him one and nestled herself on the chair across from them.
“So how did your date go then Kíli?” She asked him smiling cheekily. The two had known each other since their primary schools days and had been friends since middle school, so Kíli hadn’t expected anything less from her than to ask him questions.
“It went great!” He told her and grinned at the memories coming to mind. “Dinner was fine and dancing was great. I haven’t had that much fun in a while and she seemed to enjoy it as well.” He’d actually been quite sure about that until now. Kíli wasn’t foreign to female attention and he had gone on plenty nice dates over time with some very nice girls. With some of them he had been dating for a little while, others he’d broken of contact or they had done so and he had not really minded. But Tauriel was different in ways he couldn’t describe. He did care about their friendship, he did want her to text him back, and he did really care about what she thought of him. He actually liked her, more than liked her. He had told her he loved her, even though it was in a language she didn’t quite understand, yet.

“That sounds great! Who’s the lucky girl?” Arild asked him smiling happily.
“Tauriel Greenwood.” And her smile started to waver.
“Wow, um… okay? That’s um unexpected.” She told him honestly. “How has Thorin reacted?”
“He doesn’t know yet, and I think I’d like to keep it that way for a while.” He told her and there was a silence and he saw her think.
“What does her family think about it?”
“I don’t know, I am not even sure if they know. I can’t imagine they’ll be very pleased.”
“Maybe that’s why she hasn’t texted you back yet?” Arild offered but Kíli waved her away.
“No way, she wouldn’t care about that. This might not be easy but it’s not a freaking soap opera.” He said and took a swing of his beer, missing the worried look Arild and Fíli gave each other.

As the night progressed the brothers and Arild had prepared most of the invitations that they would send out the next day. Many of the invited were their part of their kin or their uncle’s friends, or in some cases both. Several of Thorin Durin’s best business partners were invited as well such as Elrond Rivendell and Celeborn Lothlórien. A special guest was Bilbo Baggins, a great friend of their uncle. They had met at university and had often travelled together to far corners of the world. Bilbo lived quite far away, thus the friends hadn’t seen each other for a while, most busy with their work.
While Thorin ran Oakenshield Company, Bilbo was focused on his research and writing his books, which were currently becoming quite famous. The brothers couldn’t wait to see Mr Baggins again and they were reminded that this would be in four weeks time. There was still so much to do in so little time.

Their work had kept Kíli busy and his mind of Tauriel and his phone for a while. Thus he was very surprised when his phone started to ring and her name appeared on his display. Quickly excusing himself and going outside, Kíli tried to calm himself down before picking up.

“Hello?” He asked, his voice a few tones lower than usual.
“Hey Kíli, its me.” Tauriel replied and he enjoyed the sound of her voice.
“Hey! How are you?”
“I am doing fine. How are you?”
“Oh fine as well. Just a bit busy, working on my uncle’s birthday party.”
“Oh! Have I called at a wrong time?”
“What? No, no not at all! Don’t worry! I always have time for you.” He heard her chuckle at the end
“Thanks.” And silence crept in.
“So, you’ve been busy today, or did you enjoy your free day?” he quickly asked her, hoping it wouldn’t seem like he was fishing, he had to act cool.
“Yeah, I’ve been busy. Been out shooting the whole day.” That was it! He knew she always left her phone in her locker when she went out, and that was probably why she didn’t respond.
“And? Did it go alright?”
“Well no not really, I um…” he heard her voice hesitating and an unpleasant feeling started to form in his gut, he didn’t like where this was going.
“Kíli, I um… what I want to say is…”
“What? What’s wrong Tauriel?”
“I am sorry I didn’t reply to your text sooner, I am just… I don’t know…”
“Tauriel just say it.” He didn’t want to sound mad but his voice was harsher than he expected and he could feel her flinch.
“I really enjoyed last night Kíli, really I did. It’s just that we are moving so fast, and actually I don’t even know you that well…” Kíli laughed softly hoping to lift some of the tension.
“I know, but that’s what dates are for, aren’t they? To get to know each other?”
“Yes true but…”
“But?”
“I just need to slow down for a bit Kíli. Please don’t get me wrong, I like you, but I need some time to organize myself. This… this is all kinda new for me and I don’t want to get all tangled up.” Kíli took a minute to take that all in, his mind flooded with information and he didn’t really know what to feel at that moment.
“Please don’t be mad, I am just very confused with myself right now.” Tauriel admitted her voice worried.
“It’s alright Tauriel.” He heard himself say. “We can take it slowly, I want you to feel comfortable alright?” He heard her sigh softly in relief.
“Thanks Kíli, that means a lot to me.”
“Don’t worry about it.” After a few seconds of silence he added: “So, but you’re still up for Café Macchiato’s this week?” And she laughed.
“Of course, they are the highlight of my day.”
“Haha I am sure they are. But one thing darling,”
“What is it?” She asked curiosity lining her voice.
“You better keep October 19th free in your calendar.”
“And why’s that?”
“It’s my uncle’s birthday that day and forgive my forwardness, but I have taken the liberty of sitting you next to me on the seating arrangements.”
“I’ll be your date?”
“Naturally, unless you really don’t want to, I mean I can easily…”
“No I’d love to go! Thanks.”
“Thank god! You’ll get an official invitation some time this week. But remember, it’s a surprise party!”
“Haha I’ll keep that in mind! Looking forward to it.”
“Great, me too.” He said smiling.
“I’ve gotta go now. Thanks for understanding Kíli.”
“No problem, thanks for calling. Have a good evening.”
“Thanks and you too.”
“Bye Tauriel.”
“Good bye.” And the line went silent.

Kíli leaned against the door, taking a few deep breaths of the cold outside air. The sky was dark, clouds drifting past the moon and only a few stars were visible. He was glad she had called and
happy to heard her voice. He could understand where she was coming from, but at the same time he found it hard to understand her confusion. Maybe Arild was right about her family, maybe they weren’t as accepting about it as his was. He was sure Legolas wouldn’t be pleased anyway let alone Thranduil. He just hoped she wouldn’t change her mind completely about them. Was she still that open to give them a chance? He would need to step up his game, because he definitely wasn’t going to let her go that easily.

Fíli came and joined him outside. He saw his brother’s face and felt worried. “Hey man, are you alright?” He asked. Kíli looked at him and Fíli put an arm around him in support. “What’s wrong Kee?”

“I really don’t know…”
Several days had passed and Tauriel had yet to visit Kíli again. Every day she tried to make her way to the café or even text him, but every time she hesitated, and the more time went by, the harder it seemed to get. Not that he had texted or called her either, which she found slightly annoying – though she knew she was being a hypocrite.

To be fair on her self, school was getting tough, multiple deadlines coming up, causing her to work late and be exhausted afterwards. She had arrived late at her archer trainings this week, something Celeborn had questioned her about, for she normally was never late. But he understood the workload she was under, his granddaughter often reminding him of the fact, and thus forgave her.

Arwen herself however wasn’t very forgiving, questioning Tauriel constantly.

“’I just don’t understand why you won’t see him.’” The raven beauty started the conversation as she had done the past few days. Tauriel groaned, wanting to cover her ears.
“’No, I really don’t.’” Arwen continued, “’You had a great date, but now you’re just put off by two people who don’t approve.’”
“’Yes exactly! And they are not just people, Arwen, they are my family.’”
“’Bullshit.’” And Tauriel turned to Arwen, looking in shock, for her friend was never one to use such language. “’Don’t look at me like that, I mean it! You normally wouldn’t care what they say. You’ve done plenty of things that both of them would object to. I don’t think this has anything to do with them, or a least not as much as you’re trying to make me believe. No, I think you’re just scared.’” Tauriel raised her eyebrow, challenging.
“’And what would I be so scared of?’”
“’Love.’” Arwen replied simply, the word hitting Tauriel in her chest. “’You’re afraid to fall in love.”

They both fell silent, Arwen watching her carefully, while Tauriel pondered on her words. She bit back a harsh reply and slowly came to the realization that her friend was right. But she also immediately went into the defensive, like any trapped animal would. She narrowed her eyes, flashing her bright green gems on Elrond’s daughter.
“’Yes,’” she said carefully, admitting her weakness. “’I am afraid of love. It can be miraculous and fantastic when right but…” and her eyes darkened of memory. “’It can also be hurtful, cruel, and ruthless. If that is what love is, then I do not want it.”
“’So what?’” Arwen raised her eyebrow, “just because it could hurt, you’re going to turn your back to it all together?’”
“’What, no! I just need to take it slowly. I am not turning my back.’”
“’It definitely looks like it. Tauriel I haven’t seen you as happy as you were these past weeks. Do you think this would make you happier? You like him, a lot. You haven’t stopped talking about him, and now when things get a bit more difficult, a bit too close, you’re going to back out?’”
“’I am not backing out of anything!’” Tauriel said, raising her voice, before covering her face with her hands, pulling them through her long hair. “’You don’t understand.’” She mumbled. She heard Arwen suck it her breath out of anger, something very unlike her friend, who was generally very calm.

“’I don’t understand? Of all people, you think I don’t? You know all the struggles Aragorn and I went through, and still go through! It was never easy for us! There was always struggle, and people who didn’t agree with our relationship.” Her blue eyes flashed dangerously and Tauriel knew it wasn’t a good idea to interrupt her now. She felt ashamed of herself as Arwen called her out.

“’When his father died, do you think that was easy? When he sunk down into a depression, not knowing what to do. Or even now, do you think it’s easy to have a boyfriend who decided that he
wants to be a doctor, travelling to warzones. When he’s gone, I worry every single day, hoping he’ll come back. And when he’s back, I worry about when he will travel again. And now you think I don’t understand?’ tears were forming in her eyes and Tauriel engulfed her into a tight hug. She rocked Arwen back and forth.

“I am sorry.” She whispered. “I wasn’t thinking, I am sorry.”

They stayed like that for a while, rocking each other back and forth sitting in the park, watching people walk by. Arwen dried her tears and as she looked at her friend, they started to laugh.

“You can be so stubborn sometimes!” She told Tauriel who laughed and stuck out her tongue.

“Sorry mum!” She said mockingly.

“Seriously though, you’re both so young and obviously like each other. Give him a chance ok? It’s not like he asked you to marry him.”

“That’s true. I guess I just panicked.” Tauriel admitted and Arwen nodded her head.

“Yeah… let’s just hope Éowyn doesn’t get cold feet!” They laughed.

“No, she definitely wouldn’t! She and Faramir are made for each other.

Faramir was the younger brother of Boromir, Aragorn’s friend. While Boromir followed into their fathers footsteps and became a doctor, Faramir, being more in touch with their mothers creative side studied architecture, and had recently completed his first successful project, with more offers flying in everyday.

Éowyn was an army nurse. Her brother Éomer was also a good friend of Aragorn’s as they had been in the same class in high school. Though going to different universities, Aragorn studying medicine and Éomer law, the two men still had regular contact. It had been during high school when Éowyn and Aragorn had, had a brief romantic relationship. However their relationship didn’t last especially after Aragorn met Arwen and Éowyn was introduced to Faramir at a party. Now they had formed a strong friendship, with Arwen (and Tauriel) considering Éowyn to sometimes be the sister she never had. She had been overjoyed with the news that her friends were getting married.

“Mum is thrilled with the opportunity to dress up so she wants to go shopping with us for dresses!” Arwen shared excitedly and Tauriel smiled. But the red head was also a bit worried. She had a completely different taste than Arwen and her mother, who had a love for soft, flowing, very feminine dresses. She however had a bit more practical taste, liking everything to be elegant but clear cut, reflecting her no-nonsense attitude. Arwen sensed her friend’s hesitation and laughed.

“And don’t listen to what mum has to say all the time, just choose whatever you want.”

“Don’t listen to your mother, or don’t listen to you?” Tauriel asked with a winked causing Arwen to smile cheekily. “When did you want to go?

“We have a family friend, Míriel, who is a fashion designer with her own line Perindë. She has beautiful gowns! Mother arranged a visit two weeks from now. Would that work for you?” Tauriel thought for a second.

“That should work for me. We’ll be way on time, it won’t be in 2 months. Oh that reminds me! I still have to find something to wear to Kili’s uncle’s birthday, well if he still wants me to come of course.”

“Two months is nothing, then we have enough time if we don’t find something with Míriel. And of course he’d still want you to come, I am sure of it! Can I help you pick something out?” Arwen asked excitedly, her blue eyes twinkling happily making Tauriel chuckle.

“Sure of course, but I doubt it will be that fancy, at least I don’t think a ball gown will be necessary.”

“But you do have to make a great entrance, I’ll make sure of that!”

They sat together in silence for a while, watching leaves fall down from the trees, creating an ocean of gold by their feet.

“I hope Boromir will be back on time for the wedding.” Arwen suddenly said and Tauriel looked at her, she had a faraway look on her face.

“Of course he will. He wouldn’t miss his brother’s wedding for the world. Besides, I thought
Aragorn said his mission was almost over.” Her friend seemed to have snapped out of her trance and smiled.

“Yeah of course, it’s silly of me. It’s just that there’s been so much bad news coming from there.”

“True, Mordor is a war-zone, but Boromir is a doctor, not a soldier. Besides, we shouldn’t just rely on the news, it’s heavily biased towards bad news anyway.”

“Yes, you’re right. I am just happy Aragorn decided to stay here this time.”

“I didn’t know he was asked to go as well.”

“Yes he was, but he had only just gotten back from Harad and wanted to spend time with his mother, and me of course.” She said winking and Tauriel smiled back. She checked her watch and grabbed her things together.

“I’ve got to run Arwen.” She said and gave her friend a tight hug. “Thanks, I mean it.” Arwen smiled back.

“I know you do. We’ll keep in contact, I am going to need some advice for my essay, you’re better at recognizing herbs than I am.”

“Don’t worry, just send it and I’ll check it.”

“Great! And Tauriel, promise me you’ll go see him.”

Tauriel turned and smiled.

“I will! Going there right now.” She winked and Arwen squealed with joy.

“Oh great! Let me know how is it goes ok?”

“Of course!” Tauriel said and waved as she walked away.

She made her way through the quaint and beautiful streets of Dale that were seeped with history but made also caught up with modern times, being the perfect blend between old and new. She turned right into one of the main shopping streets where Café Bree was located. As she got closer and closer she felt her heart beating faster and her hands trembled slightly, betraying her nervousness. She was surprised as she recognized Kili standing outside, and it took her a while to realize he was calling on his phone. As she got closer she picked up part of the conversation. He didn’t sound to be in a great mood.

“Of all the times you could have gone, you choose to go now? You said you’d wait until after Uncle Thorin’s birthday…” He ran his hand through his chocolate brown hair as he listened to the response.

“You can’t just take a few days off when you just got there. Besides what’s there to gain with this mission? You’re way too young anyway…” It seemed to be a heavy argument as she heard him slip into a heavy accent, throwing in Khuzdul words she did not recognize.

“I am sure your mother would have much preferred for you to stay here just as your dad… Oh that’s bullshit, he prefers counting money to fighting!” Again the person on the other line went on a rant.

“Ok first of all, “ Kili countered, “You are far more reckless than I am. But sure, good luck trying to make it back on time, just remember we’ll have a great betting on it back here. Fili and I are betting against it… Yeah, all right bastard. Just do me a favour and don’t die. Bye.” He hung up, clenching his hands into fists making Tauriel heavily doubt if this was the right moment for her to come her. As she about to turn around, when he looked up, his brown eyes catching hers and her heart stood still. Everything inside her seemed to melt, especially when a smile formed on his face, making her weak in the knees. How could she have possibly thought it would have been best not to see him anymore? She would not have survived not seeing that smile. Shyly and nervously she stepped towards him, twisting her hair along the way. They didn’t say anything to each other until they were standing perhaps two steps apart. His smile seemed to have broadened along the way.

“You finally came.” It wasn’t a question, merely him stating a happy fact. She blushed lightly.

“Yes, I couldn’t stay away longer… I… Kili I am so sorry. I was just a mess and confused… I just
didn’t know what to do… I am sorry I left you hanging.” Tauriel stuttered, feeling more and more guilty with every word she uttered. But instead of an angry reaction she had been expecting Kíli rather seemed overjoyed and softly and carefully held her hands with his own, smiling up at her. “It’s okay,” he said and she felt tears form in her eyes, not feeling she deserved any of his sweet comments. He raised his eyebrow at her.

“You hate crying.” He said causing her to laugh, a single tear escaping.

“I do.”

“Then don’t,” he reached out and whipped away the tear with his finger. “There’s nothing to cry about anyway. Come on, there’s a Caramel Macchiato waiting for you.” Holding her hand he led her inside.

“Thanks.” She told him smiling. He smiled back at her squeezing her hand.

They sat at one of the wooden tables on the top floor, close to the windows. She sipped her long-awaited macchiato and he seemed happy with an espresso. She had explained to him what happened between her and Legolas and Thranduil.

“I know it might sound weird that I listened to them, but they are my family. Usually they are not at all this strict. Thranduil was a lot more liberal with me than his own son, and I know that they mean well… they just have a weird way of showing that sometimes.” She said honestly and felt a burden lift from her shoulders. Kíli had been very understanding thus far. But she knew she had hurt him and thus the feeling of guilt remained and she knew that wouldn’t disappear so quickly. They had to rebuild some of the trust between them as he had eloquently put it.

“I know how important family is. If Fíli or my mother hadn’t approved of you, I am not sure if I would be sitting here.” Tauriel laughed.

“But they haven’t even met me!”

“They will soon, and I think they will like you even more then.” He winked.

“You still want me to come, because I can understand that after…” but before she could continue he silenced her, pressing a finger against her lips.

“Of course I still do silly. It takes a lot to get me mad enough to take someone off the guest list.”

“You sounded pretty angry outside.” Kíli frowned at the remembrance.

“That was Gimli, he’s my cousin. Well technically cousin-twice removed or something like that. But we grew up together like close family. He just turned 18 a few months ago and applied for the army, got in and he accepted a mission to Mordor, the idiot.” Kíli paused for a second, trying to find the right words. “I mean I am very proud of him of course, we all are. He’s a very brave and intelligent guy. But obviously we are also very worried about him. News reports haven’t been very positive lately. We just hope he gets out alive and well, and of course before the birthday. It’s a special year this time; my uncle’s birthday falls together on Durin’s Day, a national celebration in Erebor. So I just want everyone to be there.” Now it was Tauriel’s turn to hold his hand in support.

“I think it’s great you and your brother want to organize this, not only for your uncle but everyone around you. It must be a huge task.” Kíli laughed.

“Yeah you could say that, but it’s a lot of fun at the same time.”

“So tell me,” He asked after a few minutes of peaceful silence. “What made you turn back?” She looked into his twinkling eyes and winning smile, his lips looked very kissable right now…

“Arwen… Arwen convinced me to go back.” She said and Kíli smiled.

“Then I will thank Arwen most sincerely next time I see her, her task wasn’t easy.” He winked, giving her a cheeky smile. She felt herself blush as she laughed.

“And why would you think that?”

“Because you are a very stubborn lady.” He said tapping his finger softly on her nose.

“Hmmmm perhaps… or maybe you persuaded me yourself…” Kíli laughed.
“And how did I do that, I tried to give you as much space as possible.”
“Thanks for that Kíli, I mean it. But it also worked.”
“How so?”
“I missed you.” The words were out before she knew it and he grew still, his eyes boring into hers. Neither realized they started to move closer together.
“Tell me,” he almost whispered, their faces coming ever closer. “What do you want?” She sucked in her breath, knowing there was no way to back out.
“I can’t deny this connection, it would be wrong, unnatural... Kíli, I want to try us together...” as soon as those words left her lips, he captured them with his own and they shared a long kiss. She felt herself relax completely, this felt right, absolutely and completely right, and damn anyone who would try to tell her otherwise. Softly they broke apart, both their faces flushed. He stared dreamingly into her beautiful green eyes and smiled.

“Good.”
Kíli had finished his shift at Café Bree and was currently in Bifur's workshop, where he was making his present for his uncle Thorin.

Bifur was an old family friend of the Durins. He was very creative, using his workshop to make unique traditional Erebor toys for children. However he liked to dabble in all different forms of art. As a young adult Bifur had gotten into a fight during which he had gotten badly wounded especially his head. While the rest of his body had healed extremely well, part of his brain had been permanently damaged, which had given him speech impairment. At first it hadn't been very bad, but so the years went on, it had gotten worse. He was now only able to talk with a heavy low voice, sometimes merely grunting.

His cousins Bofur and Bombur had been very helpful during his recovery and were able to understand his current speech. After the fight, Bifur had completely thrown himself into his art as a way of expression. He enjoyed whenever he had visitors and was more than happy to help Kíli with his gift.

Thorin had never wanted nor needed much. He was happy with small things and signs of affections. This made it very hard for Fíli and Kíli to think of gifts to give him. Finally Kíli had decided on something practical. He was going to fashion his a belt. He'd bought some fine quality black leather that was both supple but firm. Now he wanted to make a buckle, which was going to be of an old Durin design. It would be made from silver and decorated with Ereborian patterns. He wanted to transform the simple belt into an item of power. But it also had to be relatively subtle enough so that Thorin could actually wear it.

Kíli came from a family where working with metals and gems was as normal as playing outside, so he didn't have too much trouble. However Bifur helped him give the buckle its basic shape that Kíli would later polish and smooth out himself. Working in the workshop meant that he had all the time in the world, no fear of getting caught by his uncle, and he had everything he needed.

Kíli pushed his chair back and looked happily at the metal in front of him. It had a regular hexagon shape and slowly but surely the decorative patterns were starting to come together. He figured he needed two more days before the buckle was be done and could be attached to the leather.

He went out to grab himself some more coffee and checked his phone. Right as he did so he received a text, from no other than Tauriel. He knew she was out today, shopping with Arwen and Celebrían. She had slightly looked up against the trip, since twirly dresses wasn't something his girlfriend felt very comfortable in, to his great amusement. Curiously he opened the message and laughed as he read the simple text.

'Help! I'm being consumed by miles of pink fabric! 9'

'Haha, it can't be that bad! I am sure the pink looks lovely ;)’ he replied smiling. Within seconds he got a response.

'No I swear, it's horrible. There's nothing normal here!'

'Well you could always wear nothing ;)'

'Haha yeah I don't think so love. Want to make a good impression.'

'Trust me, you'll make the best one ;)’
'Pervert :P Ok what colour? Green or blue?'
'Hmmm they'd both look great on you…'
'Awww thanks : But still choose!'
'Haha ok blue? Are they allowing you to choose your own dress now?'
'Yes finally! :D'
'Show me? :'
'Nope! It's gonna be a surprise! ;)'  
'Aw man really? It's not your wedding dress! ;)'
'No I'm keeping it a secret! Be prepared to be blown away ;)'
'I always am ;)'
'You're sweet :'  
'And you're gorgeous and too kind'
'Still not gonna show you ;)'
'Damn it!'
'Can't you wait two weeks?'  
'Nope'
'Too bad ;)'
'Why do you make me suffer, o fair maiden?'  
'Because I want to surprise you dear sir. '
'Fine, I just hope it confines to the dress rules.'  
'…Dressing rules?'  
'Yep, didn't I tell you about them, they are very specific.'  
'Asshole, there are no dressing rules… I checked the invitation.'  
'Nice language ;)'
'Haha stop trying, I won't show until the party. '
'What if I want my tie to match?'  
'It's blue, there you go :P'
'Fine, I'll leave it… for now… ;)'
'How's your gift coming along?'
'Going great actually, it's almost done :D'

'Wow that's great! I am sure it'll look amazing and your uncle will love it!'

'He better! It's costing blood, sweat and tears!'

'Drama Queen ;)'

'Haha ;) Gotta go work on it, talk to you later!'

'Good luck! Xxx'

'You too ;) xxx'

Smiling Kíli grabbed his now cold coffee and went back to work, not seeing Bifur shake his head amused.

Meanwhile Tauriel was still standing in the dressing room in Míriel's store. She had lost count of how many dresses she'd tried on, but many had been pastel coloured and very flowing… something she didn't really like. Had she just been with Arwen it would have been different, but Celebrian was there, and to the surprise of all women, Lady Galadriel, Arwen's grandmother and Celebrian's mother decided to come along too.

Tauriel wasn't someone who was easily scared but Galadriel had something about her that was intimidating. Not that the woman was unkind, it was the opposite, she was very friendly, but she had an air of authority and it was obvious that she was incredibly intelligent. Despite her older age, she still worked as the Secretary General of the United Earths, the head of the multinational organisation that brought the nations of Arda together and tried to establish peace.

She had long golden thick hair shot with silver that fell in waves to her hips. Her high cheekbone face was beautiful and her light blue eyes twinkled happily, though Tauriel could imagine them turn icy blue when angry. Galadriel had passed on her good looks down to her daughter and granddaughter. But Celebrian like her father Celeborn had silver hair that she also kept long. Her eyes were sky blue that seemed to be constantly smiling.

Being in the company of such beautiful women made Tauriel nervous and unsure, and she found it hard to refuse the dresses Arwen and Celebrian picked out. Galadriel had been looking very amused, and it was actually she who had picked out the midnight blue dress Tauriel was currently wearing. Finally a dress she liked. There was a loud knock on the door and Arwen's voice floated through.

“What are you doing in there? Do you have the dress on?” Tauriel laughed and slipped away her phone.

“Yes, yes! I am coming out!” She opened the door and stepped through the arched doorway into the waiting room.

It was a large oval space surrounded by mirrors to show of every single detail of all the beautiful gowns Míriel had made. Arwen, Celebrian, and Galadriel sat in the comfortable chairs in the middle, enjoying some tea and looking through some more designs. When Tauriel entered they looked up and Arwen gasped.

“Wow! Taur, you look… just amazing… enchanting really!” Tauriel smiled at her gratefully. She twirled around, liking the feeling of the soft fabric caressing her ankles. Celebrian and Galadriel smiled at her.
“It's true darling, it's like its made especially for you.” Celebrían said.
“You look like a star.” Galadriel agreed and a blush formed on Tauriel's cheeks. Arwen came up to
her and started inspecting her from up close. She playfully poked her ribs and toned abdomen.

“Gosh, you're so fit!”
“And so flat. This dress gives the illusion of curves.”
“You do have curves! They're just smaller.”
“Hmmm…”
“Oh god, you look amazing and don't you think otherwise. Kíli is going to faint when he sees you
and the rest of his family won't be able to take their eyes off of you.”
“You don't think it's too…?”
“Too what?”
“Sexy?”
“Don't you want to look sexy?”
“Well yes, but not too much, I mean, I've never met his family and want to make a good impression.”
“You will make the best impression and no it's not too sexy, don't worry!” Tauriel gave her friend a
careful hug.
“Thanks Arwen!”
“No problem! Now, time for dress number two, for the wedding!” And Tauriel groaned.

She was given another dress, again given to her by Galadriel. This time the dress was a light beige
colour, decorated with golden beading, making it shimmer. Tauriel didn't care for such glitter, but she
agreed to try it on. Carefully she slipped into the thin fabric and turned to the mirror in her dressing
room and gasped.

She really should have known that anything Galadriel would pick out would have been wonderful.
The fabric was soft and had several light sheer shimmering layers. It hugged her waist and hips,
running down the length of her legs, before widening a bit by her ankles, creating a slight mermaid
effect and allowing for room to walk. From her waist up the dress was covered with golden beading
that formed a round neckline and her long sleeves, looked like glittering lace. The golden colour
highlighted her red hair, bringing out her creamy complexion and bright green eyes. She stood
mesmerized for a few moments and wished Kíli was here to see her.

Slowly she opened the door to show the others and received the same reaction she had just had
herself.
“I don't know what to say, you're a goddess.” Arwen told her in awe. “I almost think you should
wear this to the birthday instead and wear the blue one to the wedding. What do you think mum?”
“I think both dresses are gorgeous, but I think the blue one is more appropriate for the birthday,
especially since we don't know what the others will wear. But this one, child, you could wear this
during your own wedding as well as Éowyn's wedding, it's enchanting.”
“Well then, I guess I found my dresses… finally.” Tauriel said and Arwen laughed.
“Yes, come on, we're done here, you look exhausted. Go get changed and I'll tell Éowyn we'll be on
our way for dinner.”

Gratefully Tauriel slipped back into her jeans and blouse and carefully handed the dresses to Míriel,
who was going to make a few minor adjustments to them so they would be perfect for her. All
women had found themselves a beautiful dress for the wonderful event ahead of them. Tauriel knew
Thranduil would be proud of her for buying both dresses. He always thought she was too careful
when buying things, especially when she had money enough. But while it hadn't been easy, Tauriel
was happy with herself, and for the first time in a while she couldn't wait until she was allowed to
slip into those beautiful gowns again.
Together with Arwen, Tauriel went over to the restaurant where they would be meeting Éowyn, Faramir, Aragorn, Éomer, and Théodred. Legolas had planned to come at first, but he had been called to a scene to report on that day. Tauriel didn't mind too much. While they were talking again, it still felt awkward at times, especially when Arwen loved to ask her questions about Kíli and the rest always reacted curiously, since none had seen him yet.

The restaurant served a tapas style menu, which was great since everyone had different preferences with food. Arwen was a vegetarian and Tauriel wasn't always too fond of heavy meat like beef or pork. Éowyn and her brother and cousin weren't overly fond of fish, while Aragorn and Faramir indulged in everything they were given. But the restaurant provided something for everyone, which helped the evening along. The seven of them had become very good friends over time, with many adventures to look back upon. But the main topic of conversation was Éowyn and Faramir's wedding.

It was obvious that the two loved each other very much. Éowyn had always looked radiant with her pale golden hair and bright blue eyes. She had a strong and healthy physique that radiated life. Tauriel could relate with her no-nonsense attitude, while Arwen had discovered her inner romantic side, which had bonded the three of them very closely.

Faramir and his older brother Boromir were quite alike in appearances. Both had sea green eyes, prominent facial features and dark strawberry blond hair. But Boromir was the taller of the two and also had the stronger physical build like their father, with a strong upper body and wide shoulders. Faramir in comparison was more delicate, although no less powerful. He looked more like his mother, also inheriting her softer character and personality. This was a cause of strain with his father Denethor. Finduilas had died when Boromir and Faramir were still children. Faramir had gotten sick with a virus that Finduilas also picked up when treating him. But while Faramir survived, she didn't. Denethor was inconsolable, and during fits of anger and sadness, had blamed Faramir for her untimely death. Her death had impacted the entire family, with Faramir trying to prove to his father that he was worth life, while Boromir had decided to become a doctor to prevent this from happening to other families. But Denethor had seemed to cheer up quite a bit with the prospects of a wedding and had been very helpful. Faramir suspected that Éowyn reminded him of his lost wife and the older man couldn't wait for grandchildren to fill up his life.

During dinner Tauriel at times wished Kíli could be there with her. Arwen and Aragorn were happy to see each other again after months of separation and Faramir and Éomer couldn't keep looking at each other, to the great annoyance of her brother Éomer, who, though accepting Faramir with open arms, finding in him a new friend, was still very overprotective of his little sister. He and Théodred were very close, seeming more like brothers than cousins. They had been quite rebellious in their youth and found in each other a comrade for adventure. Tauriel enjoyed the blonds company, who enjoyed to joke around, especially making fun of Aragorn. But Arwen's dark haired prince didn't mind and enjoyed the banter as well.

They had finished dinner and were enjoying some tea and coffee when Aragorn's phone went off and he excused himself. Arwen looked at him worriedly and Tauriel reached over to squeeze her hand.

“I am sure it's fine Arwen.” And her friend sighed.

“I just hope they aren't calling him to work, he's enjoying his time at home at his family's hospital. I know Aragorn and if they ask him he generally can't refuse. It's in his blood to travel.”

To stir the conversation away from Aragorn, Tauriel started to tell Éowyn about the dresses they had bought today for her wedding. Distracted Arwen enthusiastically joined the conversation. They didn't notice the time that passed that Aragorn was away. But when he did return back to their table, the mood immediately shifted. One look on his face told everyone that something was not right. He was pale with a faraway look in his eyes. Arwen stood up and supported him, her arms around him.
“What's wrong love?” she asked as the rest looked at him questioningly. It took him a while to speak, but then his eyes found Faramir's and he took an agonizing deep breath.

“It's Boromir…”
Unfair

The sky was slowly darkening after a brilliant blood red sunset. Normally this would have been moments treasured, people is awe with nature’s beauty. But today it left Tauriel cold. She was unfeeling and emotionless after a draining day. Life was unfair. How was it possible that she had been having great fun and love filled weeks, while others were fighting for their very lives? While some had fought the battle between life and death… and lost…

“Here.” She looked up at the steaming mug of tea Kíli held out to her. Gratefully she took it, giving him a watery smile and refocused her attention on the horizon through the windows of his apartment. “Tell me if you need something else alright?” he asked, concern lining his voice. “Tea is fine, thank you Kíli.”

“I have some whisky for later. It’s Durin’s Whiskey, which is the best of all. You’re gonna need something stronger than tea to get you through tonight.”

“Yeah I guess…” Kíli sat himself beside her on the couch, pulling her against him. He stayed silent, as he had done for the most part that evening, which Tauriel liked. Talking was useless right now, but she enjoyed his physical support. He understood her process of grief, which was one of the reasons she had called him after the funeral that afternoon.

His body had arrived two days after they received the shocking news. A day later all the arrangements were made and several hours ago, he was lowered into his freshly dug grave. Everything had passed in a blur: the speeches, the goodbyes, the blessings, and especially the tears. Tears had been everywhere, showing the sadness of the event, the injustice, the cruelty, and the loss of some so strong and helpful, who had always stuck to his morals. He had been brave and selfless to try and help the people in need without a thought of his own safety and life. He would be remembered as a honourable man, a great son, lovingly brother, and wonderful friend, because that was everything Boromir Gondor had been.

Tauriel clenched her fists as she wrapped herself tighter in Kíli’s arms. She couldn’t bear thinking about Faramir and Éowyn and the suffering they were going through right now. So close to their wedding, the wedding Boromir had actively helped plan and had been deliriously excited for. Why had fate been so cruel to not allow him to experience that moment of happiness that he had so desperately wanted for his younger brother? But this loss wasn’t the only tragedy.

With the news of his oldest and favourite son’s death, Denethor Gondor had fallen into a severe depression, blaming everyone, especially Faramir for his loss. Tensions and emotions were running very high creating an extremely unpleasant atmosphere. Éowyn and Faramir had decided to postpone their wedding into the unknown future, and Aragorn had become so upset by his friend’s passing, that he had decided against everyone’s wishes to volunteer for Boromir’s place. Part of him was feeling incredibly guilty and he had the irrational idea that if he had been there too, Boromir would still be alive, which of course was completely absurd. But it didn’t matter how much Arwen or anyone else begged, Aragorn’s mind was made up and he would depart to Mordor next week.

Tauriel couldn’t bear all the negative and sad emotions after the funeral and called Kíli, who came to her saving. Within half an hour he’d picked her up and driven her to his place. There he’d sat her down with a box of tissues as he went to prepare dinner. Tauriel hadn’t been able to stand the sight nor smell of food the past few days, but Kíli’s curry had tempted her to eat at least a little bit. That had been an hour ago. Now with the steaming mug of tea in her hand and Kíli softly stroking her hair, she finally started to relax, letting the emotions come out of her, even in the form of tears.

“Thanks.” She told him, feeling incredibly grateful for his support while at the same time feeling sad...
that she needed him instead of her friends. But every one of her friends was dealing with the loss in
their own way and being near Arwen or Éowyn only made her feel worse. Kíli however wasn’t in
mourning and was able to give her the positive energy and care she needed.
“No worries love.” He replied and kissed her temple. “I am always there for you.” And she smiled.

“How’s Faramir holding up?” He asked.
“He’s barely, he’s completely devastated. If it weren’t for Éowyn, who knows what he’d do. He’s
got no one to turn to now that his father has gone mad.”
“I can imagine. If anything happened to Fíli…” Kíli fell silent for a bit and Tauriel could see the
intense pain in his eyes just imagining the situation. She squeezed his hand.
“Fíli and I are so close, as children we were inseparable, and even now, I need to see him at least
once a week, just to make sure he’s fine, even though he’s the responsible one and always takes care
of me. If he would be gone… life would seem pointless.” He looked at her and then grinned. “Of
course, now that I know you I’ll be able to get through. But if you’d asked me a few months ago, I’d
probably have followed him into his grave.”
“Well I am glad I can be of some service.” And Kíli laughed.
“I am sorry love, that sounded terrible for you.”
“No I understand. Well maybe not completely, I’ve never had an actual blood sibling. I mean,
Legolas and I grew up together and if he were to be in trouble, it would hurt me terribly, incredibly.
But we were never full siblings; I think it’s different. I always wanted to have a brother or sister,
even a twin, always thought it’d be cool to have a twin. But now… I don’t think I want that
anymore…”
“Why not?”
“Because it makes you vulnerable. My parents are dead and I don’t have any close relatives… I can’t
be hurt like that anymore.” Kíli looked at her quizzically.
“But aren’t your friends your family now? How would you feel if I left?” The second he said that
she tightened her hold of him and stared deeply into his eyes, almost furiously.
“Don’t you dare!” He softly caressed her cheek.
“I wouldn’t want to love, but what if?” Tauriel was silent for a moment.
“I’d be devastated. It’s one of the reasons why I didn’t let anyone into my life. Arwen was right
when she accused me of being afraid. I am afraid of love. I’ve seen it hurt so many times that it’s
become scary to me.” Kíli looked at her and smiled before giving her a kiss.
“And how are you feeling about love now?”
“I am still afraid,” she told him honestly, “but I am also seeing the amazing sides of love that I tried to
keep out and that, you, gives me courage.”
“I am glad to hear that.” He said and got up. “I am getting the whiskey.” He poured both of them a
generous amount. They clinked their glasses together filled with the golden brown liquid.
“To Boromir.” She said.
“To Life.” He replied.

As they drank they listened to the jazz music Kíli had put on that played softly in the background.
“Did you hear anything from your cousin Gimli?” She asked.
“He’s alive and doing fine apparently. Of course everyone is still in shock. He was close to the
hospital when it was bombed. Found it utterly barbaric of course. Made him feel quite useless. He’s
there to try and protect people. It’s supposed to be his blood, not that of patients and doctors, that
should be spilled. These are his words by the way, not mine. But I can understand where he’s
coming from.”
“Will he be here next week?”
“He doesn’t know yet so I guess it will be a surprise for all of us on the day itself.” Kíli smiled at her,
pulling her closer to his strong broad chest. “I am glad you’ll be there though.” And she smiled back
at him.
“I am glad as well. I can’t wait to meet your family. Actually, since you and your brother are so
close, I am surprised I haven’t met him yet.” And he laughed.

“Honestly, I don’t really know why. He’s quite a busy guy and you’re schedules tend to clash. But I guess I am also just looking for the right moment to show off such a beautiful gem as yourself.” He said winking and she laughed.

“Gosh, you’re so poetic.”

“I have more, would you like to hear it?”

“Haha I bet, and I’d love to hear more, but maybe another time.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t bother you with them now, they still need polishing.”

They fell back into a comfortable silence, both sipping their whiskey as the night grew dark. The alcohol and the warmth of his body were beginning to make her drowsy, which surprised Tauriel. She’d hardly slept these past few days, but being tired was a welcomed change. Kíli noticed and gallantly offered her his bedroom, being perfectly happy to sleep on the couch. But she knew she wouldn’t be able to sleep once he was gone. Thus he lent her his sweatpants and a t-shirt and they snuggled up together in his soft bed. Within minutes Tauriel was sound asleep beside him. He felt relieved. He hated seeing her so upset. She was tired and weak and he’d do anything to make her feel better. Right before he himself drifted off, he had an idea how he could cheer her up…

Sunshine shone through a crack in the curtains into of the windows awakening Tauriel to the light and the soft chirping of birds. She kept her eyes closed, trying to enjoy the last few moments of rest. She had been exhausted and had slept dreamlessly that night. Kíli and his bed had been very comfortable to sleep with though she blushed at the thought. Lazily she stretched her arm to his side of the bed, but after a few pats she discovered that his side was empty and had gone cold. Feeling a wave of terror go through her, her eyes shot open. With terrified eyes Tauriel saw that indeed her hands hadn’t misled her, Kíli wasn’t in bed anymore.

“Kíli…” she muttered rather loudly, feeling completely silly as she said it. Why wouldn’t he have been awake and left the bed. She couldn’t expect him to lie there all there and try to comfort her pathetic self. What time was it anyway? But just as she wanted to check the time there was a knock on the door and Kíli poked his handsome but adorable face into the room.

“Well good morning darling, or rather good afternoon! I wondered when you’d wake up. Did you sleep well?”

“I… yes I did, thank you. Wait, good afternoon?” and Kíli chuckled.

“It’s almost two.”

“What! Oh god, everyone must wonder where I am and I’ve waste most of your day. Why didn’t you wake me?” Tauriel felt horrified and even more so when I blush crept up her cheeks. She was normally out and about very early. She felt so silly. But Kíli apparently found it all very amusing and strode over to her, planting a solid kiss on her lips.

“First of all, they know where you are, so no need to worry. Secondly, you haven’t wasted any of my time you would never be able to. And finally I didn’t wake you, because you needed the sleep.” She looked into his warm brown eyes and he gave her one of his puppy winning smiles. She lifted her head and kissed him back.

“Thanks Kíli.”

“No worries love. Now you must get up though, I am gonna make some lunch while you shower.” Tauriel laughed.

“And what’s the hurry now?”

“Apart from the fact I am starving, I’ve got something fun planned, or at least I’ll hope you find it fun, something to take your mind of things. So hurry.” He said and she gave him a quick kiss before disappearing into the bathroom.
As she showered and dried off the smell of something delicious drifted from the kitchen and she was pleasantly surprised when she saw Kíli baking pancakes.

“Oh yummy! You always know what makes me happy.” She told him as she took a seat and he placed a pancake in front of her.

“I try milady.”

The mood was relaxed and happy as she ate her pancakes with jam and some powder sugar, while he enjoyed his with bacon and some with syrup. He kept joking around and generally making a fool of himself to keep her mind off the unpleasant events of the past few days.

“So what had you planned to do?” Tauriel asked him. She wasn’t very good with surprises, but Kíli knew this and enjoyed teasing her too much, just like now.

“You’ll see.” He told her.

She kept questioning him, even when he drove them by bike. But slowly she started to recognize her surroundings. They were passing the Lothlórien Forest.

“Kíli, are we going where I think we’re going?”

“Maybe.” He laughed. Not soon after they arrived and Tauriel smiled happily, the entrance of the Lothlórien Shooting Academy gleaming at her invitingly. Kíli went over to her and held her hand.

“I figured this might take your mind off things. Celeborn told me we could use the Outer Pass today.”

“You’re amazing, really.” She told him but then looked down at her jeans and sweater. “But I am not sure I can move properly in these clothes.”

“Don’t worry.” He replied happily, holding up the bag he brought with him. “I’ve got everything covered.” He showed her the contents and she gasped, taking out her casual training clothes.

“How did you get these?” and he grinned secretively, obviously very pleased with himself.

“While you were still asleep I went over to your place and asked for these. Honestly I was surprised, I had expected that I would have to climb through a window or something, but your father opened up and he was quite helpful actually.” Kíli was still slightly shocked by Thranduil’s cooperative behaviour. As far as he knew, the man wasn’t very fond of him, and that was an understatement.

“He has his good days. He knows how upset Boromir’s death made me, so I guess he’s just happy you’re trying to make me feel better. Archery generally does make me feel better.” Tauriel said, slightly shocked but also very pleased with her father’s reaction, she would thank him for that later.

“Anyway, I am just happy it went smoothly. I didn’t know how long you would sleep and I didn’t want you to wake up with me gone.”

“You’re sweet.” Tauriel smiled at him and hand in hand they walked into the academy.

They quickly changed and went up to get their bows and arrows. As they tested their bows, Celeborn came up to greet them. His silver grey eyes that matched his hair, making him look so very unique, were sympathetic and he took his time giving his condolences. He also expressed his worries. He detested the war going on, especially with his wife so involved in trying to resolve peace, which at time endangered her life. But especially now that his immediate family was affected and his granddaughter’s boyfriend had decided to go to the warzone, the man grew even more anxious.

“It is difficult to digest such a horrible loss so close to our hearts. Boromir is a reminder to all of us of the horrors that happen to many families every single day. At least we can say he died in honour while following his heart. I found the funeral proceedings were done very well yesterday, but let us hope it will be the last one we will have to attend in such a manner.”

“Have you talked to Aragorn?” Tauriel asked and the man nodded his head with weary eyes.

“Yes I have, just like all of us, but to no avail. The terrible thing is, is that I understand his actions. As much as I don’t want him to go, I do understand. I have lost kin and friends during war and I would be lying if I told you that some of my missions I choose weren’t only to revenge their lives and finish what they started.” Kíli saw the sorrow and memories across Celeborn’s face, but they
passed over quickly and his teacher put a hand on Tauriel’s shoulder.  
“But enough about sorrows, life goes on. Enjoy your shooting, I have always found it helps with recovery.” Then the Lothlórien Lord smiled and left them to themselves.

Kíli and Tauriel choose the Outer Pass, the one that lay the furthest away from the Academy and was the most wild, running through the thick and dense forest. The targets placed were small and generally quite while hidden by the branches and leaves. But the two archers didn’t really mind the targets; rather they were here for fun, shooting anything they saw fit. They were running wildly, chasing each other and having a competition, seeing who could shoot the best, making up the targets as they came along. It had been Tauriel’s idea. Once they set a few steps into the woods she had eyed Kíli in a playful and cheeky manner. Just her smile had said enough and they started to run, douching branches and trying to stay on the indicated path of fallen leaves.

Tauriel was leading currently, which wasn’t that much of a surprise. She was taller, thinner, and far more agile than Kíli. But while she rushed through, adrenaline pulsing through her, Kíli took his time and his shots tended to be a bit more accurate than hers. But neither of them really paid attention to where exactly their arrows landed, it was all about the play. Tauriel’s mind, much to Kíli’s relief, seemed to currently only involve the forest, bow and arrows, and him. That was at least until they reached up of the streams running through the trees. They were forced to stop and catch their breath.

He looked at her, her chest moving up and down fast as she breathed heavily, her eyes were fixated on the other side. He moved closer to her and touched her arm and she wiped her head around to face him.

“Perhaps we should take a break, we’ve been at it for a while and you look tired.” He gave her a smile but she shook her head. Parts of her flaming hair had slipped out of their braided restraints giving her a dishevelled appearance while her eyes were wide and wild.

“No, I have to continue.” She stated and before he could say anything she rushed off, leaping over the stream with her long legs and continuing her run. It took him a few seconds to realise what happened, before Kíli turned to her and called out.

“Tauriel! Wait!” and rushed after her.

But his love didn’t hear him and quickened her pace, shooting as she went. It was an exhilarating feeling, and with every arrow she shoot, it seemed as if more of her pain and emotions seemed to leave her body, making her feel satisfied. They had long since left the assigned path and movement had become more restricted, but that only seemed to fuel her more. She wanted to go faster, deeper, away from everything. Trees became denser, casting darkness over the forest, making it harder to see, and she started to trip more often. Kíli’s calls and footsteps were gone and it seemed as if she was there alone. She went further and further, leaping and jumping until as she landed her foot catch with an sticking out root and she landed flat on the ground. Grinning to herself she stood up, brushing of the dirt from her clothes. Her grinning turned into laughter, and she looked at the trees she started to imagine a battlefield. She was surrounded by enemies who tried to obscure her path. Her laughter turned into sobbing, her breath hitching in her throat and a wave of fear washed over her. This change of sudden emotion seemed to activate her senses and her ears started to pick up all sorts of sounds. The drumming of footsteps, cracks and cries and her heart pounded in her chest. Her body told her to run and so she did, through the rows of dark clad enemies. She had to fight them, just like Boromir had, but she also had to flee. Fleeing away from the arrows, the guns and the bombs. The darkness started to get stronger, like someone who was losing their life. Had Boromir felt that way? Had he seen the light slip away from him? He must have fought against it, anyone would. Her parents had surely, just as Lemaril, Thranduil’s wife, or Kíli’s father Kaelin. Would she ever die that way? She didn’t want to die that way, she didn’t want anyone to die that way. She hated the darkness, she always had. As a child she had been terrified of the night. There had been a time when she would wake up in the night as a child and be completely terrified. She would cry and cry until someone came to comfort her. At first this had been her parents and then Thranduil, his long
pale blonde hair casting a light around him. Legolas often insisted on them sharing a room as kids so that whenever she had a nightmare, he would be able to comfort her and cast away the darkness. She missed him. She missed all of them. She wanted them back, and wanted them to chase the darkness away. Something pulled her down to the ground. An enemy probably, dark arms extending towards her and she twisted around, trying to shake them off. She didn’t want to be killed and dragged into the darkness, not like Boromir. She screamed, shielding herself as tears rolled down her cheeks.

“Tauriel!”
“Get away from me!"
“Tauriel my love.”
“Go away!”
“Open your eyes!”
“No!”
“Open your eyes dammit!”
“Leave me alone!” Something suddenly pulled her up into a sitting position and she crashed into something hard… a warm. Someone’s breath surrounded her, their hair tickling her face and its hands smoothing her hair. That wasn’t something enemies did. Carefully she opened her eyes. It was dark and she could barely make out the person sitting in front of her through her tears.

“Tauriel.” The deep soothing voice of a man sounded familiar and he smelled like someone she knew.
“Tauriel… look at me.” He softly lifted her head and she finally saw his warm brown eyes, surrounded by dark lashes. Stubble lined his jaw. How did he know her name?
“You’re safe, you’re safe with me, Tauriel. Wake up, it’s just a dream, a nightmare.” She blinked her eyes and suddenly the world seemed to come crashing down on her. She felt their bodies together, their limbs tangled up. She felt the leaves she was lying on and as she looked up she saw the outline of the trees. She was in a forest… Lothlórien Forest… training… the Academy… Kíli… Kíli!
“Kíli…?” She asked and his face appeared clearly in front of her this time.
“Yes, I am here.” He was and joy filled her body. She was safe now.
“Kíli.” And with that she pulled him towards her onto the ground. He rolled until she lay on top of him and held her tight, protectively in his arms as she cried.
“I am sorry, I am so sorry… I don’t know what happened to me… I was lost… a battlefield…” she apologised and she felt embarrassment rise to her cheeks.
“Shush it’s alright my love, everything is fine Amrâlimê.” And he continued to stroke her hair until the last tears seemed to have left her body. He looked at her, happy that he had found her, he’d had been so afraid. The look she had given him right before she’d run away had told him she wasn’t alright and that something was haunting her. That something of course wasn’t hard to figure out. Boromir’s death had shocked her and left her shake. His heart was breaking at the fact that she was so hurt. He had come to the realization that, though he knew her quite well already, there was still a lot about her that he didn’t know about. As much as he didn’t like Thranduil nor Legolas, this was definitely something he wanted to talk about. What was she so afraid of?

But that all would come later, right now he was just happy that she was back in his arms again. His arms pulled her closer to him and he placed a kiss on her temple. Then he pulled both of them up. Tauriel looked around her, finding her bow and quiver. She then turned to look at him, her hair falling in tangles around her. She smiled at him gratefully and he reached for her once more, taking her delicate hand in his own and kissing her hungrily and she kissed him back with equal force. As they parted panting she shivered. Without a second thought Kíli unzipped his jumper and put it on her. Then he placed his hand in the small of her back and started to lead her through the forest back to the Academy.

“I am sorry Kíli. This was supposed to be a fun time.”
“It’s fine Tauriel, really. It was stupid of me to think that some shooting would make you feel better.”
“But it did,” she protested, “at least in the beginning. What just happened wasn’t you’re fault, and I am sorry to make you worry.” He looked up to her and smiled.
“I am just happy you’re back.”
“And I am happy you found me, my love.” She smiled back.

After a while they reached the end of the forest and saw the lights of Lothlórien Academy. The sky had already grown dark, the stars and moon lightening up the night. Celeborn was relieved to see them come back. Had it been any later, he would have gathered a search party he told them. The couple apologised as they put back their weapons. All changed they walked hand in hand back to Kíli’s bike.

“What were you thinking about?” Kíli asked her, wrapping an arm around her waist. She sighed softly looking at him with her wise, starlit green eyes.

“How unfair life can be.”
“Do you have everything?”
“Yes, it’s all packed. The rest will be there at the camps and hospitals.”
“When will you leave?”
“Tomorrow morning, quite early I am afraid. I have to be on time to catch my flight. I am going to the airport by train, to make it easier.”
“Please…”
“Please what?”
“Please don’t go!”
“Arwen…”
“No, please! I beg you!”
“Arwen my love, try to understand, I have to go.”
“No you don’t, you think you have to go, nobody else thinks that, I don’t think that.”
“Arwen…” Aragorn reached out to her, holding her hand and pulling her close. His grey blue eyes met her tearing ocean ones.
“Is there really nothing I can do to stop you?”
“I am afraid not. I know this is hard for you, it is hard for me too, but it’s my duty.”
“It’s not your duty. Did Denethor ask you to go or Faramir?”
“No they didn’t.”
“Then why Aragorn, why?”
“I promised him myself.” Arwen took a step back in shock.
“What?” She asked, her voice high and Aragorn sighed.
“When Boromir left, he seemed weary and tired, but he wanted to fulfil his mission. I told him that if anything would happen I would take over for him. Of course I hadn’t expected that would actually happen, and definitely not because of this death.” He paused for a second, running a hand through his long waving raven hair. He so hoped she would understand that he had to go through with his promise, his gut told him to do so. But he understood her anger and sadness. He felt it as well, and normally he would do anything to be able to stay with her, if only to see her. But things were different and he wanted to part with her in a good way, to make their separation tolerable. He reached behind his neck unfastening the necklace he wore and handed the pendant to her. She looked at him a shock.
“What are you doing?” She breathed, her eyes wide as she saw the shining jewel in his open hand. She had given it to him several years before as a token of her love for him and for luck. Her heart broke at the sight of it in his hand.
“Take it back.”
“Why?”
“I am afraid I might lose it, and it’s too precious to me for that.” She looked at him, stubbornness flooding her eyes. She reached for his hand and closed his fingers around the jewel.
“It was my gift to you. Keep it, you need it more than I do.”
“Arwen…” he started is eyes sad. “If I don’t come back, promise me…”
“I will promise you nothing!”
“Arwen, there’s a chance that…”
“I don’t want to hear it! You will come back, don’t you dare think of it otherwise.”
“I am trying to be realistic here, I don’t want to cause you pain.”
“Well it’s too late for that now Aragorn Strider! You, we, knew from the start that our relationship would be a difficult one, but we have managed this far, and we will manage it further. You cannot expect me to now turn away. Whatever happens I will always love you, and you can’t make me do otherwise!”
“You don’t understand, I do love you, more than anything, you know that, but I…”
“But you what?”
“You father…”
“I don’t care what my father has to say about this, I want to stay with you!”

“Arwen!” the voice of her father flooded the room. Arwen turned around to look her father’s tall strong frame, his long dark brown hair flowing over his shoulders. One usually didn’t have to question the love Elrond felt for his youngest child and daughter for it was plain for everyone to see. But right now his stormy blue grey eyes were set hard, with the determined look to reason with his daughter.

“Ada please! Don’t encourage him to go! He’s like a son to you! Would you let Elladan or Elrohir go too?”

“As much as it pains me, Aragorn is free to choose his own path, just as all my children. I might not agree with everything but I want to support them…”

“Support? Are you suggesting him to give me up? Is that supporting?”

“Arwen!” Elrond raised his voice and within seconds Celebrían appeared, cautiously watching in the background. “I don’t want to hurt either of you and as you should know by now, I, we, support you both.”

“But…”

“But with Boromir’s death we have to be prepared for everything, even you, my child. We’ve been living in a dream, in a world where nothing can hurt us, but it’s time to see the reality.” Tears streamed down Arwen’s face, breaking the hearts of all in the room and her mother stretched out her hand to her to comfort her baby. But Arwen did move, instead her eyes were hard set on something in the distant, and they could see a battle raging in her head. After several minute she turned herself back to Aragorn, who looked at her sad but lovingly with his silver blue eyes.

Without any second thought or concern of her parents being so near she kissed him full force. Aragorn moved in surprise before engulfing her with his strong arms, returning her passionate embrace. Celebrían smiled softly and amusingly dragged her shocked husband out of the room to give the two the privacy they deserved.

The rest of the night and day Arwen and Aragorn fed of each other passions, savouring every kiss, every stroke, every shiver, and every smile like it could be their last. The night was late when they lay together under the heavy covers, tangled together, her raven hair spilling around them. Her head was on his chest and she delicately played with some of him dark chest hair, while his stroked her face and hair. They didn’t have to say anything, and there was nothing more to be said. Aragorn had decided and Arwen reluctantly accepted. Now the only thing that matter of them together like time was standing still.

“Arwen?” He murmured in his deep voice.
“Hmmm?”
“Would you ever want kids?” and she giggled against him her hand travelling to his and she softly started to play with his finger, tracing his palm.
“Yes, I would. Would you?”
“Yes, of course.” Then he laughed and she shifted to look at him questioningly. “I was just thinking, mother would force if I wouldn’t want them.” And Arwen laughed with him, being able to picture a distressed Gilraen demanding grandchildren. She kissed him.
“How many would you want?” She asked cheekily and he laughed, rising an eyebrow.
“That would depend on what you wanted my darling.”
“How so very considerate of you.”
“I always am.” He said smirking with a twinkling in his eye but she didn’t respond the way he’d
hoped, instead she rolled away from him.

“Not always.” She said and Aragorn sighed and then hugged her nuzzling his face in her neck. His hand traced her body until he found her hand and interlaced his fingers with hers.

“Maybe not now but,” he said and then turned her around to face him. “But I want to make sure you live in a safe world, and that our children, no matter how many, can grow up in a peaceful and happy one.” His eyes bored into hers and after a while she looked away, threading her fingers through his dark mane. Then she gave him a small smile, the smile he had wanted to see on her lips for so long.

“You are a very noble man Aragorn Strider.”

“Only for you, my beautiful Evenstar.”

In the Mirkwood Estate Thranduil was sitting in his favourite chair by the large fireplace, a full glass of red wine in his hand. He swirled the liquid around, his thoughts elsewhere. He was in fact waiting for a moment to come, a moment that he so desperately dreaded but knew it was going to come eventually. He eyed Lemaril’s portrait, looking into her bright eyes that were unknowing and still lived with happiness. He clenched his hand around his glass. He carried a large secret and burden with him these past few years. Elrond was the only one who knew and had advised him to tell, hoping it would aid his recovery, but it just never seemed the right time, and so he carried it. If Thranduil had a choice he’d carry it into his grave.

His musing as interrupted by footsteps descending down the stairs. You could hear a lot by the walk people walked. Thranduil had perfected this observation technique so that he knew what his clients were up to without them telling him themselves. These footsteps he knew were the ones he’d been dreading to hear this entire time. He took a swing of wine as Legolas appeared in the living room. He looked at his son, the jewel of his life, his little green leaf. People were quick to say that Legolas was his mirror, but they were wrong. If one looked at the young man closely they would see that the only thing his son got from him were his blue eyes and darker eyes brows. His face was softer with his mother’s mouth and cheekbones. His golden locks were just like hers just like his smile and even his ice blue eyes seemed to still emit the same brightness as her grey ones had done.

Thranduil put his glass done and opened his arms, mentioning for Legolas to sit next to him. He reached for the empty glass beside him and filled it too with wine before handing it to his son. He picked up his own again and looking at each other they clinked their glasses together.

“To your health father.” Legolas said.

“To your life, my son.” Thranduil replied and they drank.

Several minutes they spend in each other’s company in silence before Legolas spoke up.

“You know why I am here.” He said; it was more of a statement then a question.

“I do.” His father confirmed and Legolas spend some tension leave him. At least he wouldn’t have to break the difficult news. He looked at his wine.

“You’re not going to stop me?” And Thranduil sighed.

“I could and I would very much like to, but I know it won’t make a difference, you’ll go regardless.” Legolas gave him a small smile.

“That stubbornness you gave me.”

“Yes, unfortunately.” Legolas put his glass down and reached for his fathers arm, looking at him intensely. It was at times like these that he could see his father was getting older, age reflected in his eyes.

“You know I can’t let him go there alone. I have turned down the offers up until now but with Aragorn going, I want to know what is happening there. There’s a severe lack of journalist on the ground.”
“That’s not very surprising now is it?”
“No, but perhaps that makes me even more eager to go.”
“Yes, I can understand that, war tends to excite people.” Thranduil said bitterly but quickly
recovered himself. “Legolas, if you want to go, then I won’t stop you. When do you plan to leave?”
“Aragorn leaves tomorrow morning, I will follow him four days later.”
“The 22nd of October?”
“Yes.”
“On Thorin Durin’s birthday.” And Legolas chuckled.
“It appears so. How do you remember that?” and Thranduil smiled lightly.
“I am very good at remembering those things, especially that date.”
“And why if that one so special?”
“I always make sure I am gone that day so that I have an excuse to refuse a possible invitation.”
Legolas raised his eyebrows in surprise.
“Would Thorin send you an invitation?”
“Oh no, but Mr Grey as pleaded for me to attend, he thinks he might mend the ties.” And then
Thranduil scoffed at the idea. “Ridiculous.” He muttered and his son laughed.
“And so you travel every year just because of that.” And Thranduil smirked.
“It’s a ugly truth.” He then turned serious, his eyes sad. “That means Legolas, that I won’t be able to
see you off Sunday because I leave tomorrow morning as well.”
“Where will you go?”
“Somewhere far away enough.” Thranduil answered mysteriously.

Legolas nodded in acceptance and finished his wine in a few quick swallows; he then turned back to
his father.
“Then I guess I will say my goodbyes to you now.” His father smiled as they both stood up and
embraced each other tightly.
“Not goodbyes my son, but good luck.” As they separated he held his son’s face in his hands.
“Travel safety.” He whispered.
“I will.”
“Do your best.”
“Of course.”
“And come back to me alive.” With that Legolas looked his father in the eyes with a determined
look.
“I promise.”

Thranduil released his face, moving his hands to Legolas’ shoulders a gripped them firmly.
“I want you to know that I am proud of you.” His voice croaked, but he didn’t feel any
embarrassment and tears filled his son’s eyes.
“Thank you Ada.”
The men hugged each other once more before letting go. Legolas walked over to his mother’s
portrait to take his leave of her too. Thranduil walked up to stand beside him. He didn’t look at his
son when he spoke.
“Legolas, your mother loved you, more than anyone, more than life…”
Legolas looked at him, both sharing a look filled with grief and understanding. Then the young man
turned back towards the stairs he’d come from but right before he went up he turned to his father
once more.
“Don’t tell Tauriel I am leaving. I want to spare her the pain of my departure.” Thranduil nodded.
“A wise decision.”
“But will you be there for her when she does find out?”
“Of course, I am always there for her, even when she doesn’t realized it.” And Legolas smiled.
“She’s reckless.”
“She is indeed.” Thranduil returned the smile.
Legolas gave him one last look.
“Good bye father.”
“Good luck my son.” And with that Legolas turned and walked away, not seeing his father close his eyes in pain, taking a deep shivering breath.
“Come one, let me do your make-up!”
“What do you want to do?”
“Just a smokey eyes, and don’t sounds so terrified, I am great at them.”
“Won’t it be too much?”
“Taur it’s a party, and no, having eye shadow isn’t too much.” Tauriel sighed and gave her friend a smile and Arwen happily went off to get her eye shadow palette. Éowyn laughed at the raven and softly combed through Tauriel’s red locks.
“I think you two are having more fun than I am.” Tauriel told her and Éowyn grinned.
“Obviously! We love an excuse to dress you up and make you happy…” then she paused and looked down. “It makes us happy too.” Tauriel reached over to touch her hand.
“I feel bad feeling so good when you both are suffering loss, it feels wrong somehow.” Éowyn shook her head and looked straight at her through the mirror with her intense blue eyes.
“Don’t! God don’t suppress your feelings. We are happy, exhilarated in fact, to see you so in love and content. It’s been a while since we’ve seen you that way. Just because of everything that has happened doesn’t mean you can’t have fun. That’s ridiculous and I forbid you to give it another thought!” Tauriel smiled in defeat.
“I’ll try.” She promised the blonde.
“Good!” Arwen said as she reappeared with her ‘weapons’ ready.

For a while the two women worked diligently with Tauriel as their canvas. Éowyn had pulled her knee length hair into an elegant half-up with highlighting accent braids. Meanwhile Arwen had given her smokey eyes with warm brown colours that made her green eyes pop. Tauriel couldn’t believe she was the made women how was staring back at her through the mirror.

“Wow, thank you girls, you made me beautiful.” And Arwen laughed, clasping her shoulder.
“You are always beautiful love. Come on lets get you into your dress, mum and dad will be done soon.” Tauriel smirked.

“I still can’t believe your parents and grandparents were invited too, Kíli didn’t tell me.”
“He probably wanted it to be a surprise, so you won’t feel alone. Besides if everything goes bad, which I am sure it won’t, Elladan will be there too.”
“I know I’ll be fine with Kíli and even his brother and mother seem fine with me, as far as he’s told me… I am just worried about the other hundred guest… especially his uncle.”
“Don’t worry,” Éowyn reasoned, “I am sure Kíli knows best.”
“Yeah but his uncle is practically his father. What if the man hates me, I don’t want to be a source of conflict.”
“If Kíli didn’t think you were worthy he wouldn’t ask you out now would he.” Tauriel thought about that, then she nodded.

“Yeah I guess you’re right.” And Arwen and Éowyn laughed.
“We always are.” Arwen winked, then she clashed her hands together. “Come on put it on.” she eyed the dark blue fabric that lay on the bed.

Carefully as if it would crumble in her hands Tauriel picked up the silky fabric. With the help of her friends she slid into it, fastening the round halter that held the dress together around her neck. Full of excitement she turned to the mirror and gasped.

The dress still looked as good as when she first tried it on in Míriel’s store. The dress fitted her body perfectly. The top was cut in the middle, revealing some chest bone in a playful but still tasteful way.
Beneath her breasts the dress pleated inwards to the centre line of the dress that highlighted her waist. As the material moved down it highlighted her hips, giving them more volume. Then the folding stopped and allowed the smooth material to flow down freely, showing off the length of her legs. The blue shinned and with her hair and make-up down, Tauriel felt like a goddess. As the other two women continued to admire her she put in a pair of delicate silver leaf earrings that completed her look.

“No one will even think about rejecting you in this, I am willing to bet on it.” Arwen told her as Éowyn agreed with her. Gratefully Tauriel looked at her friends and gave both a tight hug. As if on cue there was a knock on the door and Elladan appeared. His raven hair hung impeccably straight along his shoulders. He wore a three-piece tuxedo with a white shirt, silver vest and deep purple tie. His black jacket and pants fitted him perfectly. But his usual poker face was broken as he looked in amazement at Tauriel and she blushed at his wondrous grey eyes. Then he smiled and greeted his sister and Éowyn, before finally turning to Tauriel.

“You look wonderful.” He simply stated and she smiled and him.

“Thank you, you’re not looking too bad yourself.” Which made him smirk and he offered.

“Come on, mother and father are waiting downstairs.” She nodded and grabbed her purse, checking if she had everything. Arwen handed her, her shawl against the autumn chill and said her good byes.

“You’ll have an amazing time, I promise.” She said as Tauriel smiled, hugging Éowyn who gave her similar encouragement.

“You must tell us everything tomorrow!”

“I will! Thank you guys again.”

“Oh please, it’s fine, we had way too much with this. You enjoy it.”

Tauriel and Elladan walked from Arwen’s room but right before they turned the corner to the stairs they heard Arwen’s voice.

“And try to keep your hands of Kíli so much as possible!” and they laughed at the heavy blush spreading over Tauriel’s cheeks.

Downstairs in Rivendell’s impressive entrance hall stood Elrond and Celebríán. Elrond was dressed like his son, showing off the silver and purple Rivendell colours proudly. Celebríán looked radiant in her silver blue dress with long sleeves, with a diagonal cut across the shoulders, leaving one bare. The dress with embroidered with white gems and beads. Her white silver hair gave an ethereal glow, a trait inherited from her mother. She smiled ecstatically when she saw Tauriel and pulled the younger woman into a warm embrace.

“You look even more beautiful than last time darling. Come lets get you in the car, there’s quite a chill tonight.” With that the red head was whirled away and before she could comprehend it all they were driving towards the Erebor Estate, where the party was held.

She tried to withhold herself from wringing her hands together and playing with the rings on her long fingers. She felt so nervous and prayed that everyone would like her. Most of all she just wanted to be with Kíli right now. She had missed him for the past few days. The Mirkwood Estate was empty right now, Legolas seemed busy and she hardly saw him as if he was avoiding her. Thranduil was way on one of his business trips. She was thankful he was coming back tomorrow. His mood towards her seemed better these last couple of days he even seemed to have silently accepted her attachment to Kíli. Tauriel had no idea where this sudden change came from, but she happily welcomed it. Elladan who had reached over to squeeze her fiddling hand interrupted her thoughts.

She looked up at him and he gave her encouraging smile, which she returned. If all else failed, at least she would have him and Kíli on her side, and with their support, she could get through anything.
More and more guests arrived at Erebor, all of them adding to the festive atmosphere around. Fíli and Kíli welcomed each one and led them through the large palace to the large hall at the back that they had assigned for the party. It gave access to the gardens in case people wanted the fresh autumn air and see the bright stars of the night. But what made the night especially special was the blood moon proudly displayed in the sky, which called for the celebration of Durin’s Day.

The party hall was decked out with tables for the guests leaving space for a dance floor that would be used later that night after a few ales had been spilled. Thorin together with Dís were in the hall to welcome the guests Fíli and Kíli brought and showed them happily to their seats, though most, especially kin stayed around to talk and catch up, all wishing Thorin a happy 65 birthday.

Both Fíli and Kíli wore identical tuxedos with shining black vests. Fíli’s tie was a deep red colour while Kíli was a dark blue that he prayed would match Tauriel’s dress. The brunet had been anxiously staring at the door sighing in disappointment every time someone else arrived. Fíli was finding it all extremely amusing. Arild had come along with him, decked out in a beautiful ruby red dress, her blonde curls tamed into a brilliant up-do. Her neck sparkled with the golden necklace Fíli had given her on their anniversary. She smiled happily, her brown eyes sparkling as she went to check up on the Durin brothers.

“Everything going alright boys?”
“Yeah,” Fíli answered her with a smile encircling her waist with his hand, “most guests should be here on time I reckon.”
“Kíli, where’s the girl we’re all dying to meet, your mother won’t stop talking about her to Thorin.” Kíli replied in a huff and Arild laughed.
“She’s not here yet and Kee will have a fit soon.” Fíli answered for his brother, his eyes twinkling with mirth, earning him a shove from his younger brother.

Right at that moment a sleek silver car appeared on the drive way and Kíli’s heart slammed in his throat. That could be her and he sucked in his breath in anticipation as the passenger door opened and a pair of golden heels came out. But before Kíli could see who it was, a man came to help the woman, his silver hair a dead give away. It was Celeborn and full of disappointment Kíli watched his wife Galadriel come out beside him dressed in a spectacular pale golden dress that was shot with silver beading, held together in her centre by a large shining clasp. Her golden hair glowed around her and her pale blue eyes found his.

“You are disappointed Kíli Durin.” She stated with an amused smile on her face as she and her husband came to greet them and Kíli felt his cheeks burn with embarrassment. He mentally kicked himself, he wasn’t allowed to nor could he afford to screw this up now, not for himself, not for Thorin, and especially not for Tauriel. So he pasted a winning smile on his handsome face. He took her slender hand and kissed it.
“Not at all Lady Galadriel. Allow me to escort you and Lord Celeborn to my uncle.” He replied and led the two elegant people through the house.
“It is great to see you again Kíli and a pleasure to meet your family.” Celeborn smiled at him.
“The same to you sir.” Kíli smiled back. He then presented them the party hall where Thorin was waiting, looking majestic as ever.
With a nod Celeborn walked his way and his wife seemed to do the same until she gave Kíli one more look, gracing him with a dazzling smile of her own, and he could understand why she often had been presented as the most beautiful woman of Arda.
“My daughter and son-in-law should be arriving here soon.” She told him and glided away, highly amused, leaving Kíli with a shock expression on his face. He watched his uncle, decked out in his own tuxedo with midnight blue vest with silver tie and adorned by several Ereborian silver jewels, to greet the Lord and Lady of Lothlórien Estate. His normally wild and thick raven hair mane shit with grey, was gelled back neatly and tied into a low ponytail in his neck. Fíli smiled at his uncle’s
content expression, it was clear he was enjoying himself.

Right as Kíli was about to return to the door himself he heard his brother run towards him happily with someone hastily bobbing behind him.

“Kíli, Bilbo is here!” His brother exclaimed and Kíli broke out into a huge grin. Behind Fíli the revered mister Bilbo Baggins appeared. Without a single thought Kíli ran up towards the small man and picked him up to hug him tight.

“Mr Boggins! How great to see you!” he cheered, using his old teasing name for the man, smiling widely at Bilbo, who smiled back looking overwhelmed by his welcome.

“Boys, boys, its been a while.” He said as Kíli lowered him back to the ground. He had a full head of brown curls, large dark blue eyes and a friendly face. He wore a dark blue dinner jacket, golden yellow vest with flower pattern and a light blue tie, all dressed up for a party. “That last time I saw you guys you were merely teenagers, and look at you now!” Bilbo exclaimed as he seized both young men up. “You’ve both grown so much.”

“I have, Fíli’s remained the same.” Kíli teased gaining him a shove from his brother. Bilbo laughed. “You haven’t changed at all.” He said and then wrung his hands together looking at the party hall.

“Now we’ll have the entire evening to catch up, I must go and congratulate your uncle.”

The brothers let their friend pass and happily watched as Bilbo walked over to Thorin. Thorin expression changed from happy to ecstatic when he saw his old friend appear.

“Bilbo Baggins!” His loud voice roared in happiness clasping him into a tight hug, which was quite out of character for the head of the Oakenshield Company, who only reserved such gestures for family or very close friends.

Thorin Durin and Bilbo Baggins knew each other from one of their travels. Their friendship initially started out a rocky one with their characters and values being completely at odds together. But as the years went by the two men formed a very close bond despite the ten-year age gap between them. For a while Bilbo had lived in Dale, helping Thorin with the business, especially dealing with some of the competitors such as Smaug Gold. During that time the academic Bilbo had taught at Dale University for a while. But he grew weary and wanted to acquire more knowledge. At Gandalf Grey urgings and Thorin’s disappointment Bilbo travelled to the Rivendell Estate where Elrond gave him access to the Rivendell libraries for his research. Several years back, Bilbo moved back to his hometown of Hobbiton by the Shire, and that had been the last time since anyone had seen Bilbo Baggins. But now people rejoiced at his return. The brother smiled at the fond expression Thorin gave Bilbo.

“It’s so great to see you again Thorin. All of you!” Bilbo said spreading his arms as to welcome every one. “I have someone with me who I’d like you all to meet.” And from behind him a small boy appeared who seemed no older than 12. He had Bilbo’s small build with a wild head of thick black curls. He looked up in wonder at Thorin with large pale blue eyes. “This is my nephew Frodo Baggins!” Bilbo introduced and on cue Thorin crouched down to the boys level.

“It’s an honour to meet you Mr Frodo Baggins.” He had smiled.

“It’s just Frodo sir.” The boy stammered, obviously slightly overwhelmed. Again Thorin cracked a smile and softly ruffled the boy’s hair.

“You can call me Thorin.” At this Fíli elbowed his brother.

“We have competition.” He whispered and Kíli grinned. “He’s completely smitten!” then they laughed.

Suddenly the two eldest of Bombur many children appeared, spotting bright red hair like their father. With wide grins they took Frodo’s hand.

“Hey, you wanna come play?”

“Sure…” the shy Frodo replied before looking at Bilbo for permission, who nodded happily, not that it would have made a difference as the other two boys were in the process of dragging Frodo away. Bilbo seemed to sigh in relief.
“I am glad he can play here, he needs some distraction, he’s still going through a hard time right now.” And Thorin placed a hand on the small man’s shoulders in support. “My cousin Drogo and his wife Primula died two years ago in a boat accident and I adopted him as my own. He’s still coming to terms that he’ll never see them anymore. He blames himself sometimes, silly boy.” “It’s understandable, it was hard for the boys as well when they lost their father.” Thorin told him and mentioned for his nephews to come over. Bilbo nodded but smiled at the brother. “Yes, but look at them now, such fine young men, you must be very proud of them Thorin.” Thorin looked at them and smiled. “I always am.” There wasn’t a higher compliment he could have given them.

Arild practically stormed into the hall breaking the magic. “Are you two seriously leaving me alone at the door?” she asked her hands on his hips. With worried expressions Fíli and Kíli gave their excuses to Bilbo and their uncle and hurried back to their assigned posts, fearful of Arild’s wrath, leaving the rest laughing on their behalf.

Kíli was faster then his brother, reaching the door first but he stopped so suddenly that Fíli crashed straight into him, sending them both to the ground. Cursing Fíli tried to get back up dragging his brother with him. “What the hell man? What was that for?” he all but shouted, but Kíli didn’t respond, instead continued to stare outside. Fíli followed his gaze. A silver Mercedes was parked outside with Elrond and his wife Celebrian having stepped out of it already. A man that the brothers assumed to be one of their sons was in the process of helping out the final passenger.

Silver strappy heals exited the car first and they firmly touched the ground. Elladan held out his hand and a slender one took it. Full of grace, a woman slipped out of the Mercedes. A long midnight blue dress hugged her slender feminine body and contrasted with her flaming hair. A silver shawl that protected her from the cold shone like the stars in the sky above them. Her green eyes locked with Kíli and an amused smile formed on her lips. “Tauriel…” Kíli muttered as if it was a question. Fíli looked over at his brother who looked like a love struck fool and he gave him a sharp jab in the ribs. This seemed to wake him up as he shook his head before looking at her again, now returning her smile. He walked over to her, took her hand from Elladan, who grinned, and kissed it. “Welcome to Erebor,” he said with his warm brown eyes, that made Tauriel melt every time. “You look absolutely stunning.” He told her and a heavy blush formed on her cheeks. “Thank you,” she breathed, “you’re looking handsome yourself.” And she gave him a wink. A small cough returned them to the present before they got lost in each other’s eyes. Quickly Kíli walked over to where Elrond, Celebrian, and Elladan where standing who had already greeted Fíli. “Sorry,” he apologized as he shook their hands, “I am Kíli Durin. It is a pleasure to meet you.” Celebrian gave him an encouraging smile. “It is great to finally meet you Kíli, Tauriel and especially Arwen, have told us so much about you.” “Only good things I hope.” He joked as Tauriel came to stand beside him. “Of course.” She told him before focusing her attention on Fíli. The blond smiled at her and gave her a kiss on the cheek when they greeted. “Finally I see the girl that my brother is so obsessed about.” He grinned and she laughed. “And I finally meet his better half.” She joked and Kíli groaned. “Oh I see it’s going to be pick on Kíli night.” He grumbled prompting Tauriel to kiss his cheek. “Of course!” She giggled and with a shake of his head, Kíli began to lead her inside holding her hand tightly in his.

While Lady Galadriel had already left quite an impression on the guests present they didn’t know what they had coming. As Kíli walked her into the hall a silence grew with fervent whispers filling the air as they gazed at their clasped hands. Many had of course heard rumours about one of the heirs of Thorin dating a child of Thranduil Greenwood. But of course hearing those rumours and seeing
live confirmation was a completely different story. Most hadn’t been able to understand what could possibly attract Kíli Durin to someone affiliated to the Mirkwood Estate. But now gazing upon her star-like presence that mystery appeared to be solved… although she was quite slender and tall compared to the other Durin women. But probably the most convincing fact of all that showed that this wasn’t some practical joke that the young Durin was famous for, was the love that seemed to radiate between the two people. Only a blind fool wouldn’t be able to see that.

Dís happily clapped in her hands, which seemed to the break the hall out their trance and continue their festive activities and chatter. The mother made her way to her son and upon arrival immediately grabbed Tauriel’s hands and pulled her into a motherly hug.

“Oh it’s so great to finally meet you! Kíli has sheltered you away long enough.” Dís gushed happily and Tauriel looked at the small but sturdy woman in front of her. She had wild raven hair that like her brother was shot with strands of silver. Her piercing blue eyes that Fíli seemed to have inherited sparkled. All in all she and Thorin looked very much alike although Dís’ face was finer and more delicate and she radiated warmth unlike her brother’s stoic appearance.

“It’s an honour to finally meet you too Mrs Durin.” Tauriel told her and the woman laughed.

“Oh please,” she waved, “call me Dís, Mrs Durin makes me sound so old!” and Tauriel laughed looking sideways at Kíli who gave her a huge grin. But before he could pick up her hand again, Dís intervened and put Tauriel’s arm on her own.

“Come on, you’ve got plenty of people to meet.” She said as she meandered her way to Thorin. Kíli hurried after her.

“Uh mum… I can…”

“Nonsense, it’s your own fault for not bringing her around sooner.” Dís scolded him and Tauriel laughed looking sideways at Kíli who gave her a huge grin. But before he could pick up her hand again, Dís intervened and put Tauriel’s arm on her own.

“Come on, you’ve got plenty of people to meet.” She said as she meandered her way to Thorin. Kíli hurried after her.

“Uh mum… I can…”

“Nonsense, it’s your own fault for not bringing her around sooner.” Dís scolded him and Tauriel laughed at his sad expression. While there was no doubt Kíli had a rebellious streak, it was nothing Dís couldn’t handle. However she was rather grateful for having Kíli so close to her, who had promised to not leave her sight for the evening, especially as they got closer to Thorin. The man in question turned his brooding eyes their way as Bilbo stood beside him shifting his weight around with obvious glee.

Finally the two stood opposite each other. With her heels Tauriel had grown an extra few centimetres making her a full head taller than Thorin. But inside she felt so incredibly small as his ice blue eyes judged her. Nerves filled her body as she stuck out her hand hoping fervently that she wasn’t shaking.

“Tauriel Greenwood.” She said, relieved that her voice hadn’t cracked. Thorin shook her hand but didn’t break his eyes contact.

“Thorin Durin.” He said rather brusque.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you sir.” She hastily said, relieved that her voice hadn’t cracked. Thorin shook her hand but didn’t break his eyes contact.

“Thorin Durin.” He said rather brusque.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you too Tauriel.” He said and Tauriel couldn’t resist her own smile of relief rise on her face.

“Thank you.” She said and was happy to feel Kíli’s hand in hers. He looked at her with utter happiness and similar relief. Thorin laughed at their expression

“I got you there.” He said grinning and his sister rolled her eyes.

“I will never understand your humour brother.”

“And I’d love to keep it that way,” he replied, “that makes it so much more fun for me.” And Dís gave him a playful shove. With Kíli’s mother and uncle’s approval, nothing seemed to be able to ruin their night.
The night passed with great splendor. Tauriel enjoyed all the food that was presented to her, trying all the different types of Ereborian cuisine, most of them heavy meat dishes. She couldn’t resist stealing glances at Arwen’s family, who were all vegetarians. But they seemed to enjoy themselves nonetheless and were happily engaging in the party. They were especially enamoured by Balin and Bilbo who had taken it upon them to entertain the standing out guests. Kíli and Fíli had been fantastic hosts and she felt extremely content among them. Arild, Fíli girlfriend, was very animated and told Tauriel tales of the brothers from when they were teenagers. She was also very helpful in explaining what everything on her plate and beyond represented.

Dinner made way for desserts and Kíli had a field day making her try all his favourite puddings, cakes, sweets until she feared she but burst out of her dress. At this commented Kíli replied that, that would be a shame for the dress she was wearing looked fabulous, something he mentioned often throughout the evening. But, he added when the rest was distracted, he was sure she would look beautiful without it as well, if not more so. He gave her a playful wink and she, though very much flattered, attempt to hide her blush by drinking her champagne.

More and more ales seemed to pop up everywhere as people had, had their fill of sweets. It didn’t take long for the background music to play louder and the make shift dance floor to fill up by guests dancing, although Tauriel wasn’t exactly sure if she could call all of it dancing. At first the music was elegant and Kíli surprised her by effortlessly gliding her along the dance floor.

“You never told me you could dance like this too.” She told him and he grinned remembering their first date, when he had dance with her at a club.

“Mum went through this phase where she wanted Fíli and I to be able to dance. I think we were still in our awkward teens and hated every minute of it, but I guess it did pay off.” And Tauriel laughed. “It definitely did!”

“Am I impressing you milady?” He teased.

“Are you always?” She replied and he laughed, pulling her closer to him so he could give her a swift kiss.

“Did you ever learn to dance?” He asked and she nodded.

“Yes, but not like this, it’s a different type of dancing, very popular in our circles.” He raised his eyebrows in curiosity.

“What’s it like?”

“If difficult to explain, it’s kind of like tap dance up not really. We call it Riverdance.” She explained and he smiled.

“Can you show me?”

“Not right now, especially not in this dress. But I will show you show time when you come over and meet my friends, we all learned. Actually Elladan can dance it too.” At the mention of her friend his face fell slightly and she noticed instantly. “What’s wrong?”

“Are you and Elladan very close?” He asked softly as if embarrassed by his own question and Tauriel laughed.

“Oh dear, you’re not jealous are you?”

“Maybe,” he challenged, “it’s sometimes just weird to think that there are people who have known you for so much longer than I have and who have shaped your life.” He said stealing a glance at Elrond’s tall handsome son, who was currently the centre of attention by most of the female in the hall.

“Elladan is a brother to me, we are very close but that’s also because he saw me grown up, there’s ten years between us. But I understand you Kíli, and I feel the same. Hearing Arild and your mother talk about you and your brother makes me almost feel sad to not have known you then, to share those experiences with you.” At her response Kíli smiled and twirled her around before firmly pressing her against him.

“Then we should focus on the shared experiences we are making now.” He murmured huskily into
her ear. She grinned at him slightly flushed and kissed him.

The night went on with more alcohol and less proper dancing. Tauriel felt as if she slowly but surely started to enter a pub. Celeborn and Galadriel had taken their leave already and Elrond, Celebrían, and Elladan were about to do the same. But Tauriel was enjoying herself far too much to leave yet, and there was no way Kíli was going to let her leave yet anyway. So she said her good byes and told them to tell Arwen that she would call her the following day. She laughed as several women looked heart broken by Elladan’s leave, while the men seemed to look hopeful at his removal, though they were disappointed to discover that Elladan had left a lasting impression that no other man could compete with at least for tonight.

To escape the heat and the ever-losing control party, the two young lovers went outside where they admired the stars and fire moon. Kíli wrapped his arms around her waist as they looked up.

“Have I told you yet how beautiful you look and how lucky I am to have you?” he asked her softly as he nuzzled his face in her neck, enjoying the sound of her giggle.

“Hmmm, I don’t think you have yet.” She replied laughing and he joined.

“Well then Tauriel,” he whispered as he placed a kiss in her neck, “you are, the most beautiful creature I have ever beheld.” He muttered between kisses going down to her collarbone and Tauriel felt herself shiver in delight, butterflies spreading through her body. She turned around to face her, her own love, lust, and happiness reflected in his eyes.

“You’re very poetic tonight.” She told him as she kissed his jawline.

“That’s what happens when you find you’re muse.” He told her and she smiled against his skin. They looked at each other before crashing their lips together in a hungry kiss, her fingers travelling through his hair. After several minutes they broke apart for breath, their cheeks flushed, but their eyes were no less intense.

“Let’s go home.” He said and with a nod she wordlessly agreed.

They made their way through quick good byes and promises for meetings in the near future. Dís hugged her son and Tauriel tight as they gathered their belonging and invited them over for dinner in the next few days. Tauriel happily accepted the invitation, seeing in Dís a similar motherly figure that Celebrían had provide for her. But the couple couldn’t get through the pleasenaties fast enough and where relieved when they were finally in Kíli’s car as he speed home.

Once they reached his apartment he had tried to calm himself down, but as he helped her out of the car he saw it was useless. There was currently one thing on his mind and that was getting her out of that dress. It had teased him the entire night, and Kíli, who prided himself at his self-control, had been finding it difficult to do exactly that, especially when she was looking at his suit with the same expression.

They had just entered the room and he closed the door when their kissing from the gardens resumed. He thought back on their night in Dale when he had taken her to the hill to see the stars. Those passion filled kisses had come back with even more need. As her hands found their way back into his hair he set himself the task of releasing hers from its bounds. Pin by pin did Éowyn’s creation fall apart, falling a waving strands over her shoulder. How he loved her hair. He carefully removed her earrings afraid they might get tangled up while she worked on his tie.

Somewhere between his door and bedroom he’d lost his jacket and vest, while her shawl lay in a pile of the floor.

Reaching his bed he unceremoniously sat down on it and turned her around. With nimble fingers he found the hidden zipper and slowly pulled it down. Then he stood up again, loosening the halter of
the dress, before sliding it off her. He turned her back to him. She was wearing an amused smile as he admired her body. Her fingers glided over the buttons of his shirt loosening them before he impatiently tried to shrug it off. Freed, her hands explored his broad chest, softly playing with the dark hairs that lay on it. He kissed her, moving down her neck to her collarbone, nibbling at her flesh as he went along, marking her as his. Within their dance of passion, he’d lost his pants and they lay together on his bed, an entanglement of limbs.

“Kíli.” She breathed against his warm skin, holding him by his strong shoulders and he stopped what he was doing.

“Yeah?” he asked, his intense eyes on her and she swallowed her nerves away.

“I haven’t… I have never… God, I am still a virgin.” She told him, her cheeks colouring at red as her hair and she turned her head away from him, scared of his reaction. Then she heard him chuckle.

“Why?” he asked her softly, reaching out to stroke her face. “I am not going to lie, I am surprised.”

“I just never found the right person.” She told him, before trying to cover her face. ‘It’s stupid.” She muttered. Kíli’s hands found her and pulled them away from her face.

“Why are you embarrassed?”

“I don’t know, I guess because everyone expects me not to be.” Kíli’s eyebrows furrowed together.

“But that shouldn’t be embarrassing, I think it’s anything but.” Her head snapped back to him.

“Isn’t it?” she asked rather harshly but Kíli smiled at her and kissed her cheek.

“Nope, not at all. In fact…” and he rose a bit, looking her deeply in the eyes. “Do you want to do this, because I don’t want you doing anything you don’t want to do? I can and will wait until whenever you feel you’re ready.” At that she smiled.

“But I am ready, I wouldn’t be here if I wasn’t.” and Kíli smiled.

“Well in that case I am very honoured milady.” And she smacked him. “Ouch! What was that for?”

“Don’t be cheesy.” She told him and he laughed.

“You should know by now that cheesy is my middle name.” and he kissed cheek again.

“You’re a fool.” She laughed and he grinned at her.

“But a cheesy fool.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

With one final look of confirmation, Kíli hands slid down her body, leaving shivers of pleasure down her spine. At first his touch and kisses were hesitant, asking for permission but when she responded with vigorous need of her own he complied and soon they were lost within each other. Every stroke and kiss led them further into a spiral of blissful passion, claiming each other as theirs and bonding together, creating memories to last them a lifetime.

Time passed what felt like days when they finally came to rest in each other’s arms. They were grinning to each other like fools as Kíli covered them with him blankets. He reached forward and softly kissed her on her freckle-covered nose.

“Amrálimê.” He told her and she laughed.

“You still haven’t told me what that means yet.” She told him, giveing him her best pout face and he laughed, kissing her again.

“It means ‘my love’. ”

“It sounds beautiful.” She said.

“As it should, you better get used to it.”

“Oh, how so?” she asked and cheekily raised an eyebrow at him.

“Because I am going to be calling you that very often from now on.” He told her and she kissed him.

“Sounds lovely.” And with that they cuddled up together ready for sleep to take them.
As she started to fall asleep in Kíli’s warm and strong arms, she hoped Legolas wouldn’t be too worried at her not returning home for the night. Either way, she would explain everything tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys!

Sorry this was a very long chapter but I hoped you all enjoyed it.
I wanted to say thanks to everyone who left kudos, comments, and who have bookmarked this story. Thank you all, you keep me all going with this story!
Slowly Kíli started to awaken, the sun shining brightly through his bedroom window. His sight was still hazy when he opened his eyes but he liked the fact that the colour he saw was the flaming coppery red that he had grown to love so dearly. Her hair was spread over the pillow, tangling together. Tauriel had wrapped herself in the blankets like a cocoon, but Kíli was delighted to see her shoulder bare. The light creamy skin was dusted with freckles. Softly so not to wake her, he lightly traced them with his thumb. He could still not believe she could find something so beautiful to be a fault while he thought it only added to her perfection. She moved slightly, purring as he drew constellations on her body. Her eyes opened up a little bit, her bright green orbs looking at him, sending shivers through his body.

“Good morning.” She mumbled and he smiled at her. Bending towards her, he kissed her shoulder.

“Good morning to you too Amrâlimê.” He said and she smiled back at him.

“What time is it?” She asked.

“Time for me to make breakfast.” He laughed and sprang out of bed, but before leaving he turned.

“Stay in, I’ll call when it’s ready.” Which earned him another smile.

“You’re sweet.”

“Always.”

He put on some coffee while whisking eggs together for French toast. He silently thanked his mother for forcing him and his brother to sit through some of her cooking lessons. At first the lessons seemed torturous but now he was happy he knew the basics, especially when he could show off to his girlfriend. Tauriel was definitely not a morning person, while he, surprisingly, had become one. He loved making her smile in the morning with a well-prepared breakfast.

As the toast splattered in the pan he heard the shower running and smiled. If there was one thing she hated it was not showering in the mornings, especially since they helped wake her up. It also added to the fact that her immense long hair needed time to dry, which it couldn’t at night. Hairdryers were a huge no in her book, only using heat on her hair for special occasions. Kíli found it all quite amusing, but was glad that her didn’t cut her hair despite some people suggesting her to do so, because he loved every strand on her head.

He had just put the toast on a plate and poured coffee when she walked in wearing nothing but one of his sweaters. The grey sweater was nothing special, he often liked to wear it when hanging around his apartment or going out for a jog. But seeing it on her, just barely covering her hips made his heart skip a beat. He suddenly felt quite over dressed in his jeans and t-shirt.

“That’s not fair.” He muttered as she sat down. She looked up at him in surprise with innocent green eyes until she saw his face and smirked. Cheekily she pushed a strand of wet hair behind her ear and smiled.

“What’s not fair?” She asked eyes filled with glee. He reached over and kissed her hard on the mouth before pulling away and taking a seat across from her.

“You dressed in that.” He mumbled and felt himself blush as she giggled. He looked over and was relieved to see her red cheeks and a playful glimmer in her eyes.

“Well I’ll try to play more fair next time.” She told him with a wink, eagerly digging in to her French toast.

“The maiden is starving I see.” He grinned and she smiled at him.

“For all the good reasons sir.” And he laughed and reached over to hold her hand. Their fingers interlaced and he brought her hand to his lips.

“Good.” And now she laughed, confusing him. “What?”

“Who knew the Durin’s could be so romantic?”
“I learned from the best.”
“Not from your uncle I am sure.”
“What do you know about my uncle? What if I told you he is the most romantic of us all?”
“No, impossible!”
“Why?”
“Because that goes completely against my image of him and everything I’ve heard about him.”
“Well then, what did you hear he was?”
“Honestly, anything but romantic and not just him, but his entire family.”
“That hurts. But to be fair, all I was ever told was how uncaring and icy Thranduil and his family were, so you’re a pleasant surprise.” And Tauriel laughed.
“I am glad people were so wrong about us. But I can understand why they think Thranduil is heartless, I at times think the same.” She admitted and Kíli sat a bit straighter, curious.

“Oh?”
“Yeah, I mean he can be quite cold and at times very old fashioned. He hated the thought of us, and even now I don’t really know what he thinks about it. But he’s not really heartless. He just has a hard time expressing his emotions.” And Kíli let out a chuckle. Tauriel shot him a look. “Oh come on, as if Thorin is so good at expressing his feelings.”
“No he isn’t either. Fíli and I were lucky with mum, she’s a lot more open.”
“She’s a sweetheart.” Tauriel agreed.
“You only say that because you’ve seen her good side. She is terrifying when she’s mad.”
“You probably deserved it.” And Kíli gave her a hurtful look.
“Me? Never!”
“Oh please, you can’t play innocent with me, you’re reckless. I bet you and your brother were terrors as children.” And Kíli grinned mysteriously.
“Maybe…”
“You’re poor mother.”
“Oh no, more poor Dwalin.”
“How so?”
“We used to prank him all the time, especially when he started courting my mother.” Tauriel gasped, dropping her fork.
“He what?” and Kíli laughed at her horrified expression.

“Dwalin and my mother. The guy had a crush on her since they were children. But he is my uncle’s best friend, who was very protective of my mother, to her great dismay. So Dwalin never said anything. He left for service for several years, and when he came back my mum had met my dad and they became engaged not too long after.”
“Wow, that must have been painful for him.”
“I don’t know, probably. But he loved my mum and saw that she loved my dad with all her heart, who felt the same about her. I think he gave up and moved on, I know he had a few girlfriends in the past. But when my dad died he was there to support my mother. Of course it took a while before he allowed himself to make any kind of move. I was 14 when he asked my mum out for dinner. I remember Fíli and I being so mad at him we kept terrorizing him for about a month. Of course my mum didn’t know about it, and when she found out she stopped us.”
“Poor Dwalin then, I bet he’s still afraid.”
“And he should be!” Then Kíli grinned. “Nah, it’s fine now. They only started being serious four years back.”
“They waited until you were 18?”
“Yep, I think they hoped that with us being adults and going to university it would be easier.”
“And it helped?” She asked with a smirk.
“A bit, Fíli and I still prank him from time to time. It was hardest on Fíli. We both grew up with Thorin and Dwalin around, they practically raised us, but Fíli still remembers dad very well, and he
didn’t want Dwalin to take his place.”
“I can imagine.”
“But Fíli loves Dwalin though, apart from our uncle, he’s his role model. I wouldn’t be surprised if he names one of his kids after him.” And Tauriel laughed.
“That would be incredibly cute.”
“And incredibly funny. Can you imagine Dwalin handling a baby?” The image of the tall, brute looking man, holding a small squishy baby in his large hands, looking confused and helpless, was too much for the young adults and they both burst out laughing.

Kíli amused her with several more crazy stories of his childhood, and before either of them noticed it was well past noon. Surprised Tauriel checked the time.
“Gosh, I really should get going. Thranduil and Legolas will be worried, and Arwen and I have to work on another project for the coming week.” She had also promised to tell her friend about everything that happened and from experience she knew Arwen hated waiting.
“That’s a shame.” Kíli pouted as they finished the dishes. He looked very adorable with his large puppy brown eyes. Tauriel bend down to give him a kiss on his forehead.
“You know I’d love to stay.” She said, treading her hands through his thick hair. Kíli smiled and pulled her down for a kiss.

What started out as an innocent kiss quickly grew with passion and need from both sides. Tauriel wasn’t quite sure exactly when they had landed back in the bedroom, but she didn’t mind as they kissed and nibbled. Love radiated from every caress, Kíli’s sweater lying abandoned on the floor as they went up in passion.

Afterwards they lay together, both with wicked grins on their faces. He reached out to stroke her face.
“Have I told you how beautiful you are?” He asked and she smiled.
“Mmm maybe?” She giggled, his expression grew serious, yet she didn’t miss the sparkle in his eyes. He bent over her and started to cover her face with butterfly kisses, murmuring I love you’s after every one. His hands caressed her body until they reached her waist and then he started to tickle her. She shrieked.
“Kíli…no…Kíli stop…haha…I am serious…don’t!” he paid no attention, rather enjoying it.
“Don’t do what darling?”
“Don’t…tickle me!” And he grinned and stopped but straddled her so she couldn’t move.
“Will you look at that? The archery captain is ticklish.”
“Unfortunately,” she sighed dramatically, “my greatest flaw.”
“Definitely, you wouldn’t want people thinking you’re actually a human.” He teased her. “But I am glad to hear your freckles aren’t your greatest enemy anymore.”
“Oh dear here we go again.” Tauriel groaned. “No I don’t hate them anymore.” She admitted causing him to grin.
“And why is that?”
“Oh no, I am not saying, your ego will explode.”
“Because of me, how sweet?” He bend down and gave her a sloppy kiss. Laughing she pushed him away.
“Alright, alright you win.” She said and rose out of bed, trying to locate her bag with clothing. Kíli rolled onto his back, admiring her movements from there, smiling at her happy exclaim when she found the bag.
“Do you have to leave me?” He sighed dramatically as she buttoned up her jeans and clasped on her bra. She smiled and reached over to give him a quick kiss, but quickly backed away before he could
drag her back to bed.

“Unfortunately yes prince Durin.” And she laughed at the disgusted face he made.
“Don’t call me that.”
“Why not, it says so in your passport.”
“It’s a meaningless title, I never understood why we still have it.”
“What? His royal highness doesn’t sound appealing to you?”
“No not really.”
“It’s not that weird, plenty of people I know carry a title. Prince Legolas, Lady Arwen, Lady Éowyn and so on. Actually come to think of it, I think I am an odd one out.” She said as she pulled a shirt over her head.
“No, you’re perfectly normal, do remain that way.” He grumbled and sat on the edge of the bed. He mentioned for her to sit between his legs.
“Kíli I really have to go.”
“I know I am just going to braid your hair. Can’t have you show up at the palace with hair like that. His royal highness might have a stroke.” And Tauriel laughed as she took a seat. She had to admit it felt amazing having his fingers sectioning out her long tresses and weaving it into a braid.
“Fíli doesn’t seem to mind his title.” She said and Kíli laughed.
“No, but that’s because he’s the crown prince, it makes him feel important. Uncle raised his as his heir. He never minded all the stuff around it.”
“Then why do you hate it?”
“I don’t hate it per se. I just don’t always feel comfortable about it. I am a second son, a spare so nobody really cares what I do.”
“Then it shouldn’t matter that much.”
“No not really, just a lot of names to fill out on your resume.” And she laughed.
“You’re just lazy.” She said as he tied of the braid and nuzzled her neck.
“Mmmm.” Came the only response.

She stood up and smiled. Carefully she untangled her dress and rolled the fabric up so it would fit in her bag. She would straighten it when she got home. Getting her belongings together she made her way to the hallway and pulled on her jacket with Kíli trailing her steps.
“You sure you don’t need a ride?” He asked as he opened the door, his eyes slightly worried. She smiled at him, giving him a kiss.
“No it’s fine, it’s not far.”
“You sure?”
“Yes really, don’t worry Kíli.”
“Alright Amrâlimê.” He said and gave her a kiss back.

She turned around to walk down the stairs, her braid dancing behind her.
“Text me when you get home alright?” He said and she turned, blowing him a kiss.
“I will! Le melin!”
“What?”
“I love you!” And Kíli smiled.
“I love you too!” And with that she disappeared.

With a huge grin he turned back to his apartment. His fished his mobile out of his pants from last night and checked any messages. His grin grew when he saw several, one from his mother and Gimli. His brother had apparently gone berserk as he scrolled through seven. His last one read:
“Ok, I give up, you and Tauriel are busy. I really don’t want to know with what. Don’t forget dinner at mum’s tonight, Gimli and family will be there. Text me once you’ve read this…at some point.”

He laughed, quickly sending his overbearing brother a reply. He could picture Arild finding it hilarious at how inseparable they were, though he knew she was glad he had finally found himself a
girlfriend. It meant him not being over their floor all the time. But he was glad his brother had told him, he’d completely forgotten about this evening, having way better things on his mind. As he went over to take a well deserved shower he made a mental note to drag Tauriel to a family dinner, especially since it would highly satisfy his mother who had talked of nothing else.

Tauriel had found the walk back to Mirkwood Estate refreshing especially since it calmed her down. She was still giddy from everything. But she didn’t mind the happiness that flowed through her body and was quite ready to declare to everyone that her boyfriend was the best. On her way she had checked her phone for messages, finding the majority to be from both Arwen and Éowyn who were begging for details, especially when Elladan had told them that she had stayed. What did surprise her was that there were none from Legolas. He usually texted her after a night out just to check if she was okay. But she didn’t mind too much, it was probably a good sign that he decided he could trust her in Kíli’s care.

With a huge smile she entered the mansion.
“I am home!” She called out as she put down her bag, she would clean up later. Right now she was craving a cup of tea.

Gracefully she danced through the large living room to the kitchen and put on the kettle. Only once she grabbed a cup did she realize that someone was on the couch and turned around. Surprised she found Thranduil sitting there, looking at her with a rather amused look on his face. As per usual he was nurturing a glass of wine in his hand. At first she thought he looked very relaxed, something unusual. Instead of the suits he preferred to wear, he was sitting in a pair of finely cut trousers and a cashmere sweater, the Bordeaux colour bringing out the small amounts of colours in his face. But after looking at him longer Tauriel saw he looked tired and drained, his pale face white and his eyes seemed red. His normally perfectly straight hair seemed tousled as far as Thranduil was concerned. Warning bells went off in her head as she softly approached him.

But as she reached him he gave her a smile.
“Did you have a fine evening? Elrond said you were enjoying yourself.”
“Yes, I had a great evening.” She told him surprised at his tender tone.
“I am glad.” While such a genuine and heartfelt response should make her happy, it only made her more worried.
“Thranduil…what’s wrong? You are ok?”
“I am fine.” He said, giving her smile before taking a swing of his wine. But Tauriel saw through his act and within seconds she was beside him. Her green eyes looked at him slightly fearful as she felt his temperature. He didn’t seemed to be sick, but something was wrong, very wrong. Her mind started to work at top speed as she tried to go through possibilities. His travels would have gone fine. It wasn’t the anniversary of his wife’s death. Business was going fine as far as she knew, and he would never get upset about that. He really seemed to be happy that her night went fine, so he couldn’t be upset about that either. The answer seemed suddenly so clear she felt stupid for not having thought of it first. Legolas.

“Thranduil, what’s wrong with Legolas, where is he?” She asked, trying to suppress the panic rising in her throat. He looked at her with sad ice blue eyes. He gave her another sad smile.
“You’re very smart darling.” Another compliment and darling. He hadn’t called her that for years.
“Thranduil, was is going on? Are you drunk? You never get drunk. Where’s Legolas.” He put his glass down and she saw he was on his second bottle. But his ever graceful movements told her he was still quite sober. He looked so sad it made her heart cry. As much as he could be distant he was still a father figure for her and she hated seeing his so vulnerable and upset.
She was about to ask again when he stopped her.
“He made me promise not to tell you.” His low voice rumbled. “I was to distract you so you wouldn’t notice. Honestly Thorin couldn’t have celebrated his birthday on a better day.” Tauriel definitely didn’t like the sound of this, several stones seemed to have fallen into her stomach and it was getting harder to breath. She prayed that what she feared was foolish. He wouldn’t have, not without saying goodbye, it was not like him.
“What is he?” Her voice trembled as his eyes bored into her own.
“He left…” Thranduil told her, his face in pain, struggling to say the words.
“Where?” It was a useless question, of course she knew where.
“Mordor…” the answer escaping his lips seemed to remove the final blockage and a dam inside her broke. Tears streamed down her face.

“No!” She all but shouted. She tried to find anything contradicting it in his eyes, but there was none. She didn’t think but threw himself into his arms. His strong powerful arms engulfed her holding her tight as she cried into his chest, ruining his sweater. But Thranduil didn’t seem to mind as he rocked her back and forth, channelling his devastated emotions in trying to comfort his adopted daughter.

“I agree, I found his reasons ridiculous.” Thranduil said, having picked up his glass again. Angry Tauriel twirled towards him.
“And yet you let him go! And you didn’t tell me!”
“I had promised him I wouldn’t say anything.”
“Protect me? From what? To make our parting easier? Well that hasn’t helped has it? He’s still gone and if he comes back I’ll kill him myself.”
“I have to leave…”

“Last night.” Within seconds she shot up, fury sparking through her.
“Last night?” She echoed, her voice shrill. “He left last night? Without telling me? He made me go to a party. He told me to have fun…and now…? He thinks this is ok?” She asked but not to Thranduil in particular. She wasn’t aware the last time he had done so since Lemaril died. Of course he had done so without anyone there. He hated to be seen so vulnerable.

They sat together for several minutes and he loosened his grip when he felt her calm down.
“Last night…” Within seconds she shot up, fury sparking through her.
“Last night?” She echoed, her voice shrill. “He left last night? Without telling me? He made me go to a party. He told me to have fun…and now…? He thinks this is ok?” She asked but not to Thranduil in particular. She wasn’t aware she had stood up and was pacing through the room. “He thinks he can leave and that it, we, I will be ok? When did he tell you?”

“Several days ago.”
“You knew?”
“Of course I knew he’s my son.”
“He’s my brother! Why wouldn’t he tell me?”
“To protect you Tauriel.”
“I have to leave…”
“Protect me? From what? To make our parting easier? Well that hasn’t helped has it? He’s still gone and if he comes back I’ll kill him myself.”
“I have to leave…”
“I agree, I found his reasons ridiculous.” Thranduil said, having picked up his glass again. Angry Tauriel twirled towards him.
“Last night?” She asked, her brilliant green eyes that had captured his heart when she was a child, staring at him helplessly.
“Last night…”
“Last night!” She all but shouted. She tried to find anything contradicting it in his eyes, but there was none. She didn’t think but threw himself into his arms. His strong powerful arms engulfed her holding her tight as she cried into his chest, ruining his sweater. But Thranduil didn’t seem to mind as he rocked her back and forth, channelling his devastated emotions in trying to comfort his adopted daughter.

“I have to leave…”

“Last night.” Within seconds she shot up, fury sparking through her.
“Last night?” She echoed, her voice shrill. “He left last night? Without telling me? He made me go to a party. He told me to have fun…and now…? He thinks this is ok?” She asked but not to Thranduil in particular. She wasn’t aware the last time he had done so since Lemaril died. Of course he had done so without anyone there. He hated to be seen so vulnerable.

They sat together for several minutes and he loosened his grip when he felt her calm down.
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night, when her friends were so adamant on making sure she had a great time, hoping she would stay with Kili. Arwen even suggested for her to come over for a sleepover tonight, all to keep her away from the terrible truth.

“I’ve been betrayed…” She said softly and Thranduil looked at her surprised.

“What do you mean?”

“They’ve betrayed me! They knew and told me nothing. They tried to hide it from me! How dare they?” She was seething.

“Who Tauriel?”

“Arwen and Éowyn, they knew!” Fresh tears filled her eyes. She looked at Thranduil and hated the pity that reflected in his eyes. “I can’t trust them anymore.” She said and felt a strange feeling arise. She had to get out of here. She had to move and clear her mind. She tore herself from Thranduil’s steady and safe arms and went to the stairs retrieving her bag.

“Where are you going?” His deep voice asked her.

“Changing, I need to run or something, clear my head.” She didn’t wait for the agreeing reply from her foster dad. She stormed to her room and dropped herself on the large bed, looking up at the ceiling that she had painted like the night sky. She threw her bag down and glared at it from her lying position. Horrid tears leaked from her eyes, dripping down her ears onto the covers. Her phone vibrated in her pocket. She whipped it out and saw a new message from Arwen, fury rising and she felt as if she was going to be sick. How dare she!

Without thinking she dialled her number and waited. After a few rings Arwen’s voice happily answered the line.

“Hi Tauriel! How are you? I want to hear all about last night!” She chirped gleefully, which only fuelling Tauriel’s madness.

“You’ve betrayed me, you bitch! I will never forgive you!” She shouted in the device.

“Tauriel…” came Arwen’s shocked reply but angrily Tauriel cut the conversation off. She didn’t want to hear her pathetic excuses.

She remained on her bed, glaring at the ceiling, ignoring the several calls that came in of Arwen desperately trying to reach her. She didn’t want to talk to anyone, not properly anyway. She wanted to shout, god yes. She wanted to hit and kick and destroy something. It was not fair. All the happiness she had left just a little while ago had gone down to drain. She felt betrayed, angry, sadness, and worst of all completely hopeless. A sob escaped her throat. She didn’t want to feel this way. She didn’t want to descend into this dark void of dreadful emotions. She wanted to feel happy and in peace.

Tauriel sighed as her looked over at the sleek black device that had given up ringing with missed calls. She felt bad for her next actions, she felt selfish but she couldn’t help herself. There was only one way out. She grabbed her phone and dialled in the number, trying to calm herself as she heard it ring. God she felt dreadful.

Kili heard his phone go off as he sat on his mother’s comfortable couch, listening to Bilbo stories. He sat his ale down as he fished his mobile from his jean pockets. He was surprised at the ringing; he hardly had phone calls, preferring texting. He only got more surprised and slightly worried when he saw Tauriel’s name flashing on the screen. He quickly excused himself and slipped into the hallway before he picked up, ignoring the questioning looks he was getting from his cousin Gimli.

“Hey darling, are you alright.” There was a sob at the other end of the line. Worried he clasped on to his phone more.

“Tauriel, baby, are you alright, sweetheart?”
“No…” her voice was small, and his heart broke at how broken and vulnerable she sounded, which was nothing like his girlfriend.
“What’s wrong?”
“I’ve been betrayed…”
“Betrayed? By who, why?”
“It’s Legolas…he’s…he’s gone…” It was as if a knife had pierced his stomach and someone was twisting it. He didn’t like the sound of this.
“Gone where?” He prayed his fears would be false.

“He’s gone…to Mordor…”
Apologies

For an hour Kíli had spent on the phone trying to comfort Tauriel who had not come over the shock of finding out her brother had left to Mordor. He felt incredibly useless as he promised her everything would be fine, while not being able to hold her. He waved her constant apologies away, she needed him and he would be there for her, always.

She told him about Arwen and Éowyn and he heard the pain in her voice. Having met Arwen he couldn’t imagine the girl doing anything to hurt her friend. He’d suggested that perhaps they wanted to protect her from such news because they knew she never would have gone to the birthday is she had know. If this was the case than Kíli wholeheartedly thanked them. But as much as he was happy she hadn’t known about this yesterday, he understood her pain. He would flip if anyone would do that to her. Legolas and possibly had terribly underestimated her, thinking she wouldn’t be able to handle it. She was one of the strongest people he knew and if she had known she would have dealt with it far better than now. She was realistic enough to get over it; she didn’t have any choice.

He had made her promise to talk to her friends the next day after she had slept a little. Then he told her to come over in the evening at his mother’s insistence who had heard enough of the conversation to understand what was going on. Dís had planned some distraction for the girl. Also Gimli would still be there, he had seen Mordor and perhaps he could help her understand Legolas’ situation better.

Hanging up his heart felt heavy and he took a while to process what had happened before he told his family, who had all looked at him questioning. Their reactions were shocked at the news.

“Poor girl!” Arild exclaimed. “To be left in the dark like that, by her brother especially. Are they close?”

Kíli thought about the blond man, the way they seemed to move in perfect synchronization with each other and his protective attitude around Tauriel. Yes he could definitely see they were close, which Tauriel confirmed through all her stories of her past. Legolas very often appeared in them. Kíli would be lying if he said he hadn’t at times felt jealous and even threatened by the man. But apart from being incredibly angry at the guy for hurting Tauriel like this, he realized, dreadfully, that he did respect him more. He had to admire his bravery; for heading to one of the most dangerous places in the world to help out, it was quite admirable.

He couldn’t help but wonder if Tauriel would have been as upset if he had gone.

By the time the sun came back up Tauriel had slept minimally. She had half hoped that by waking up she would realize it had all been a bad dream and she would soon hear Legolas go downstairs. He was very much a morning person, rising with the sun. But of course, it hadn’t been a dream and she lay in bed feeling empty. Her talk with Kíli last night had definitely helped her. He understood her strong bond with Legolas, a bond similar to the one he shared with his own brother.

She had listened to what he had said about Arwen and Éowyn and she felt incredibly guilty about her outburst. They were both dealing with loss and if they had tried to protect her from feeling the same, it would have been one of the nicest things rather than acts of betrayal.

And so she waited for the hours to fly by until it was a respectable time to call her friends. She listened to the birds that were starting to sing and read the texts for university that she had fallen behind on, anything to keep her mind from Mordor. She had come to the realisation that she wasn’t
even able to reach Legolas by phone, and she desperately tried to push away the constant feeling of fear in her stomach.

Once she saw the hour turn to be nine in the morning, she gave in, not being able to wait any longer. She picked up her phone and dialled Arwen’s number. Propping herself up against her bed’s headboard she took a shaky breath. She could imagine Arwen’s anger, what she had said was really unforgivable. She heard the phone dial and within seconds her friend’s voice came through the line.

“Tauriel?” came a voice heavy with sleep and she felt terribly guilty.

“No, Tauriel listen, I am sorry. I never should have listened to Legolas and you have every right to be mad at me. I only heard about his leaving from Aragorn, who swore me to secrecy and when I confronted Legolas he made me promise not to tell you. And you were so happy with Kíli, I couldn’t dare to tell you. I am so sorry for being such of a coward.”

“No Arwen, I don’t think you’re a coward, not at all, you were and always have been my friend. I so want to take back the words I said last night. I just couldn’t understand, I didn’t want to understand…”

“I know…”

“Can you forgive me for such words?”

“Can I…can you forgive me for not telling you?”

“Of course I can. And you are not the coward, Legolas is for not being brave enough to face my anger.”

“Legolas was only trying to help Tauriel, as crazy as it sounds, not that I agree with him of course.”

“Yeah… I can see his reasons… Did um Éowyn know about it?”

“Éowyn only knew that night. Apparently Faramir had told her. She was going to ask you about it but I told her to shut up. She didn’t like that of course. I think if it had taken me longer to find my make p supplied she probably would had said something.”

“I am glad she didn’t…” Tauriel admitted softly. “I should probably call her later.”

Yeah…” Arwen agreed softly and there was a pause.

“How…um…how are you feeling?” She carefully asked.

“Empty… I just… I am still so angry,” Tauriel told her, “Not at you, but at him, at this war…” she quickly added.

“I understand, if Aragorn was here right now, I would punch him…several times…” her friend agreed. “But life goes on, they have decided to go, so we have to make the best of it.”

“Will it get better?”

“I don’t know, it hasn’t felt any better, but I do advise you not to have a radio or tv on somewhere, it’s just terribly distracting.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

“So… do you want to tell me about the party, Elladan told me you stayed.” Her friend asked and Tauriel could picture her face in front of her, her eyes curious and a sly grin on her face.

“It was great, the party was amazing. Everyone was so friendly, his mother loves me and even his uncle seems to tolerate my presence. Their parties are quite…different from ours.” Tauriel told her, her heart lifting as she remembered the great time she had. She knew this answer would only partially satisfy her friend who wanted to know some very specific things.

“Oh great! See I told you, you didn’t have to worry. How did Kíli find your dress?”

“He liked it a lot, kept telling me how great I looked.”

“Good, good… and then?”

“And then I stayed over at his place, the party was only just getting started when your family left.”

“Yes and then?”

“Then what?” She heard Arwen sigh dramatically.

“I swear you’re doing this on purpose, do I have to literally pull it out of you?”

“You know I am terrible at giving you details.”
“Oh but so there are details to give?” and Tauriel laughed.  
“I had a great evening Arwen, he... it was great. There, happy?”  
“No, but this answer will do for present. He really makes you happy doesn’t he?”  
“Yes he does. I love him.”  
“Oh gosh, this is so romantic.”  
“You think everything is romantic.”  
“Hey! I know a great romantic story when I see one. Come on think about it! Son and daughter of two opposing companies meeting and falling on common grounds, against all the odds.” And Tauriel laughed.  
“You’re making it sound a lot more dramatic then it has been.”  
“I am just more cultured. Thranduil should have taught you that. Talking about Thranduil, how is he doing?” Tauriel sighed thinking of her guardian.  
“I don’t know, it’s very hard to tell.”  
“It’s hard to tell with him anyway.” Arwen commented dryly.  
“True, but he seems to be ok. He’s terribly hurt obviously and worried for Legolas, afraid of losing him too. But he at least got to say good-bye and so he’s keeping himself strong, as always. In a weird way, it might have actually helped our relationship.”  
“Well I am glad to hear that he appears to be coping, and I know you will too. Dad will probably come by in the next few days. Apparently Elladan has been talking more about Mordor than dad likes.”  
“Oh god, not Elladan too.” Tauriel said in shock. She could practically hear Arwen shake her head.  
“Apparently it’s in our blood. Let’s just hope he’s not stupid enough.”  
“Agreed.”  
“So… any plans today. That’s another thing that helps, keep busy. I can’t be alone in my room too long before I go crazy.”  
“Yeah I was planning on keeping busy for a while. There’s an archery competition coming up soon, so more excuse to practice. Kíli’s mother invited me over for dinner tonight. So working on that project for the rest of the day I think.”  
“Oh good! When is the competition, Éowyn and I would love to come watch.”  
“It’s in three weeks from now. It would be great if you guys came. I had actually been thinking before Aragorn left that we three should introduce the boys to Kíli. I mean I want him to get to know you guys as well, you’re also part of my life.”  
“Even without Aragorn here, I think that’s a great idea. Éowyn can’t wait to finally meet him.”  
“Well we will figure something out. I am gonna hang up and make some breakfast.” Tauriel said.  
“Yes of course. Enjoy your day, it might be hard, but everything will be fine.”  
“Thanks, you too. And Arwen, again, I am sorry.”  
“I know and so am I. I am glad you called.”  
“Me too.”  
“Bye love.”  
“Bye.”

Putting her phone down, Tauriel leaned back to rest. She was glad Arwen didn’t blame her for overreacting, and glad she heard the full story. She could definitely imagine her and Legolas’ intentions. If only she hadn’t been so impulsive... but at least she was forgiven.

Softly she heard someone downstairs turning on the espresso machine, which made its usual rattling noise. Thranduil must be up as well. She sent Kíli a message saying that she had talked to Arwen and all was fine, thanking him for his help last night. Pushing the covers off her and throwing on jeans and a shirt she made her way downstairs. Normally she’d enjoy a shower now, but she’d skipped dinner last night and her body was begging to be fed.
As she came down stairs she suspicions were confirmed as she saw Thranduil move within the kitchen. She smelled freshly baked bread in the air and happily walked to the kitchen.

“Good morning Tauriel.” He said, without turning around. “How are you feeling this morning?”

“Much better, thank you.” She told him as she put some plates down on the table, before turning to the coffee machine. “Did you know I was awake.”

“I had a feeling you would be.”

“I talked to Arwen this morning.”

“Oh?”

“Well last night… I said some pretty horrible things to her… I was some mad.”

“You’ve always been reckless, doing before thinking.”

“Yes, well I realized and called her again.”

“And?”

“She forgave me, thankfully.”

“I would have no doubt that Arwen would forgive. She is far too kind.” And Tauriel laughed.

“Thanks.” She said sarcasm lining her voice. She looked at him. His clothing was impeccable as usual and his face looked calmer, telling her he was feeling better than last night. His silver blond hair was tied of at the ends to keep it out of his face, a hairstyle he generally adopted while cooking.

“How are you feeling?” and he looked at her and she saw a sparkle of a smile in his eyes.

“Better, well as good as can be. I have to say I am glad to not live with this burden in secrecy anymore.”

“Have you heard from Legolas?”

“Not much, he’s still travelling. We’ll probably get news tomorrow when he arrives at his post. Which reminds me,” and out of his pocket came a business card. “His contact details are on here. Try not to bombard him.” With a smile Tauriel took the treasured information from him.

“I’ll try not to.”

The bread was done, sliced in perfect slices. They prepared and eat their bread in silence, but it was a comfortable one. It had been a while since they had eaten together. With the three of them having busy schedules of their own, it generally meant that meal times were not together, something Tauriel realised she had missed.

“I missed this.” She told him and he nodded. “It’s rather ironic that Legolas always tried to force us to eat together, and that now that he’s gone, we finally do.”

“Yes indeed. He would be happy to hear it.”

“Yes…” she said and as she took another bite of her bread a memory came to mind, an old one. She was a young child, her feet swinging from a high wooden chair, not being able to touch the ground. The table she was sitting on was white and filled with fruits and jams, as well as syrups and chocolate. The smell of pancakes filled the air. Strong sunlight came from the windows and she remembered it being summer. Her parents sat on either side of her, they faces weren’t clear but she could tell their outline, her mother’s red hair and her father’s blond locks. They were smiling at her, happiness radiated from them during this normal happening. Tauriel came back to the present, looking slightly dazed.

“I used to eat like this with mum and dad.” She said though with a slight hesitation in her voice, as if asking a question. Thranduil looked up at her, his eyes curious.

“You remember?” He asked and she looked back at him.

“I do… well just now… I remembered just now. During the summer, it was a very warm summer.” Thranduil didn’t say anything but his eyes had grown hard, concern lining his face.

“Have you been remembering anything else?” He asked and she was slightly taken back by the strange question.

“Well no, not really…although…” She thought back of the time in Lothlórien forest with Kíli.
“Yes?” Thranduil urged.

“Well not so much as remembering I think, but not too long ago I was in the forest with Kíli. It was the day after Boromir’s funeral and I was very upset. We decided to go shooting and at one point it seemed as if I was in a kind of trance, as if I had fallen asleep and had a nightmare.”

“What was the nightmare?”

“It wasn’t very clear… it seemed like a battlefield, or at least people were fighting, they were shadows and chasing me… it was all very dark.” She looked at him, a frown now clearly present on his face.

“Have you been having these dreams often.”

“No thank heavens, it was only that time. I was very upset.”

“Yes of course.” He murmured and then his frown lifted and he even smiled. “You’ve always had a wild imagination.” And Tauriel laughed.

“That’s true.”

“And always so scared of small things.” He teased.

“Small things? Oh come on, I was never afraid, Legolas was the coward.”

“At times yes, but as a child you were so afraid of spiders.” And Tauriel shivered.

“I still don’t like them.”

“And you could never stand the dark.”

“There are many people afraid of the dark.” And Thranduil huffed.

“It’s an entirely irrational fear.” He said and Tauriel rolled her eyes.

“Well we can’t all be as brave as you.” And he smiled.

“No, no indeed.”

They resumed their delicious meal and cleared up.

“I have a meeting tonight, so I won’t be here for dinner.” Thranduil told her and she shrugged.

“That makes two of us.”

“Oh?” He raised his dark eyebrow.

“Mrs Durin, Kíli’s mum invited me over for dinner.”

“How lovely.” He said dryly and Tauriel gave him a look.

“She’s very nice as is the rest of his family.” She told him and he laughed.

“Yes I am sure Thorin is a pleasure to be around.”

“Ok, well maybe not him, but he’s not that bad. He seems to tolerate me.”

“Which is more than most people can say of him.”

“Is that supposed to be a compliment?”

“Possibly. Just don’t expect me to throw huge dinner parties like Mrs Durin seems to do. I’d like to keep my house intact.

“We can always give them Legolas’ room to trash.” She muttered and Thranduil gave her a slyly smile.

“I’ve taught you well… but no.” and she laughed.

She was about to go upstairs again when Thranduil, who was busy putting on his jacket to leave to his office, called her. His hair was released for the hair tie, falling around him so perfectly it was almost frightening.

“Yes?” She asked and his ice blue eyes locked with hers. He seemed to think over what he was about to say, choosing his words carefully.

“Have…fun tonight and get home safe.” He told her and she smiled.

“Thank you, I will. You enjoy you’re evening too.” He was about to leave when he turned once more.

“I am glad you’re still here Tauriel.” He said softly, almost too soft for her to hear, but she did and smiled even more widely this time.
“I am glad too Thranduil. Now go before you kill yourself with such heartfelt words.” She teased and he gave her a grin before walking out.

She couldn’t believe, that in his own weird way, he had basically said he cared for her. While missing the presence of Legolas terribly, at least she and his father were making steps, albeit baby steps, to getting closer to a father-daughter relationship, which was more than she could have asked for.

She reached her bedroom and checked her phone. Kíli long replied to her message saying how glad he was everything seemed to be better than last night. He asked if he should pick her up that evening. She smiled.

‘Only if it’s with that sexy motorbike of yours xxx.’ She sent. Within seconds there was a reply.

‘Deal my lady. Prince on the motorbike coming your way xxx’

Laughing she walked off to take a well deserved shower.
As promised that evening Kili arrived at the mansion, his motorbike rumbling. Tauriel walked over to him with a spring in her step. She had decided to dress up a bit, since she would be meeting his family again, but unlike the party this would be far more intimate and she wanted to continue giving of a good impression. So she’d opted for a pair of dark brown pants, a maroon red tank top over which she wore a sheer cream shirt. Her hair she left loose and it swayed around her knees. The sight of her took Kili’s breath away, as usual. She greeted him with a smile and a kiss, that he couldn’t resist deepening. It was only when the wind picked up and she shivered did they come up from breath.

“Hello gorgeous.”
“Hello handsome.”
“You’re looking lovely as always.” He said with a grin before turning more serious. “I am glad to see that smile.”
“Thank you, for everything Kili, I wouldn’t know what to do without you. I feel so useless right now, even to you. The only thing I do is be sad.” And he laughed at that.
“Now that’s not true, there was a time nothing could get you down, it’s not your fault your friends enjoy going to Mordor.” He hoped she would appreciate the humour and thankfully she did as she laughed at him. Then she bent down, giving him another quick kiss.
“Shouldn’t we go, I don’t think your mother would approve of us coming late to dinner?” She asked as she playfully danced away from him hands. He gave a huff as she put on the helmet but smiled when they got on the bike and he felt her arms sneak around his waist.

When they arrived at Dís’ house they were greeted by the smell of food. Kili sniffed the air deeply before smiling at her.
“Mum’s making a feast.” He told her excitedly and she smiled back at him. Hand in hand they entered the house.
“Ma, we’re here!” he shouted and within seconds Dís appeared in the hallway.
“Oh there you are darling.” She said as she maneuvered her way through the space before capturing Tauriel in a crush hug. Tauriel looked up in surprise. She still had to get used to the abundance of physical contact that the Durin’s displayed, something that was so different at home when it was generally only used to comfort someone instead of random displays of happiness.
“Ma don’t crush her please, I’d like to keep her alive.” Kili commented dryly, which earned him a chuckle from his mother and the look from Tauriel.
“You’d like to keep me alive?” She asked, an eyebrow raised and Kili laughed winking at her.
“But of course love.” This earned him an eye roll from Tauriel but he was unimpressed by it an dragged her to the living room.

The first thing Tauriel noticed was how very cosy it was, despite being a large room. The walls were coloured a warm grey with tapestries and photos hanging everywhere. She glimpsed a few of young Kili and Fili happily playing in a field and splashing each other in a blow up swimming pool. The floor was made of a dark wood with a thick carpet by the hearth, which was surrounded by several heavy leather couches and armchairs. It was completely opposite to the elegant and high-class interior at Mirkwood or Rivendell but Tauriel immediately loved it as it made her feel at home. She could definitely imagine herself snuggling up in a large blanket and sitting by the fire together with
Kíli. As she thought of him she squeezed his hand and he looked at her with a huge smile, which she returned.

As they entered the other people present turned towards them. Tauriel saw Arild who smiled at her. Fíli also gave her a grin. His cousin Gimli sat with the couple on one of the couches. He was a smaller man like Fíli and Kíli but he had even broader shoulders and chest that were heavily muscled. His copper hair was tied back and he sported a heavy, yet neatly trimmed, beard. His dark eyes twinkled at her curiously. He stood up and gave her a firm handshake.

“Gimli, son of Glóin. Must’ve missed you at Thorin’s party. Nice to finally meet ye! Kíli won’t shut up about ye.” And Tauriel laughed.

“It’s nice to meet you too Gimli, son of Glóin. I am sorry for not introducing myself to you at the party, there were so many people. Besides I was under constant watch.” She said and her eyes flickered to Kíli who gave a groan but smiled at the same time.

“And for good reason.” He muttered and Gimli and Tauriel laughed at him. Then Gimli sized her up.

“He probably spent all night forcing you to the buffet.” He remarked bluntly as he looked at her small frame obviously not approving it very much. But Tauriel graced him with a smile.

“And they probably spent the whole night trying to drag you away.” She retorted raising an eyebrow. She looked at him and saw his eyes twinkling and even his full beard couldn’t hide the smile on his face.

“You’re alright lass.” He said and Tauriel interpreted it as a high compliment coming from him. “Thanks.”

With that Bilbo had jumped from his armchair and made his way to Tauriel. She smiled at the small man who seemed to be a funny blend of seriousness and eccentricity with his bold coloured vest and wild curling hair. With a smile he took her hand, pressing a soft kiss to it.

“It’s a pleasure to see you again Tauriel. I am delighted to see both these troublemakers surrounded by such lovely girls.”

“Thank you Mr Baggins, it is lovely to see you again too. Lord Elrond wanted to thank you for the amusing conversations you had during the party, his wife and parents-in-law very much enjoyed it.”

“Oh Bilbo please, I don’t want to sound so old! And it has been a pleasure too. Some had to take it among themselves to engage in civilized conversation.” He said, his eyes sliding to Thorin, who replied with a grunt. With a smile the small man turned his shining eyes back to her. “My nephew Frodo was completely in awe with you. He keeps asking me about the flame haired fairy.” And Bilbo winked as Tauriel started laughing.

“That’s so sweet of him! Well I don’t know how long you will be here, but you and Frodo are welcome to come to the archery competition, if you’d like. There will be plenty of fairies for him there.” She said and looked at Kíli. “You wouldn’t mind that love?” and Kíli laughed, his arm encircling her waist.

“No of course not, it would be fun! The more the merrier!”

“Oh yes,” Bilbo said, “Kíli has told me about it yesterday. Well that sounds lovely, I am sure Frodo would love to see that.”

Then finally her attention turned to Thorin, who sat in his armchair that stood closest to the fire, watching the exchanges from a distance. Plucking up her courage, Tauriel walked over to him giving him a smile.

He silently accepted to hand she held out.

“It is good to see you again Tauriel Greenwood.” His low voice rumbled.

“Likewise Mr. Durin. I um wanted to thank you for accepting me with Kíli.” She told him and he raised his heavy brow, piercing eyes looking at her.

“You thank me for that?” He asked and she swallowed heavily, hoping she hadn’t made a mistake. But her fears were quickly dimmed when the man graced her with an actual smile. “Lass I fear, even if I didn’t accept it, my nephew and well this entire room would turn against me. I am a very proud
and stubborn man, as some here love to remind me, but I know better than trying to go against Kíli or his mother for that matter.” Several chuckles filled the room, Thorin’s laugh among them before his eyes turned serious again. “But do know that any action against him, is also one against us. You won’t survive our wrath.” He stated simply. But instead of being intimidated by it, Tauriel merely smiled.

“Understood sir.” She said, humour lining her voice. A cough came from behind them and they turned to see Kíli stride towards Tauriel, his cheeks red with blush and he began to drag her away. “Seriously, you guys are way to embarrassing. I am the one supposed to be threatened.” And Tauriel laughed.

“Oh you will love, soon enough.”

Not long after, Dís called that dinner was ready and the company eagerly sat themselves on the long wooden table that was laden with food. Sitting next to each other, Tauriel bend over to Kíli as she tried some of Dís’ amazing dishes.

“So is this where you get your cooking skills from?” She asked and he nodded, his mouth full. He quickly swallowed.

“Yes, mum was adamant Fíli and I would learn if we were to leave home.”

“The best decision she ever made I’d say.” Arild said happily as she gave Dís a large smile, earning her a playful jab from Fíli. Dís laughed, her eyes sparkling.

“Believe me, if you are ever graced with boys, you’ll soon learn that food is the one thing to keep them content. It’s only fair they are able to return the favour.” She said, before turning her attention to Gimli, who was currently avoiding her glance, trying to disappear in his chair. “How are your cooking classes going?” Dís asked him, and he shifted uncomfortably.

“Well if we are talking about food, Tauriel have you ever tried local Hobbiton dishes?” Bilbo asked as he helped himself to some more potatoes. Tauriel softly shook her head.

“No I haven’t been fortunate enough.”

“Well then do remind me to make some for you at one point. Does Mirkwood have their own particular dish?”

“Hmm our diet is more varied than that of Rivendell and Lothlórien. A speciality is deer and rabbit pie, but it’s mainly vegetables and fruits.” Tauriel told him and looking at the rest at the table, they seemed to appreciate that she ate meat. She wondered if it would have been more of an insult if she had been a vegetarian rather than the adopted daughter of Thranduil Greenwood. “I think our main export is wine, Thranduil considers himself to be an expert.” She said.

Thorin had remained silent for most of the dinner thus far, observing the others. But at the mention of his business enemy did he join the conversation. Tauriel wondered if it had been a mistake to do so.

“So Tauriel, tell me, how is it that Thranduil adopted you?” Thorin’s low voice rumbled, his ice blue eyes giving her a calculated look. She looked away from his gaze, focusing on cutting the meat in front of her. Once finished she pinned a piece with her fork, bringing it to her mouth.

“My parents died in a car crash.” She told him before taking a bite. The hardness in his eyes softened.

“I am sorry to hear that.” His voice filled with genuine emotion. “Do you miss them?”

“Of course, but I hardly remember them, I was very young when they died.”

“How old?”

“Four. I do know what they look like, I carry a picture of them around with me, but other than that static image I don’t recall them.”

“What were their names? Are you named after them?”

“No, my father’s name was Feredir and my mother’s Meriliel.” She looked over at Thorin who had grown remarkably still. “What?” She asked him, her eyebrow raised. He snapped his head back to her.
“Feredir and Meriliel Forrest?” He asked back and she looked surprised as seemed the rest of the family.
“You knew them?” came the question from Kíli and his uncle nodded.
“Aye I did, not very personally though. Your father worked closely with Thranduil when our businesses still worked together… Incredible.” He muttered towards the end seeming to slip into his own thoughts.
“What is incredible?” Tauriel asked, finding his entire behaviour incredibly odd.
“Sorry did I say incredible, I meant rather a shame, for such young and strong people to die in that way. Must have been a terrible time for you.” Thorin said and Dís rolled her eyes, becoming more annoyed by the second.
“Actually I don’t remember anything of that time, there’s just darkness, like a gap in my memory. Thranduil send me to a therapist quite soon after because I wouldn’t speak. She said it was due to trauma. Who knows, maybe one day I’ll remember?” Tauriel said and then smiled softly and with that Dís stood up.
“Well its always nice to have my brother over for dinner, he always brings up such lovely conversation.” She said sarcastically and hit Thorin over his head with her napkin. “I think it’s time for dessert.” She said and within seconds she had retrieved a large chocolate cake that she balanced on a silver plate. She cut off a healthy portion while waving away her eager sons, and handed in to Tauriel. “There you go love, do eat up.” She said with a warming smile that Tauriel happily returned.

The rest of the dinner passed with pleasant conversation. Gimli told about his time in Mordor, making sure to give Tauriel an accurate description of how it was there.
“Oh of course since your brother isn’t a soldier, his experience would be a bit different. The journalists have different quarters and tasks and stuff. But just being there and seeing everything is something everyone there shares. We all look out for each other.” And Tauriel smiled at him and Kíli hoped this would put her mind at ease.
“Thank you Gimli.” She said softly and to his surprise Kíli saw a slight blush appearing on his cousin’s ruddy cheeks.
“Tis no problem. If I see ye brother, I’ll tell him you said hi.” And Tauriel laughed.
“Make sure to also give him a few good punches.” At this Gimli and the rest of the Durins laughed. “It will be my pleasure lass.”

It was late once everyone had gone upstairs after enjoying some good stories, music, and a fair bit of brandy. Thorin and Dís were left by the smouldering fire place, the fire dying out as its embers glowed.

The siblings sat in opposite chairs, Thorin softly twirling around the alcohol in his glass. Dís eyed him carefully, knowing she had his attention.
“Did you have to bring up such conversation? You barely know the girl. You of all people know how hard it is to talk about loved ones we’ve lost. It’s not something we should openly discuss like that. You made her uncomfortable and embarrassed the rest of us. Poor Kíli will have a hard time convincing her to come back again, especially now. We shouldn’t talk of death when her brother is in Mordor, it will only make her worry more.” Thorin didn’t say anything but she knew he’d heard her, his eye catching hers. He continued to twirl his glass and take a sip. Right before she thought he wouldn’t answer her at all he finally spoke.
“I think you underestimate her.”
“Excuse me?”
“She wasn’t uncomfortable with the topic, I would not have continued asking is she was.”
“Well that’s a comfort.”
“There’s something not right Dís.” Thorin said ignoring her sarcastic come back and his eyes bored into hers.
“What do you mean?”
“Feredir and Meriliel were strong people, part of Thranduil Guards.” Thranduil’s Guards just like Thorin’s Ravens were people loyal to them who not only helped them with business but also missions, some dangerous, some not. Especially with reoccurring battle scenes it was becoming important for them to be able to defend their territory. There were fears that the war in Mordor would spread and thus businesses like Oakenshield Company, Mirkwood Estate, and Rivendell would invest in army-trained personnel, ready to defend while the actual armies were busy elsewhere.
“As impressive as that is, so what?” Dís asked, an eyebrow raised and her brother turned to her with a huff, obviously annoyed she didn’t follow his absurd train of thought.
“It’s strange for them to die so young. I remember when I heard the news, it was all very hushed up.” “Believe it or not Thorin but things like car accidents can be fatal.” His sister answered her voice on edge and he sighed apologetically.
“I’m sorry Dís, I didn’t mean to imply that Kaelin…”
“Yes well, be careful with what you say. I know you like no other, but most people won’t understand and take major offense.” And he cracked a grin.
“That appears to be something I am good at, offending people.” And Dís laughed.
“Yes, you’re hidden talent.” She said before her eyes turned serious again. “But what is it you’re implying then, if you find their death so strange?”
“Well it’s just a theory mind you, more of a feeling…” Thorin stated slowly, fixing his eyes on the dying fire. Silent minutes passed as he seemed to formulate his thoughts. Then he turned to his sister who looked at him with the same intense blue eyes that he had.
“I think they and Frerin suffered a similar fate…”

Meanwhile in Mordor the only thing Aragorn Strider could think about was his bed. It had been an incredibly busy and draining day. Fighting was going on in a town nearby and patients swarmed the hospital like bees around honey. Some had minor injuries while others were slowly dying in front of his eyes.

He gathered the papers on his desk; many of them were death certificates he had to sign. He didn’t want to think about those right now. He wanted to sleep. He’d seen and cleared away enough scrapple from wounds for one day.

Just as he was about to turn off the light and head home, there was a loud knock on his door. He sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.
“Yes?” he answered, trying not to sound too annoyed. His day hadn’t been all that bad, he was especially glad to see Legolas again.
The door opened and one of his assistants appeared, she looked slightly distressed.
“What’s wrong Fama?”
“There’s a woman to see you sir. She just arrived, we couldn’t send her away, it seems she came from far.”
“What’s wrong with her, is she hurt?”
“Well not particularly sir, apart from being exhausted.” And Aragorn raised his eyebrows in surprise. “Then why do you need me?”
“Well that’s the thing, she specifically asked to talk to you.”
“Did she say anything else?”
“Not much apart from your name, I don’t think she can speak our language very well.” Aragorn grew even more curious.
“Alright.” He said and followed Fama to the hospital lobby while she kept talking.
“From her appearance and accent we think she might be from Harad.” Aragorn only nodded and then he saw her.
The woman was dressed in rags, holding a tightly wrapped bundle in her arms, probably containing her few belongings. She had a tanned skin, a mass of thick black curls that desperately needed a wash, and her emerald green eyes that contrasted with her skin were exhausted. But once she saw him she leaped up, determination filling her eyes. Aragorn couldn’t remember ever seeing her before. He approached her and held out a hand that she slowly took hold of.

“I am Aragorn Strider, can I help you miss?” He asked gracing her with an encouraging smile. The woman smiled back as if relieved. She slightly bowed her head.

“My name is Nashwa.” She said, her voice heavy with the Harad accent. Then she looked up, facing him, her eyes sparkling.

“I am Boromir’s wife.”

Chapter End Notes

Hi guys! I hoped you all enjoyed it! Thank you for all the amazing comments, kudos, and follows. They all mean so much to me! :)

If you have any suggestions or things you’d like to see happening, I am always open for suggestions :)

“Excuse me?” That was the only thing his brain managed to process and say. Aragorn caught himself with his mouth open and felt incredibly stupid. This was ridiculous. What this woman had said was ridiculous and he felt a headache come up, beating his head, making it even more difficult to concentrate. Apart from that, the mentioning of his late dear friend was terribly painful. He felt emptiness and it was as if someone had decided to gut him right there, a knife twisting in his stomach. It made him angry, how dare she take advantage of Boromir’s death? She probably wanted money or something stupid like that. Perhaps she thought it might be a ticket out of this miserable place. Aragorn couldn’t really blame her for trying, but the fact that she used his friend made him livid. He scoffed and ignored her offended look, as if she had the right to look that way. He, his friends, and Boromir’s family were allowed to be offended. The poor guy was probably turning in his grave right now. He hated being used by anyone. In fact the whole notion of him having a wife was ridiculous, the woman obviously hadn’t done her homework.

Everyone knew Boromir had no plans for marriage nor for a steady relationship. He was too busy. He had too much energy and he used that energy to help people. In fact he had told Aragorn several times when the conversation arose that he couldn’t even picture himself living a domestic life. He didn’t care much for it, he didn’t have time for a girlfriend, let alone a wife. And the guy didn’t even mind, he had described himself as a life long bachelor. He rather looked forward to be an uncle for the future children of Faramir and Éowyn than having children himself. He would be able to spoil them and then give them back at the end of the day, very practical. Everyone knew this about Boromir, so this woman was talking bullshit. Angry Aragon narrowed his eyes at her, crossing his arms over his strong chest, appearing taller and bigger and hopefully more intimidating.

“His wife? Boromir never had a girlfriend or a wife. I would appreciate it if you left his spirit and memory alone and just say what you really want, and we’ll see what we can do.” He told her, desperately trying to keep calm, he was a doctor; he was supposed to be in control. Getting worked up wouldn’t help and only create chaos and he was well aware of the audience they had. But the woman didn’t seem intimidated. Instead she narrowed her own emerald eyes at him, glaring.

“I tell truth.” She spit at him in broken common tongue. “We married six months passed.” And Aragorn scoffed again.

“Impossible. Stop telling me lies. What do you want?”

“I don’t lie.”

“And I am sick of this game. Tell me what you want or leave!” She glared at him even more furiously and he saw her tanned cheeks redden.

“He say you understand, you be nice. I knew not so, but I try. Now I right.” She told him, practically talking to herself.

“What. Do. You. Want?” Aragorn hissed at her, patience wearing extremely thin. He wanted her gone, she made precious memories of Boromir flood his mind and he hated it.

“His family.” She answered and he raised is eyebrows, thinking he misunderstood. Wasn’t there a goddamn translator here somewhere?

“What?”

“His family!” She told him again, more forcefully hoping he would understand. Then she frowned, trying to find words to explain what she meant. When that failed, she sighed, giving up. Her strong posture faded as she dropped her thin shoulders. Aragorn figured if she weren’t this skinny she would cut an impressive figure and presence. She took a step forward, adjusting the bundle in her arms.
Aragorn thought he saw something move and then suddenly fear filled his body. What if… She wouldn’t possible try this trick…? But he hardly had time to think as she gave him a good look at what she was carrying. He breath caught in his throat, a strange noise escaping him.

She held a baby.

He shook his head. There was no way. The child had a light mocha skin and a full head of black curls like his mother. But it was impossible as Aragorn was going to protest. But then the child opened its eyes and he was staring into Boromir’s sea-green orbs…

It was a week before the archery competition and Tauriel and Kíli had practically taken up residence at the Lothlórien Academy for the past two weeks just like the rest of the students. Everyone, of all three levels, were desperately trying to improve their skills. The red and blue bands were set on trying to beat the green bands, and had together created a pact against the green masters, who would make sure to defend their title at all costs.

Kíli was very excited. It would be his first competition since a few years, and he had heard stories from Tauriel and others like Haldir, Rúmil, and Orophin on how intense it could get.

There was a healthy type a rivalry going on between Kíli and Tauriel as they practised. Kíli had made it very clear that while she was his girlfriend, by no means would he let her win to which Tauriel had laughed, saying she wouldn’t let some beginner beat her – boyfriend or not. She and Legolas tended to win the competition anyway and with Legolas away, she didn’t think there would be too much dangerous competition trying to steal her title away.

They were currently warming up at accuracy practice before they would leap into the forest for some endurance. The competition would only involve accuracy, but they figured it would be boring to only practice that, as well as being counter-productive. They lined up arrow after arrow, shooting with deadly accuracy at the targets. Celeborn was walking around with a mad grin on his face. He always loved the few weeks and days before the competition – it brought out many different emotions and atmosphere. It created loads of tension but also excitement, determination and hard work. For him it was a great way to judge the students and determine who would be climbing ranks, stay the same, or in some cases even drop down or out.

He passed the enthusiastic couple with a smile, being sure to correct them on some slight errors. Being Arwen’s grandfather he knew Tauriel on a professional but also a more personal level than some of the other students. Seeing her with the youngest Durin had at first been a bit of a surprise. They had seemed like an odd couple, one with more contrasts than similarities, but as he got to know Kíli better and see them together, Celeborn was quick to realize that they were one of the best-found matches. They complemented each other. Tauriel, while wilder than some others, had still been rather demure. Her was quieter and in the background, preferring the solitude of few but loyal friends. Kíli was far more outgoing. He was easy to talk to and his presence demanded attention, though not at all in a bad way. He had been her more open and free, Celeborn couldn’t remember a time when he’d seen her happier.

After two hours, the pair decided to take a break, making their way to the café. The weather had cooled dramatically in the past few weeks and they had opted to wear their warmer training uniforms. The Lothlórien Café was made almost entirely of wood, it’s interior a shining warm brown. To make it cosy there were candles everywhere in red, blue and green holders and plush embroidered cushions of fine silver colours covered the chairs and soft couches. The outside of the café was covered with ivy, the leaves having changed from a rich green to a brilliant red.

The couple ordered their drinks and took a seat on one of the tables outside, enjoying the feel of the
“So have you spoken to Legolas recently?” Kíli asked her, his arm around her, and Tauriel nodded as she remembered the first time she had called her adopted brother.

She had felt very nervous, hoping to hear his voice as prove that he was still alive. She hoped she wouldn’t break down. She usually had never been this open with her emotions but meeting and being with Kíli had changed her. Her hands were shaking as she dialled the number Thranduil had given her. The phone rang once…twice…a third time…

“With Legolas?” His soft rich voice filled her ear and she cursed herself as a strangled sob escaped her throat. Nevertheless Legolas seemed to recognize her voice anyway.

“Tauriel?”

“Yes?” And she could practically hear him smile.

“It’s so good to hear your voice.” He said.

“Yes, the same to you.” She told him.

“I didn’t…I didn’t think I’d hear it so soon…which I would understand of course!”

“Legolas…”

“No Tauriel, wait hear me out!” He said quickly, words rushing from him, like wine escaping from a corked bottled, as if he was afraid she would hang up any second. “I am so sorry,” He told her, his voice raw with emotion. “You have every right to be mad at me, I would be too. I couldn’t bear it to say good-bye – not knowing, you know with Boromir… I wanted you to have good last memories. Once I got on the train I realised of course…”

“I realised what an absolute coward I had… have been. I know it would be wrong for me to ask for forgiveness…”

“Legolas Greenwood! Will you shut up?” He fell silent so abruptly it was almost comical and Tauriel laughed. “Of course I forgive you.” She told him and he sighed of relief. Throughout the rest of the conversation he had told her about the situation in Mordor and how he was doing.

“It’s a mess here Tauriel. There is so much chaos and so much death. A few cities are under our protection for now but it’s been difficult holding on to them. Everyday there are bombs and casualties. The times I’ve seen Aragorn he’s busy with the wounded seeping into the hospital. Apart from that refugees are coming in by the dozens. I just hope we will be able to provide them the safety they seek.”

“I think it’s very brave of you to go there, you’re very much needed.”

“Yes, well, they need as many hands as they can get.”

“Just promise me you’ll stay safe…as much as possible that is.” And he laughed.

“I promise Tauriel.”

Tauriel looked up at Kíli and gave him a smile.

“Yes I spoke to him, he’s doing fine. There’s enough to keep him busy anyway.” And Kíli nodded at that, but his eyebrows furrowed and he seemed lost in thought. She poked him and he looked up sheepishly. “What’s on your mind?”

“Oh nothing really, just…” and he shrugged, looking at her with those big doe eyes. “It admirable going there… I sometimes wonder whether I should go…” Now it was her turn to shrug as she looked to the valley.

“Yes it’s admirable I guess… but also extremely dangerous. It changes them and the ones that stay behind.” Then she looked at him and leaned in to give him a chaste kiss. “I’d prefer it if you’d stay here.” And he grin, raising an eyebrow.

“And why is that my lady?”

“To keep you out of trouble.” She winked and stood up as they both had finished their drinks.
“Come on, we need to practice.” She told him and started to walk back to the range until she squealed in surprise as Kíli had flung himself around her waist, planting a kiss in her neck. “Mmmm I know something we can practice back at home…” He whispered huskily and she smiled. Perhaps they’d had enough archery for today…

Days passed in a blur and before either of them knew, the day of the competition finally arrived.

Celeborn had ordered for decorations to cover the Lothlórien grounds and together with his wife Galadriel, he made sure they could accompany to large amounts so spectators that were due to arrive. Many family members of the archers were quick to fill up the assigned benches as they supplied themselves with enough food and drink to last the day. Although small children weren’t often brought along, they had provided for a day care centre where they would be entertained, away from the sharp arrows. It was something Bilbo Baggins was very happy about. Sure Frodo couldn’t be counted among the very small at the age of 11, but the boy tended to wander around the place when he got bored. Thus Bilbo brought him to the centre where a lovely tall lady with a kind smile welcomed him. Frodo seemed to forget about his earlier protests as he gazed upon the fair lady who reminded him of the fairytale stories Bilbo had told him about. “There now laddie, you’ll be fine here. I will pick you up when it’s Kíli and Tauriel’s turn alright?” Bilbo said and smiled at the boy fondly as he ruffled his black curls. Frodo only nodded, his large pale blue eyes still trance fixed on the lady in front of him. Satisfied Bilbo turned to her. “I hope he won’t be too much trouble. As I said I’ll be picked him up soon enough.” He apologized but the woman smiled. “It’s no problem, there will be plenty of other kids to amuse him for a while.” “Great! Well thanks and um… I’ll be back later… well soon…uh yes.” He stammered before giving Frodo one last look before walking back to the seats. But Frodo didn’t see it. He’d slipped his small hand into the woman’s and looked up at her as she walked him inside to where two twins boys with black curls were playing. “Are you an elf?” Bilbo heard his small voice ask and the giggle that followed. “Perhaps.” The woman responded laughing, which brought a small to his own face as the small man walked to the seats where the Durin family was waiting for him.

As he arrived he saw Kíli animatedly laughing with his brother and mother would looked very happy to be there. Thorin on the other hand looked very much out of place. He looked around him with a heavy brow, looking quite grumpy, as if he was trying to find an escape route. Bilbo had to chuckle, he would not hear the end of this. He squared his shoulders. It was time to cheer the old man up; he’d only attract unwanted attention to himself this way.

Meanwhile Tauriel had found her friends Arwen and Éowyn, who had brought Faramir along as well as her brother Éomer. The fact that Arwen’s family came was a given. Her parents sat in the chairs a few rows above them. Her brothers sat together with Elrohir’s wife Elendiel, who had delivered off their twin sons, Elrohan and Elrodal at the day care. She looked happy to have some few moments of peace, though she loved her sons deeply. “It’s so great you guys could come!” Tauriel told them happily. She was tied into her competition uniform, the silver fabric gleaming. Two twin braids on either side of her face held her hair out of the way. She was itching to start shooting. Éowyn leaned over to her friend, laying her hand on hers. “But of course dear. It’s about time we saw it, which reminds me,” A smile crept on the blondes face. “Bring Kíli here. To be honest I rather came here to meet him rather than see you shoot, though I am sure that’s amazing too.” And Tauriel laughed. “Alright, alright I’ll get him. Be nice.” She warned them, looking specifically at the Rivendell twins who were trying to pull of their most innocent looks.
Tauriel made her way to the Durin family. They greeted her warmly; she even received a polite nod from Thorin. Kili had told her that his uncle wasn’t very good at showing positive emotions so she took the nod as a grand gesture and smiled back. Kili smiled at her, going as far as giving her gloved hand a kiss, making Tauriel feeling incredibly embarrassed.

“Hello Ms Second Place.” he said, his eyes sparkling and she smiled back dangerously.

“Be careful what you say or you’ll end up last Mr Durin.” Earning her a few laughs, Kili laughing along. He pulled her close and whispered softly so only she could hear.

“If I do lose, I don’t mind being on bottom place later.” Tauriel didn’t miss a beat and pinched his arm.

“Stop that, not right now.” But he only grinned apparently proud of himself.

“I hope you’re that bold in a few seconds.”

“And why’s that?”

“There are a few people dying to meet you, but I am not sure all will be as nice as I am.” She smiled smugly as his eyes travelled over to his ‘welcome committee.’ He shrugged his shoulders.

“Sure.” And she grinned as she grabbed his hand ready to lead him to them. Quickly her turned over her shoulder.

“It’s great that you came Mr Baggins!” She said and Bilbo smiled back.

“It’s a pleasure.”

They couple were about to walk away when she spotted someone in the crowd that made her freeze in her step causing Kili to bump into her back. Frowning he turned to her.

“What’s the matter love?” He looked at her worried, his eyes trying to find what had her so shell shocked.

“Impossible.” She muttered, not answering him. Luckily for him it didn’t take too long to find the surprise. Coming towards them – or much rather gliding towards them – was Thranduil.

Wearing a black designer coat with burgundy scarf tucked in, his platinum blond hair dancing behind him, Thranduil seemed the epiphany of grace. On one hand he seemed to blend in with the people around him, being tall and elegant, with long hair and fine features, but he was also extremely tall, towering over most here. He seemed almost too elegant and too prefect that it appeared scary, his clear blue eyes piercing everyone’s soul. He reminded Kili of Galadriel is a sense, but while Galadriel seemed to radiate warmth, Thranduil seemed to rather be frosted around to edges, like a beautiful flower in winter. God – that sounded far too poetic for his liking.

Within seconds Thranduil had reached them, leaving several people gasping in his wake. It appeared to Kili that Thranduil didn’t come here as often as he’d used to anyway.

“What are you doing here?” Tauriel confirmed his suspicions immediately.

“Always ever so polite. I am proud.” Thranduil said mockingly. But his eyes wasted no time on his ward as his gaze rested in Kili, who felt himself gulp.

“So, you must be Kili Durin.” It wasn’t really a question, more of an observation but he needless felt the need to answer.

“Yes I am sir.” He didn’t really know how but he’d reached his hand forward for Thranduil to shake. The pale man looked down at his large hand, apparently unsure what to do with it at first. To Kili it seemed as if several days passed, his hand feeling heavy and he began to feel embarrassed, wanting to draw it back. But then a pale hand reached his and he was almost surprised to find Thranduil’s own hand hold his in a firm grip. There was a brief shake before both parties withdrew, almost pretending as if it had never happened, but the event seemed to chip away the icy wall between them. Kili quickly found Tauriel’s eyes, who smiled at him.

“It’s good to meet you sir.” He said and he thought he saw a flicker of amusement pass the man’s stoic face.

“Likewise.” Thranduil’s deep voice replied. Then he looked past the couple to look at a pair of eyes he didn’t think he’d have to see for an age. Thorin Durin. Their gazes locked, anger and tension
flowing between them but before either could make a move they were interrupted.
“My gosh, it’s about time we meet you.” Both men looked at the source of the interruption and found Dís looking at them, though her own pale eyes were transfixed on Thranduil rather than her brother. Thranduil looked at her surprised and questioning. She practically rolled her eyes at him and stuck out her own hand and he took it warily.
“Dís, Kíli’s mother.” She told him frankly and out of sheer automatism, Thranduil brought her hand to his lips as greeting.
“Thranduil, Tauriel’s…father.” He replied sliding a look to her in question who gave him an encouraging smile.
“Well ye raised her in any case.”
“Yes.”
“She’s become a fine young lady.”
“Yes, she has.” And with that Thranduil gave Dís a nod before turning back to Tauriel.
“I didn’t think you would come.”
“There was a change in schedules so I had time.”
“I see.”
“Yes.”
“Well thanks, I hope you’ll enjoy it.”
“I am sure I will.”
“There’s a party I’ll be going to later.”
“Yes, I am aware.”
“Alright.”

They stood rather awkwardly together, or at least that was how it appeared to Kíli who was looking at the exchange with a dumbfounded expression.

Thranduil seemed ready to turn to walk to some seats by Elrond and Celebrían. But before he walked away and turned once more to Tauriel.
“Legolas would have loved to see you win, as do I.” This earned him a smile from Tauriel.
“I only come here to win.” She told him and to Kíli greatest surprise a smile formed on Thranduil’s face making his frosty exterior disappear.
“Good,” he said, reaching out his arm to place a firm hand on her shoulder, looking her in the eye.
“Good luck.” Then he turned ever as graceful and ascended the stairs.

When Kíli looked at Tauriel she was beaming.
“He hasn’t come to watch for years.” She told him and he smiled back at her.
“Well I am glad to meet him though he gave the rest a bit of a shock.” They laughed as they looked to see Dís looking at Thranduil’s back with Thorin in full glare mode with Bilbo desperately trying to distract him.

Taking his hand once more, Tauriel led Kíli to her friends who were eagerly waiting. They welcomed him very warmly and Kíli had no doubt they would get along finely. He was sure having a few beers with Faramir and Éomer would be a lot of fun.

As Thranduil reached his destination his friend Elrond had already stood up to greet him.
“My! I didn’t think I’d see you here.”
“Yes well plans changed.”
“I see.” Elrond’s eyes sparkled and he looked down to where Tauriel and Kíli were standing with his children and their friends. “The boy’s a fine fellow.” Thranduil merely huffed slightly causing Celebrían to laughed and lay a pale arm on his own.
“Oh but they look so adorable together. Even you can agree to that!” and Thranduil rolled his eyes in a less than graceful manner.

“Kids…” he muttered and with that the drums signalled for the first game to start as the red band archers started to take their positions.

The competition had begun!

Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone!

Wanted to thank you all for all your support thus far! It has been great to read all your comments and receive your kudos!

I wanted this chapter to be cover the entire competition but in the end it got too long as it started to write itself, so you'll find out who wins in the next chapter! Hope you enjoyed this one! More will be revealed about Aragorn's discovery later, please have patience ;)

Thanks!
There was buzzing excitement as the shooting began. When the archers drew their arrows the audience was expected to remain silent so not to break their concentration. Deadly seconds passed before Celeborn gave his call and only the sound one could hear was of the rushing of arrows that sped to their targets.

There were ten rounds in total and by number five it became obvious who would win the round to go to the final. From every group three archers with the best scores were permitted to participate in the finals. The closer they got to their last shot the more nervous, frustrated or happy the participants looked. Tauriel, who was wrapped in Kíli’s arms, looked at some in pity. All students at the academy were great archers but at times like these, stress and nerves brought out a different side to them. Some of them looked incredibly pale or rather red in frustration. One of the reasons she and Legolas were so good was because Thranduil had taught them how to channel their emotions, especially at times like these. One had to forget about their disappointment and push it away to feel after all the rounds were over. That way, they were able to remain deadly focused the entire time and be successful.

Finally the bell rang as the last arrows had flown. Now they were measured on their targets to determine who had won the round of the red bands. It didn’t take long before the three winners were announced. The audience cheered and Celeborn called for an interval before the next group was up.

Everyone broke into chatter, sharing their opinion to each other. For Kíli this was the time to get to know Tauriel’s friends better. Arwen he had already met a few times and he recognised Elladan from Thorin’s birthday. He found himself sitting next to Éowyn who smiled kindly, obviously not ashamed that she was as curious about him as he was of her.

“So, are you nervous?” She asked him and he smiled.
“A bit to be honest, but more excited than nervous. I can’t wait to win.” He told her and laughed as Tauriel gave him a protesting jab.
“You wish.” She muttered but there was laughter in her eyes.
“How come you’re not shooting? Tauriel couldn’t convince you to join?” And Éowyn laughed, her pale golden hair dancing around her.
“She definitely tried. Unfortunately for both of us I am quite horrid with a bow and arrow.”
“Do you have another weapon of preference then?” He jokingly asked and the blonde gave him a smirk.
“I prefer a blade if you must know.” And Kíli raised an eyebrow in response, earning him another laugh.
“I do fencing at the Rohirrim Institute together with my brother.” She told him and he heard the pride in her voice.
“No way! But then you must have met my brother Fíli, he goes there as well.” And now it was Éowyn and Éomer’s turn to look surprised. Her brother had joined the conversation at his mention.
“Hmmm I can’t remember seeing anyone like you.” She told him and Kíli laughed.
“You won’t! Fíli and I don’t look very much alike. Our parents mixed things up very well.” He said giving her a wink. “I’ll call him. He’s blond like you… come to think of it, what is it with blondes and swords?” As the rest laughed, Kíli called his brother who looked up at him in surprise. With impatient hand movements Kíli gestured him brother to come his way. Looking sceptical and slightly annoyed Fíli stoop up and made his way to him, dragging Arild along with him.

Once he arrived Kíli grinned and introduced them to the others. Arild took a seat next to Tauriel and Arwen, who immediately tried to make her feel at ease. Luckily Arild wasn’t a shy person at all and happily start to chat with the raven beauty.
“Éowyn and Êomer, meet my brother Fíli.” The three looked at each other.
“Do you recognise them?” Kíli asked his brother. “They also do fencing at the Rohirrim Institute.” But Fíli and the Rohan siblings shook their heads and Tauriel almost laughed at Kíli adorable disappointed eyes.
“No I don’t, but you do look slightly familiar, maybe we’ve seen each other pass in the halls.” Éowyn suggested and Fíli nodded.
“Yes probably. To be honest, I only go in the evenings after work and the last months have been busy so I haven’t gone as much as I’d like.”
“Éowyn and I tend to practice at weird times. Our uncle runs the institute.” Êomer said and the Durin brothers looked at them in amazement.
“No way! Wait but then you’re the White Lady!” Fíli exclaimed and then flushed in embarrassment. The rest looked at him curiously before turning to Éowyn who gained a blush as well.
“Sorry… I well… didn’t think I’d meet you or that you were really one person… There were rumours that you were related to Théoden so I just guessed…” Fíli said seeming quite unsure of himself.
“Do explain.” Arild said looking at her boyfriend with curious eyes. She’d never heard of the White Lady before.

Éowyn waved everyone’s looks away and her brother smiled knowingly.
“It’s nothing guys, it’s actually a rather funny story. There was a time when I tended to skip school just to practice fencing. Of course I didn’t want Théoden, my uncle, to find out. So instead of our green suits, I showed up wearing a completely white one. That way I went unnoticed for a while and was able to beat the shit out of most of the students.” She laughed and Faramir threw an arm around his fiancé, looking proud. “Of course it didn’t take long for Théoden to find out, he recognised my fighting style. But now during some practices and demonstrations, I’ll come in wearing that white suit. It’s good fun and apparently it has earned me a reputation.” She said looking at Fíli who smiled.
“We all thought they hired a professional to kick our butts and scare us off.”
“I am a professional.” Éowyn said and the rest laughed.

Fíli took a seat next to Arilí.
“You never told me about her.” She said, giving him a pouting look, though she was obviously teasing.
“The guys all have bets going to see who would beat her. Of course none of us ever did. It hurts my pride every time I think of it, let alone tell my girlfriend that this girl has been beating me at fencing every time she shows up.” Fíli told her and she laughed before rolling her eyes and leaning to Tauriel.
“The Durins are such prideful people. I think it’s in their DNA to drop dead when they lose face.” Tauriel laughed and cuddled Kíli.
“Are you sure you want to go through with this competition love? If what Arild says is true than it will be a suicide mission.” Kíli turned to her grinning.
“You just wait! I hope you haven’t engraved your name on that trophy yet because it’s going to need to be changed to mine.”
“Talking about shooting, they’re going to begin again guys.” Arwen said and she was right. The blue bands started to come up, the Galadhrim brothers, Haldir, Rúmil and Orophin among them.

The audience grew silent as the archers took their positions and lined up their arrows. Tauriel and Kíli peered at their friends. In this group there were some brilliant archers that were trying to prove their worth. Haldir especially had improved a lot and it wouldn’t surprise them if he would join them as green master after the competition.

The first arrows had been fired and the archers turned to reload. As they did so Êomer gave a slight gasp surprising everyone.
“Who’s the girl on the right, the one with the black hair?” he whispered to no one in particular. To everyone’s surprise it was Faramir who answered.
“That’s Lothíriel, my cousin.” And Éomer looked at him in surprise. “Why do you know her?” Faramir asked, giving his future brother-in-law a sideways glance. Éomer shook his head.

“Thought she was someone else.” He muttered, looking away focusing his attention on the other archers. Tauriel caught a ghostly smile on Éowyn’s face.

“Well then she should root for her, don’t you think Éomer. She’ll be family some day.” Éowyn smiled cheekily, not looking at her brother’s reaction, who shrugged nonchalantly.

“Yeah I guess.” He said, threading a hand through his long golden hair.

The rounds passed quickly and it didn’t take too long before the scores where released. The Galadhrim brothers had all three gone to the final. Éowyn could see on her brother’s face that he was disappointed that the mysterious Lothíriel hadn’t gone through.

As the audience applauded, Kíli and Tauriel got up from their seats to get ready for their turn. Their friends wished them good luck with many smiles and thumbs up. As they walked past the rest of the Durin family, Dís and Thorin also wished them well, as did Bilbo, who in the mean time had picked up Frodo. At the sight of Tauriel, Frodo laughed, having forgotten that he had been disappointed to leave his new friends at the day care.

“Good luck! I hope you will win!” The boy chirped as Tauriel crouched down to his height, ruffling his dark curls.

“I will tell you a secret.” Tauriel whispered and the boy looked serious.

“Yes?” He breathed, his eyes sparkling.

“I will win just for you, because you bring me luck.”

“Really? But you’re the fairy, you bring luck.” The boy disagreed but happy he was let in on this secret.

“Oh but you do. I’ll show you.” Tauriel laughed.

“Okay.” Frodo agreed. Maybe he did bring her luck, she would know.

With a final wave the couple disappeared to the changing rooms. Kíli grinned and threw an arm over her shoulders.

“You’re amazing with kids.” He said and she blushed slightly.

“No, not really, he’s just adorable, he can’t be hard to amuse.” And Kíli slightly shook his head.

“You need a lot of patience with him. The boy always had his head in the clouds, dreaming about magical creatures and lands.”

“Why is that a bad thing?”

“It’s not per se a bad thing, it’s just that he doesn’t stop. Bilbo says he thinks it’s because he lost his parents so young and suddenly, that he is building these imaginary worlds to shield himself from reality.”

“Quite understandable, though I see your worry.”

“Do you know what he calls himself, miss fairy?”

“No?”

“A Hobbit?”

“Hobbit? What a funny sounding name!” Tauriel laughed and Kíli grinned as well.

“Apparently Fíli and I are dwarves…” and this made her laugh even louder.

“Well you are rather small.” And Kíli looked at her like a wounded puppy.

“Compared to you and your insanely tall friends yes. The people I grew up with are my height or shorter.”

“Let’s hope that will help you right now.” Tauriel winked and leaned to him, giving him a kiss on his stubble cheek. “Good luck.” And he smiled.

“You too!” before both disappeared into the changing rooms.

It didn’t take long before they reappeared, clad in their silver uniforms as they headed to the warming up area. Tauriel picked up her bow, letting her hand travel along its smooth lines. The motion had a calming effect on her. She would need that to win. She had to win, not so much for herself of course
but for Legolas and Frodo. And now that Thranduil was here as well there wasn’t any choice. She looked over at Kili, who smiled at her and told hold of her hand, giving it a squeeze.

“It appears we’ve come to a critical turning point in our relationship.” He began seriously and she raised a questioning eyebrow. “How will we handle each other during such an important competition.” And then he broke and grinned widely. “Will you still love me after this?” and Tauriel laughed.

“You fool, don’t scare me like that!” she said whacking his arm.

“I didn’t mean to scare you, but that doesn’t answer my question.” He said.

“Liar, you definitely did, but to answer you question, I think our love is strong enough to handle it. What do you think?” She replied with a grin of her own. Kili shrugged his shoulders.

“No doubt we’ll survive.” And he winked at her before pulling her to him and giving her a kiss. Then they were signalled to come up. With one final look at each other Kili and Tauriel went to their assigned positions. It was time to start.

She focused intently on her target, guiding her third arrow into the right direction. When it was perfectly positioned she froze. Slowly she relaxed her shoulders as Kili had taught her and then she waited for Celeborn’s call. The first two had been perfectly centred bull’s-eyes so this one had to be too, just like every other arrow in order to win. She counted down in her head as she wondered how Kili was doing; probably incredibly well. His technique tended to differ a lot from hers and the rest of the academy, but he was amazingly good and Tauriel felt proud of him every time he shot an arrow.

“Leithian!” came the signal and Tauriel released, feeling a rush of energy go through her as the arrow slipped between her fingers. Her eyes trailed its feathered end as if that would help it reach its destination. At the sound of a thud she smirked as it had hit dead centre. Only then did she hear the other arrows hitting their targets with thuds that sounded like gunshots. She was used to hearing that sound, but right now something clicked in her mind. She’d heard that sound before – but not on an archery shooting range. No, she’s heard it somewhere where it didn’t belong. Somewhere where it was supposed to be safe. She was digging for memories that seemed hidden away in the dark far corners of her mind. Briefly she saw darkness and one word rang through her mind – closet. The sound of muffled gunshots rang through her ears until they were followed by a high-pitched scream.

Tauriel blinked and shook her head as Celeborn’s command brought her attention back. He had signalled for them to pick up their fourth arrow. Feeling dazed, Tauriel turned slightly to pick up one from the quiver behind her. She looked at the audience, who all looked at her and the rest with great interest, but she wasn’t focused on them. Instead her eyes found two pale blue ones looking straight at her. Focus they told her. She rolled back her shoulders and grabbed an arrow. Now was not the time to daydream – focus Tauriel, focus. Celeborn’s voice rang again and she released. Another deadly hit.

Thranduil couldn’t take his eyes of Tauriel, his little girl, the daughter he never had. Something was off. He’d seen it immediately, the ever so slight shift in her stance after her third arrow. The stiffness in her back told him something was wrong. The way she turned and looked straight at him had only been a confirmation. Something was haunting her and he was almost certain he knew what it was. Memories. But why now? Why at all? She had hidden them so deep she herself had forgotten, and if he hadn’t seen it first hand, he never would have known what had happened. He didn’t want her to relive them like he did – she didn’t need that burden.
Elrond shifted beside him.
“Is Tauriel alright?” His friend asked and Thranduil wasn’t sure whether to praise or curse the man’s keen eyesight and observation skills. But there was no need for him to enlighten his friend, not yet at least. So Thranduil turned to him and gave him a rare smile.
“She’s fine.” And then he chuckled softly before proudly turning back to the archers. “She’s winning.”

Kili didn’t feel any sense of disappointment when he was called up second, differing only one point, one meagre, tiny point with first place. But Tauriel’s last shot had been a millimetre better than his. Not that he cared. He felt incredibly happy when the thick silver medal hung from his neck. He revelled at the sight of seeing his love standing in the spotlight, her hair catching the light, becoming a fiery halo all around her. With such grace, she bent over to receive the golden medal from Galadriel before looking at him with an adorable grin on her face. He decided she looked very becoming from above, and with their deal for tonight it made his loss feel even sweeter.

There was loud applause. Haldir had proven his entire being, gleaming happily with the bronze medal around his neck. The three of them descended the stage and were quickly swarmed by family and friends. But before answering anyone, Tauriel made sure to give Kili a hard and passionate kiss.

“You deserve this more than I do.” She murmured and Kili laughed.
“What’s this? First you go on about how you’ll beat me and now you want to share? You surprise me my love.” And she smiled.
“We were so close, we should have tied.”
“Darling, I am very proud of this silver plate, I don’t think I want to trade. Besides silver looks much better on me than gold.” He said and she laughed.
“Well alright then!” And he was rewarded by another kiss. They were interrupted by small Frodo, whose eyes and smile were so wide, Kili hoped it wouldn’t hurt him.

“That was amazing! All those arrows and then, and then…wow! You were so close! Can I try too?” the boy was bouncing on his toes in excitement, giving the couple his best practiced puppy eyes. Thankfully they were saved by Bilbo, who placed a firm hand on Frodo’s shoulder.
“Absolutely not! But I am sure they wouldn’t object to you watching them shoot, as long as you behave of course.” Bilbo said and Kili tried not to laugh when Frodo rolled his huge eyes and his face scrunched up in disappointment. But the man ignored his nephew and ward and instead shook hands of both of them.

“Congratulations both of you. It was absolutely magnificent to watch. I had to catch myself not to fall off my chair in excitement and trying to see everything clearly, it all happens rather quickly.”
“Thanks Bilbo, I appreciate that you came here.” Kili said and Bilbo laughed.
“But of course my dear boy! It was a privilege to watch and Frodo obviously enjoyed himself immensely.” At his name Frodo nodded heavily and smiling Tauriel sank down to her knees, ruffling his hair. Then she lifted the medal over her head and placed it over his, until the large medal rested on his small chest. His big grew even bigger as did those of the people around him. Kili smiled, knowing exactly what she was doing.

“There,” she said smiling, “I told you you’d bring me luck. So I think you should have it.”
“R…really? You mean it?” Frodo stuttered and Bilbo looked in shock.
“Yes, are you sure Tauriel? I mean I appreciate the gesture but you won this competition by yourself.” He said looking unsurely between her and Kili.
“I am sure Bilbo, I want Frodo to have it.” She said giving him a smile.
“I well… then, Frodo what do you say?” At this Frodo bowed very deeply, and Tauriel hoped he won’t fall over.
“Thank you so much Tauriel!”
“It’s my pleasure.”
“Frodo and I will make sure it will get the most beautiful in Bag End to reside on.” Bilbo promised her earnestly.
“That’s great.” She laughed and felt Kíli wrap an arm around as she stood up.
“Well we won’t keep you up much longer, I know there are plenty of others that want to talk to you. I am afraid we can’t go to the after celebration. We have to catch our train back to the Shire in the early morning.”
“That’s alright. It was great to see you again Bilbo and have you around. I hope to see you again soon, not like last time.” Kíli said and Bilbo laughed.
“Oh yes of course. I am planning a next visit in the near future. Although do know that you are always welcome in Bag End, both of you that is.” He said and the couple smiled.
“We’ll definitely remember that.” Kíli said smiling.

They turned to the others who congratulated them enthusiastically. At one point they got separated talking to many different people. As Kíli stood with his family Tauriel saw Thranduil approach her. There was a light smile on his face.

“Congratulations Tauriel. You shot magnificently.”
“Thank you.”
“I am proud of you.” And Tauriel gave him a slight bow of her head.
“That means a lot to me. I am glad you came to watch.”
“Yes it had been a while. Legolas would be very happy. You’ve spoken to him?”
“Yes I have. He’s doing well.”
“Good.” Then Thranduil paused and looked at her intently and he appeared to feel uncomfortable, which was a surprising emotion to see on him. “Tauriel, I couldn’t help but notice you seemed… distracted during the shooting. Is there anything I should know?” and she almost felt embarrassed. She shook her head slightly.
“I don’t think so, it was just a bit odd… but probably just the stress playing up.”
“Yes of course. Well, I am going to have to leave. We’ll talk about it some other time. I’ll be gone for a few days, there are some things I have to attend to.”
“Oh of course. When will you be back?”
“End of the week probably.”
“Okay, well good luck, have a safe trip.”
“Thank you. Have a good week here and have a good time at the party. You and Elrond’s sons will Riverdance right?”
“Yes, it’s become a tradition.”
“Have fun Tauriel.”
“Thank you. I will see you soon.” And Thranduil nodded, ready to walk away, before he turned one final time, his eyes gazing to where Kíli was standing. Then he turned back to Tauriel. “The boy is not as bad as I thought.”
“And that’s a huge compliment coming from you.”
“You misunderstand me, it’s not a compliment, rather an observation.” But Tauriel smiled nonetheless.
“A good observation then.” And Thranduil gave a smile of his own.

“Perhaps.”
After Party

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much everybody for all the lovely comments, kudos, and subscriptions. They all mean so much to me. I am very sorry this one took a bit long to update, but with a bit of luck the next one should come in the near future! Enjoy! :)

The after party would take place in one of the grand Lothlórien halls. There would be a buffet style dinner with a performance. After that music would be played for those who wished to dance. Kíli thought it was all rather exciting. He had never been before but had always heard marvel stories from those who had. Several in his former politics class at university had been invited and had gushed about it for a week afterwards. He was glad his family was staying as well. The Durins had found company with Elrond and Celebrían and Fíli and Arild didn’t mind getting to know Tauriel’s friends more.

He smiled as he saw her interact with them, especially with Arwen and her brothers. While Tauriel stood out in both age and her looks with her flaming hair, wild green eyes, and freckled skin, they treated her as if she was their younger sibling. Thranduil and El rond, being both part of the high elite society in Dale had often visited each other, and when their children were young and Thranduil’s wife Lemaril had lived, they even went on holidays together to some faraway estates. It was during those visiting and trips that their children had gotten to know each other and became friends. It had been quite a shock when the Mirkwood couple adopted four-year-old Tauriel as part of the family. Arwen, who at the time was the youngest at seven-years-old was grateful at her arrival. She was glad she wasn’t the only girl anymore, even though her loyal playmate Legolas was only a year older than her and had enjoyed her company. Being an only child he was glad to have someone to play with. After two blissful years, Lemaril died. Instead of travelling as a family, Thranduil would send Legolas and Tauriel over to Elrond and Celebrían so they would have a good time and he would be left in peace. Knowing their friend needed time to heal, the Rivendell Lord and Lady gladly took the young children under their wing.

Smiling broadly Kíli walked up to his girlfriend. He had changed into a more festive outfit, dark jeans and a navy dress shirt, with his hair tied back with an Ereborian clasp that his mother had given him. Reaching Tauriel, when threaded his arm through hers and she smiled back at him. She wore a short silver dress, with a tight bodice and a flowing skirt that reached her knees. Her hair hung loose, curling at the ends. He knew she would be part of the performance tonight, though she refused to tell him what it was. The buffet was about to start and he was hungry. Softly he started to drag her to their table that they shared with friends. She laughed, as they got closer to their seats.

“Did you want some attention, handsome?” she asked teasingly and he grunted in response.

“Yes, what’s wrong with that?” He challenged. “I haven’t spoken to you alone since our game.”

“Oh dear, you make it sound as if we cannot be separated for more than an hour.”

“It’s been 4 hours and I can’t wait for this dinner to be over.” Tauriel raised her eyebrows.

“And why is…that?” But one look at his intense eyes on her gave her answer. Her cheeks turned scarlet.

“Oh…” was all she managed to say, “of course…” she mumbled and he grinned. Their deal, which had all been his idea. In fact thinking about it, Tauriel assumed he knew she’d win all along, or perhaps he’d lost intentionally. Their deal entailed the winner comforting the loser that night. Tauriel sighed. It wasn’t that she minded it, just that, that was the only thing occupying his mind currently.
But Kíli merely shrugged his shoulders. “What? Can’t a man want his lady?” He asked innocently and then mischief filled his eyes. “It’s not my fault you look even more stunning without clothes or are amazing…” But Tauriel quickly clamped her hand over his mouth and the rest of his sentence came out muffled.

“What do you think you’re doing?” She demanded, her voice higher as she looked around panicky, hoping no one heard what he said. She tried not to squeal when she felt his tongue ran over her hand. He grinned at her like someone young teenage boy who had just pranked a teacher. “You’re so cute when you get worked up.” He told her plainly and she glared. Just then the buffet was opened and the couple walked to the tables.

“Thank god,” Kíli said and smiled, “because I am ravenous!”

Tauriel wasn’t sure he meant it in terms of food.

The rest of the dinner passed rather quickly. The food was delicious as always was the case. No one could ever complain about the great cuisine Lothlórien had to offer its guests.

At their table, the young adults chatted away. Lothíriel had joined their table and sat with her cousin Faramir. Since the death of Boromir, the cousins had closer than ever before, sharing their feelings and grief. Éowyn and Faramir had decided to postpone their wedding to the end of spring in the coming year. No one was yet in the mood nor shape for such a joyful affaire. While Éowyn and Boromir had never been close, they had tolerated each other and she didn’t think it fair for him to not honour his untimely death, which had been a huge blow to Faramir as well as their father Denethor. They had received a strange call from Aragorn not long ago about a DNA test. Aragorn had been very vague about the whole matter, not giving away any details, not even to Arwen, which annoyed to raven greatly, since she could feel something was going on. But they trusted Aragorn as their good friend, and Faramir had agreed into sending over some of his DNA. Aragorn promised to give them a call again soon. The whole story had become to main topic of gossip at the table, with everyone offering their own opinions. Their conclusion was that is was very odd. Meanwhile Tauriel and Kíli relayed on the news of how Legolas and Gimli were doing. There were sighs of relieve when they heard the two men were doing well, although it appeared they hadn’t met each other yet, which wasn’t very surprising with the large amounts of people in Mordor, as well as them having completely different positions there.

Dinner drew to a close and a break was announced, during which guests would receive coffee and tea or a stronger drink. During that time, Tauriel and several others rose and went to a separate room to get ready for their yearly performance. Tauriel quickly scooped down to give Kíli a kiss, who wished her good luck. Elladan and Elrohir followed her.

There was a room behind the makeshift stage that they used to get dressed and warm up. Changing into her performance clothes, Tauriel moved to one of the mirrors to paint on some makeup. She put on her black tap shoes and took a deep breath. Unlike most years, she hadn’t had that much time to practice. Between university and archery she could usually be found in the dance studio dancing. But with Kíli’s arrival into her life, her ever pilling up school work and Legolas’ departure to Mordor, she found time lacking. She just hoped now that everything would work out. It wasn’t long before Galadriel popped her head in to tell them they could start.

In silent agreement Elladan and Tauriel looked at each other, it was now or never. Of course it wasn’t much of a surprise, they, with several others would Riverdance every year, but she hoped Kíli would like it. It was very different to what he was used to. With her hands she smoothed away any wrinkles in the fabric of her short green dress that was stud with sparkling gems. Her hair was put
into a tight half up, to keep it out of her face. The loose hair was coiled into tight ringlet curls, eating up its length, that would later be bouncing against her back and add a touch of drama to the dance.

Most dancers were from Mirkwood that lay in the Silvan County although Elladan and Elrohir participated as well. At times like these she missed Legolas, who usually was her partner instead of Elladan. The latter currently looked perfect as always, wearing tight black pants and a billowing white shirt that contrasted with his long inky hair that was tied up into a ponytail, with several strands framing his chiselled face.

Elrohir looked at great as his brother, wearing a black shirt instead of white, and the twins stood out with their dark locks against the brown, auburn and blonde of the other seven dancers. The two other girls wore black dresses. Gwilwileth had striking golden hair and Tuilin had rich brown curls that bounced as she moved. The five other men wear dressed like Elrohir, in full black. All ten dancers wore shoes with metal underneath that would create amazing sounds as they danced in unison. Elladan looked at the rest of them.

“Ready?” he asked and he was answered with several cheers. In unison they left the room and came onto the stage gaining a lot of applause already. While Tauriel and Elladan took centre stage, the rest hung back in the shadow, unseen by the audience. With a nod of his head, the music started and he and Tauriel began to dance.

The music started of soft and playful with high flowing notes. With clicking steps Tauriel danced around the stage, graceful like water, her hair twirling around her. Then drums came into the rhythm and Elladan started to dance his part, tapping faster and faster as if challenging the drums with his own feet. The pair danced together, kicking and flicking their feet and legs around, perfectly on beat. Tauriel felt a smile rise on her face. The music sped up further and the other dancers joined them. Tapping their way across the stage they all formed a straight line. With perfect synchronization they danced together, becoming one with the music. Their high kicks rose into the air and Kíli was in awe. He marvelled at how fast their legs were moving while their upper bodies remained completely straight. He saw Tauriel beam at him and he couldn’t help but smile back as he felt pride fill his body. This amazing woman was his, she was his Tauriel and at that moment, seeing all those tall, lithe dancers dance their Riverdance, Kíli couldn’t wait to spend the rest of his life by her side.

With a huge round of applause they finished. Kíli clapped until his hands were sore and he heard others whistle. All smiling brightly, chests rising rapidly due to exhaustion, the dancers on stage bowed, all holding hands. Then they quickly returned to the back room to change back into their party outfits. It didn’t take long for Tauriel to reappear. Without a second thought about his family and friends being there, he gathered her in his arms and kissed her. Holding her face between his hands he smiled his charming and adorable smile.

“That, darling, was amazing!”
“Really? You truly think so!”
“Of course!”
“I am glad! I know it’s so different from what you’re used to.”
“Only a fool wouldn’t be impressed.”
“And thank Valar you’re not a fool.” She grinned and kissed him.

Walking back to their table Tauriel and the others were showered with compliments.
“Amazing, as always!” Arwen told her friend and brothers. “It’s a shame Legolas isn’t here but Elladan filled his role adequately.” She said and Elladan rolled his eyes.
“Thanks sis.” He countered and Arwen laughed, throwing her arms around her oldest sibling, giving him a kiss on his cheek.
“I am just kidding, you did great too.”
Éowyn and Faramir had gone to get everyone a drink. Tauriel happily took a glass of red wine from her. Looking at each other, the old and new friends toasted and eagerly sipped their long sought after drinks. In the mean time some of the empty tables were cleared so that a make shift dance floor appeared and music started softly playing in the background.

Sitting down to rest, Tauriel and Arild engaged in pleasant conversation. Arild wasn’t a dancer but had enjoyed the performance immensely.

“I filmed some of it to show at home, my mum is a big fan of such dances, much to my dad’s annoyance I am afraid. He and my brothers prefer ale over music.” She told laughing.

“How many brothers do you have?”

“Four, all of them older.”

“Wow!” Tauriel remarked, giving Fíli a look, who burst out laughing as well.

“Yes they didn’t make it easy for me.” The blond said, winking and his girlfriend huffed.

“Oh please, they were never really serious, you were just too much of a coward.”

“Not serious? They threatened to do all sorts of things…” Fíli exclaimed and Kíli snickered, leaning in close to Tauriel to whisper.

“With his balls…” And Tauriel let out an ungraceful snort while Fíli glared at his younger brother. “I heard that.” But Kíli shrugged his shoulders.

“What? It’s true. At one point it got so bad, he didn’t come by their house for two weeks, and when he did find the courage, he dragged me along.”

“Which pissed me of royally as you can imagine. There I thought I’d found myself some brave warrior, I was so disappointed.” Arild said.

“You are lucky Kíli likes you,” Fíli told her, “He can be very nasty to those who get on his wrong side.” Tauriel raised an eyebrow and Kíli smirked, trying to look innocent.

“In my defence,” he started, “all the other girls you’d brought home with you were complete airheads. Only after him for his inheritance and they would treat me like I was some baby. At least Arild and I were friends. We played in the same sandbox as kids.” He explained as Tauriel laughed.

“Oh yes I remember that! We would build fort castles from the sand and defend it from intruders.” Arild grinned.

“And who were the intruders?” Tauriel asked.

“Gimli and Ori…oh and at that time Fíli also. He was trying to act older and hang out with Bofur. Needless to say, it wasn’t appreciated.” Kíli said and the friends laughed.

“Alright, alright, enough stories.” Fíli said and pushed the couple from their seats. “You two go dance. We’ll judge.” He said and put an arm around Arild. Laughing, Tauriel and Kíli did as they were told and hurried to the dance floor where several were already dancing.

Placing her hand in Kíli’s a salsa started playing. Smiling, Kíli led her into the steps and soon they were effortlessly gliding over the dance floor. They saw Éowyn and Faramir awkwardly trying to flow the rhythm. Elrohir and his wife Elendiel were also dancing, and Tauriel happily saw Elladan and Arwen doing the same. She smiled when she saw Éomer talking to Lothíriel at the bar. They seemed to be getting along, though she didn’t miss Lothíriel’s eyes glancing longingly at the dancing couples. Unfortunately Éomer lacked all dancing skills like his sister and it was plain to see he hoped she wouldn’t mind.

“How long will Thranduil be away?” Kíli asked, bringing her attention back to him.

“About a week. I was thinking, when he’s back, you should come over. It’s weird to think I’ve seen so much of your family already while you’ve barely seen mine. Besides, he’s warming up to you.” And Kíli laughed.

“I am glad to hear. Honestly I haven’t minded not seeing much of them yet, not when I’d be eaten alive.”

“Gosh, you’re just as brave as your brother.” Tauriel dryly remarked and he huffed.

“I am much more brave than he is!”
“Perhaps. Or just more reckless.”
“Perhaps that too. But seriously I would like to meet him properly.” The music changed into a bachata and they moved positions accordingly, dancing against each other.
“I was thinking about doing something fun this weekend.” He said not long wards.
“Like what?”
“Well, perhaps, if you want, I’d like to see where you grew up. You’ve seen the Erebor neighbourhood, and I spend loads of time in Dale, but I’ve never been further than the Mirkwood gate.” He said and was glad when she smiled.
“That sounds like a great idea. We could make a day of it. There are some great treks and hikes that we could do.” Tauriel said and her eyes where shining with ideas. “It will be lovely.” And with that Kili leaned in for a kiss.

“I know it will be love.”

In Mordor Aragorn was startled by a knock on his office door. Within seconds a nurse came in, holding a large envelope out for him.
“He was the results for the tests you asked for.”
“Thank you Thea, I appreciate it.” Aragorn told her, taking it. As she left, closing the door, he felt his hands shake.

Carefully he opened the seal and got out the pieces of paper inside. Part of him was afraid to read its contents but the other side was screaming for him to know. His eyes skimmed the letters on the page. His hand found the telephone beside him.

It was time to call them.
Gimli grunted as he dragged himself through the rough terrain. He was drenched in mud, his muscles were sore, he felt chilled to the bone, but worst of all, he was hungry, incredibly hungry. The enemy wouldn’t see them coming but rather hear his stomach approaching. It made him lose his concentration, and that was something heavily required on this mission. He tried to remember why exactly he had agreed to come.

He’d only been back several weeks and he’d been incredibly bored. His hands itched to do something. Cold had descended so he had been in charge of cutting up enough wood to supply the people for warmth. He scoffed. Three years of military training, rigorous and intensive, and there he was, in the middle of Mordor chopping up wood. He’d been frustrated and tired and so when one of the military generals, Gimli believe his name was Glorfindel, asked him if he wanted to help with the mission, he’d agreed immediately, without even knowing what it actually entailed. Looking back he declared himself an idiot. While he’d felt useless before, he now could remember the smiles on people’s faces whenever he came in carrying the logs. He had been useful after all. He wouldn’t mind going back there now; he ached for some warmth, a shower would be heavenly. Gimli didn’t think there was a part of his body clean at the moment. He had long given up trying to wipe the grime off his face with the grime on his hands.

Next to him lay Ereinion, the second in command. There were two other soldiers who had trained in Doriath. Gimli was the only one from Erebor. Not that he minded very much, they generally left him in peace. But there was one that tested his patience. The journalist. Gimli had practically laughed in the blondes face when he’d requested to come along. Come along! As if this was some school trip. The man might have been leanly built, but he was also way too tall and thin. Not one who couldn’t fend for himself in the wild, not with such perfectly styled hair.

Those volunteers, who thought coming here would be a walk in the park, who thought they could do everything and not break a nail. Sissy’s every single one of them. Gimli couldn’t stand them.

Thus far the journalist had survived, proving to be sturdier than originally thought and much to Gimli’s chagrin the lad had been very good with a bow. At least he could protect himself, because Gimli had no intention of looking out for his sorry ass. He might be ok with being an wood chopper but definitely not a baby sitter.

But the man’s name sounded familiar… he couldn’t quite place it. Everyone called the man Lego, an unfortunate nickname Gimli assumed. The young sturdy redhead avoided the man at all costs. He had never been very good dealing with his anger management; it was one of the reasons why he’d joined the army, to let of some steam. But he did have a lot of pride and felt a large amount of responsibility. He wasn’t going to start a fight if it was avoidable because it would end badly for all of them.

The sun had gone down and when the sky shifted from twilight to dusk the small party made a small camp. They kept a fire low, which provided they with just enough light to see what they were doing. They were closer to their target, the city of Pelargir. Recently had been recaptured by enemy forces leading to further devastation. Pelargir had been in and out of enemy control since the entire conflict started. Legolas even remembered that as a young child his father would talk about it. The aim of their mission was to infiltrate the centre of the harbour city and take out the leaders, so to weaken their defences so that coming forces would be able to take it over and bring it into Gondor forces control. The large forces were a day away, waiting for Glorfindel’s command. But first they had to make it to the city unseen. They were close, so close that Gimli could practically smell it. It affected
them all. They became quieter and more withdrawn. They all knew the plan, the only thing they could do now was pray that everything would go well, and they’d all get out alive.

Two days passed and Glorfindel and one of the Doriath soldiers had gone to explore the city, memorizing the changing of the guards and the ins and outs of the fortress and the palace where the leader lived. Glorfindel came back filled with hope.

“It’s time. I will send word to the waiting forces. We will attack right before dawn tonight. With any luck we can create so much confusion and fear that our aid, arriving midday tomorrow, will have limited resistance.” At his words Gimli felt a spurge of adrenaline go through him. Looking around he would see in the eyes of the others that they felt the same. He felt excitement just also incredibly anxious. He hadn’t really thought much of his life back home, not much of his father or mother, but now, knowing real danger was coming, he couldn’t help think back on all those great times. Whenever his mother made his favourite food or when his father would bring him to wrestling matches, after which he always got ice cream. It was at that moment that he wondered if they would be proud of him. He hadn’t gone into accounting, as his father had liked. He’d always pushed himself into dangerous situations despite his mother’s warnings. She had probably preferred him to use his physical abilities to play Olympic sports. At least then she’d have more control over his well being. Now they had no control at all, in fact they didn’t even know where he was. He had known about this mission before coming back for Thorin’s birthday but had sworn he wouldn’t tell anyone. He wondered if he died here and the mission failed, would they tell them what happened? Would his parents be told about this? Would it ease their pain in some way?

Gimli looked around again and met the eyes of the journalist. There was a strange mix of fear and determination in them. Gimli huffed at himself before passing ale to the man. Pale blue eyes met his one brown ones and the journalist smiled.

“Thank you.”

“Its nothin’, ye’ll need it.” Gimli said gruffly, before turning his attention to sharpening his weapons, and from the corner of his eye, he saw the blond do the same. The rest of the evening they spend sharpening weapons, loading and packing equipment and going over the plan, until they could dream the layout of the harbour city and the main building they would target. They quickly ate some food that would last them for a few hours. Then they doused the fire and everyone tried to get a little sleep while Ereinion kept watch.

That night Gimli dreamed of blazing fire while Thranduil and Tauriel’s face haunted Legolas. Both men were glad when Ereinion woke them up. It was dark, the only light came from the stars. There was a new moon that night which was beneficial as it made sneaking in a lot easier. Drawing his black hood around him, Gimli checked once more if everything was in place. Satisfied, he slipped after the others into the darkness, on to Pelargir.

When they reached the city wall under the cover of darkness, Ereinion and one from Doriath ran forward, pressing their backs against the cold wall, ready to climb it. Waiting the listened whether to hear if they advance had been heard, but it appeared not. Then they scaled the wall. The changing of the guards had begun and there was no one on that section of the wall. Silently they climbed on and hide themselves in the shadows. The journalist readied his bow; his task was to kill the new guard as quickly as possible, while the two on the wall would make sure he made no sound. The guard came into view. He didn’t look very pleased and his eyes seemed tired or at least that’s what Gimli heard Glorfindel say, he himself didn’t have such brilliant night vision as the rest of the party. They waited several minutes for the guards to settle. From their disinterested positions, they wouldn’t be too much of a problem.
The journalist had probably received a signal, because suddenly an arrow flew swiftly and silently through the air. Bull’s-eye. Gimli could make out the guards shadow, the arrow sticking out of his heart. But before he could offer a cry, Ereinion and Doriath I silenced him quickly. They removed the dead man’s armour, stopping the wound from bleeding too much. Then Doriath I put on the clothes and strapped the helmet on his head. He would now be in charge of keeping watch and ensuring their way out when necessary. Ereinion disappeared again in the shadows as they hid the body of the guard. Then the others started to climb over the wall. Gimli tried his best to do it as silently as possible but towards the top it became troublesome. A hand reached out to him and without thinking he took it and was pulled on. It irritated to see it was the journalist who helped him, who was currently smiling at him, obviously glad they survived the first part. Gimli didn’t return his smile.

“I didn’t need ye help.” He whispered hoarsely and the blond merely shrugged his shoulders, with a pleased grin on his face.

The party slipped into the city, stepping through the shadows and empty alleyways. It didn’t take long for them to near the building that was being used as a palace for the leader of the city, Lord Umbar. A few buildings before it, they climbed onto the roofs, that way they could reach the palace unseen. One by one they jumped the distance to land on a flat side of the palace roof. From there Glorfindel had found another unguarded entrance into the building. Reaching the door, Gimli felt his heart beating in his chest. He hoped getting in would prove as easy as getting the hell out. They sneaked through the hallways, several times they were almost caught by a guard or wandering servant. Gimli wiped away the sweat from his brow. Beside him he saw the journalist and others looking perfectly calm. Stupid fairies, he thought. Glorfindel had followed the Lord’s movements and had some idea where he might be. They had tried the bedchamber, but found it empty. Now they tried location B, the Lord’s study and library. It didn’t take long for them to find it. Within minutes they found themselves inside.

Lord Umbar’s chambers were dark and musky. Silently they approached his study. Angamaitë sat in his chair by the fire, he held a book in his hand, but didn’t appear to be reading it. Suddenly his let out a laugh that sent chills through Gimli’s spine. As quick as lighting he turned around and the party drew their weapons. The Lord’s dark eyes scanned over them looking slightly amused.

“There, there, what do we have here, my assassins committee? I have to say I am flattered to receive so many of you.” The man said, his lips curling into a grim smile. His dark hair stuck to his face. “Well I can’t say I am surprised, sorry to disappoint. I received news from my brother in Gundabad of an attack there. I knew it was only a matter of time before you came to see me.” The Lord said smugly.

“What attack?” Gimli couldn’t help himself from asking, and kicked himself for being such a fool as he looked at Glorfindel. This amused the man even more.

“Well, I see you aren’t very informed.” He observed and Gimli felt the man look at him from top to bottom, judging him. “Would you like me to tell you dwarf?” Gimli balled his fists in anger. His lack in height had always caused others to tease him, leading to many hard-handed fights. But it hurt to admit that especially besides such incredibly tall men, he did indeed appear like a dwarf. Angamaitë didn’t wait for his response.

“A small force of idiots from Mirkwood thought they were strong enough to break into Gundabad’s defence system.” And he let out a shrill laugh. “Fools.” He sneered and his dark eyes flickered to the journalist, who had stiffened and paled. “Their leader joined them for once, it’s been an age since he has.” The man licked his lips and took a step closer. “Didn’t daddy tell you? He suffered great losses, the coward.” He sheered and Gimli saw anger burst in front of the blond eyes. His cursed inside. How had he been so stupid to not realize that the journalist was Legolas Greenwood, Tauriel’s adopted brother? He felt like an idiot as well as sorry for the young man. His hands reached for his
throwing axes as he saw Legolas gripping his bow tightly. The Lord saw as well and gave them a mocking smile, raising a thick eyebrow.

“You really think I’d let you kill me in my own home?” He quickly turned his head slightly to the door, hand reaching out for a warning bell beside him. But before his fingers touched it, an arrow was yanked through it. Angamaitë gave a scream pulling back his wounded hand, cradling it with his other. His eyes flashed murderously at Legolas who’d released his arrow.

Gimli ran to the door, blocking it from potential guards. The man screamed again, and loud footsteps came closer as well as shouts. Glorfindel and Ereinion seemed to have enough and charger at the man. The man was a born fighter, dodging their attacks. Meanwhile Gimli was helped by Legolas and Doriath 2 to secure the door as numerous guards were trying to open it. Lord Umbar had manage to secure a fireplace rod as weapon, wielding it in his left hand, his wounded one dangling useless by his side, blood dripping from it. Yet he fought with confidence.

Gimli and Doriath 2 were now in charge of a second door while Legolas shot anyone daring to come in the first. They heard the clashing of swords and rod behind him. At one point, no one recalled how, parts of the library had be lit ablaze, burning collection of books at a time. Confident Doriath 2 could handle the other door, Gimli tried to douse the fire. He heard the Lord laugh and not long after a window shattered. Knowing he couldn’t stop the fire, Gimli used it to block the doors. The people behind it shrieked in pain and fear as flames engulfed them. This gave them time to turn to the ongoing battle. Glorfindel and Ereinion were sporting several scrapes, but Angamaitë had it worse. Parts of his wounded hand were now completely missing and he had cuts running across his face as well as chest and legs. But he maintained the wicked grin on his face. His back was to the broken window and he swung his vicious rod around him to keep the fighters away. Swiftly he climbed into the windowsill as something strange flickered in his eyes. The man knew he would die. He turned his body as if ready to jump. Glorfindel took a step towards him as if trying to call him back but the man turned even further. Gimli thought he would jump at any second, ending his own life. But right before he did, Angamaitë turned once more, something shiny flying from his hand, and with that he let himself fall backwards, out of the window, sealing his own fate.

Gimli felt something rushing passed him but was unsure of what it was. Smoke began to get heavier, flames licking at the door entrances. Their only way out was through the same window the evil Lord had dropped himself. He was about to smile when he heard a groan beside him and turned. The blood left in his face drained away. The shining object, a sharp dagger, was protruding out of Doriath 2’s heart. The soldier had a look of shock on his face, clasping his chest, as if unsure what had happened to him. His brown eyes sought Ereinion who rushed towards him with a wail of agony.

“Aeglos! Aeglos! No god damnit! Look at me! Look at me! You’re fine; we’re going to get you out of here safe and sound. Look at me!” Ereinion practically shouted and Gimli felt tears streaming down his face as he saw Glorfindel inspect the wound, his face turning ever more grim by the second.

“Gil…Gil-Galad…” Aeglos managed to stutter, blood trickling softly from the corner of his mouth and Ereinion, also called Gil-Galad, wiped it away with his finger.

“Yes?” the dark haired warrior asked softly.

“Get…out. Tell…tell…my brother…tell…Lindon…I love…love him. Will you…?” Aeglos gasped. He had fallen unto the ground, his hand over his heart. Glorfindel had pulled the dagger out.

“Of course I will.” Ereinion promised, tears dripping from his cheeks unto Aeglos’, who gave him a smile. He took several more weak breaths before he closed his eyes and stopped moving. Ereinion looked at him in shock.

“No…no….it can’t be…not like this…” Glorfindel held his shoulder trying to give comfort. They were distracted by more shouts coming from the door. Several guards were trying anew to get into the room.
“Ereinion, we have to leave now.” Glorfindel said and the warrior gave a quick. “We can’t take him with us.” Again a nod.

“I know that.” And Ereinion reached around Aeglos’ neck to receive a necklace, his weapons and several other small belongings. Then he looked at the door and the fire. “I can’t leave him like this, if they do come in, who know what they’ll do to his body. Help me move him into the fire.” The four of them each held a part of Aeglos and carried him as closer to the fire as possible. Gimli shuddered at the feeling of the already cold skin. He reached into his inner pocket and got out a flash with Ereborian whiskey. His looked at Ereinion with permission who nodded. He poured the contents in a symbol of respect over the fallen soldier. As soon as the flames tasted the alcohol they engulfed the body, making the remaining party jump anyway quickly. Legolas and Gimli made it for the window, swiftly slipping through it and on to the roof. Below them a crowd had gathered, but they were too busy with the body on the ground to notice them. Ereinion and Glorfindel joined them quickly and they ran as fast as they could back to the wall from which they came.

Getting closer they saw there was panic on the wall. They were relieved to see Doriath 1, Lindon still there.

“Thank god you guys are back. Several here were commanded to come to the palace to aid the Lord. I was praying to Valar that they wouldn’t ask me. Also the troops are here, I had contact with their leader, once we jump off this wall, they will attack.” Then the soldier let his eyes roam the party and his eyebrows furrowed. “Where’s my brother?” Gimli breath caught in his throat and he looked away. The silence he received confirmed Lindon’s fears.

“Good god…” he said and swayed on his feet. Ereinion and Glorfindel came to his support. With begging eyes he looked at his commanders. “You can’t be serious…” he whispered and Ereinion closed his eyes before pulling out the necklace and Aeglos’ weapons.

“I am so sorry Lindon…I don’t know what to say…” And Lindon let out a sob.

“He was my brother…my baby brother…he can’t be dead…can’t be…”

“Lindon, you’re brother fought bravely and his death was honourable, I don’t think he was in much pain, it happened so quickly and suddenly. But we will have time to mourn later, we first have to get out of here.” Glorfindel said, trying to sooth the poor young man.

“I can’t just leave…His body…”

“We made sure they couldn’t touch his body, its currently burning in the room, probably killing several who try to come close.”

In a daze, Glorfindel led Lindon and the others from the wall. Due to the panic and chaos on the wall, they weren’t noticed. They ran back into the forest. Once they were under cover, Ereinion produced a horn and blew it. The loud, low sound carried far. It didn’t take long for there to come a response and with that the troops attacked the city of Pelargir.

Several long hours passed. The party had created a large distance between them and the city and set up camp. Ereinion and Lindon had distanced themselves from the rest. They would go back to the main city, where Lindon would be brought back to his family and allowed time to recover from the terrible fate of his brother. After a while they got news that the troops had won and Pelargir was back into allies control and the smoke of fire and destruction cleared up. Gimli saw Legolas sitting on one of the small hills, looking out in the distance. He sighed, picked up two bowls of stew while balancing some bottles of ale and walked over.

“Here.” He grunted and Legolas looked up in surprise. “Thought ye’d want some food. Ale’s never bad at times like these.” With a nod Legolas accepted the food and gestured for Gimli to sit next to him. They sat together in silence for a while.

“Well, that was that.” Gimli finally said and Legolas gave a nod though he remained staring out in the distance.
“Indeed.”

“Have ye heard anythin’ from ye da?”

“No, but I know he is fine, he’s a strong man.”

“So I’d heard. Are ye ever worried bout him?”

“Sometimes, but not often.” And then Legolas turned to the red-haired soldier beside him. “I am more worried about my sister.”

“Tauriel?”

“Yes, you know her?”

“Kíli’s my cousin.”

“I see.”

“She was mad when ye left.”

“Yes.”

“Why didn’t ye tell her, she’s a strong lass.”

“I know she’s strong, but that doesn’t mean I won’t protect her.”

“Didn’t seem like protectin’ to me.” And Legolas turned to glare at him.

“What do you mean?” And Gimli shrugged.

“Well, I don’t think runnin’ away without sayin’ anythin’ is protectin’ someone.”

“Don’t you.”

“No I don’t.”

“It wasn’t a question, just an observation.”

“Touchy are we? Tell me, why did ye do it.” And Gimli was met with several seconds of silence.

“Because I love her.” Legolas finally answered.

“Of course ye do, she’s ye sister.”

“She is sometimes… and sometimes she’s not…sometimes I love her more than that.” Now it was Gimli’s turn to remain silent, as he had to process those words.

“I see.” He finally said and was surprised to hear Legolas laugh beside him. “What’s funny?” He grunted, worried he’d said something wrong.

“Nothing particularly, I am just glad you don’t judge me.”

“Well I have to tell ye I am shocked, but having met her, let me tell ye she’s not my type, but I can imagine she breaking a few hearts.”

“Yes, and she does so without even knowing it.”

“So I assume she doesn’t know.”

“No heavens no, it would be my greatest nightmare. To be honest it is one of the reasons I jumped at the chance to come here.” Gimli looked at him in surprise.

“Ye what?”

“Seeing her so happy, I couldn’t bear to do anything I’d regret. I hoped by coming here I could clear my head. And I do like Kíli, I can see he treats her well.”

“Well I am biased of course, but even then I’d say you’re a lost cause, they love each other too much.”

“I know, she would be far happier with him than with me.”

“Aye.” And Legolas looked at him and smiled.

“Thank you Gimli, for being so honest.”

“Likewise, I’m glad I could help.”

“Would you mind keeping this…”

“A secret? Of course I will lad. You know what they say, anythin’ that happens in the army stays in the army. Honestly I think its best. If we would tell everythin’ that we said and did here, it would be far safer here than at home, I can tell ye that.” And Legolas burst out laughing.

“Definitely.”

“Now once we’re back at camp, you should get that arm checked.” Gimli said pointing at the cut on Legolas’ arm. The blond shook his head.

“It’s only a cut, I hardly feel it.”

“Lad, it’s an excuse to meet all those nurses, never mind the cut. I’ve seen men purposely cut
themselves just to have an excuse to see a bonnie lass.” And Legolas grinned at him as Gimli rolled for both of them a cigarette. Taking it, Legolas inhaled deeply.

“Thank you, I think I will. Are you sure you’re not bruised yourself?”

“I might be.” Gimli winked and with that the two new friends watched the sun go down once again.

Éowyn sat on the couch reading her book. Heavenly smells floated towards her from the kitchen as Faramir was cooking a feast. He had promised to do so for weeks, and now finally he had the time to do so, much to Éowyn’s delight. As she happily listened to her fiancé humming in the kitchen, she heard the phone ring. Quickly she marked her page and hopped of the couch to reach the phone on time.

“Hello!”

“Hello Éowyn.”

“Aragorn! How lovely for you to call! Is everything going alright there?”

“It’s going fine, thank you. Is Faramir there, I need to speak to him.”

“Of course, hold on a sec.” And she put down the phone.

“Faramir honey?”

“Yes darling?”

“It’s Aragorn on the phone, he wants to speak to you.” There was a bustling sound in the kitchen and Faramir appeared, his apron marked with tomato sauce.

“God now? Would you mind stirring? It’s almost done.” He asked his eyes begging. As she handed him the phone she pressed a kiss to his cheek.

“Oh course love.” And with that she made her way into the kitchen. There was a marinated chicken in the oven and a pan of sauce on the heat and she quickly started stirring as she tried to listen to what was being said.

“Great to speak to you man, how are things? Will I finally hear what all that DNA was about, you aren’t trying to clone me are you, that would be a bad idea.” Faramir laughed into the phone, but soon he fell silent giving short aha and yeah answers. Deeming it hopeless, Éowyn focused on their dinner that was indeed almost ready. When the alarm went off, she took the chicken out of the oven and placed the sauce from the heat. Carefully she poured it onto the chicken. Armed with gloves she lifted the tray into their small dining room, onto the set table, next to a large salad.

“Honey, dinner’s ready.” When she got no response she walked into the living room. The phone call had already ended and Faramir was sitting on the couch, heads in his hair.

“Faramir, what’s wrong? What was that about? What did Aragorn say?” She fired rapidly, sitting down next to him in a few strides, draping an arm around him.

“It’s so strange, I don’t know whether to be happy or sad…” Faramir said softly.

“What darling?” Éowyn asked again and he turned to look at her.

“Aragorn told me…that I am an uncle…”
Tauriel had her phone clasped in her hand, disbelief written all over her face.

“Wait, let me get this straight. You're inviting us for dinner to tell us that Faramir has become an uncle? But that’s impossible... Boromir is…”

“Dead, I know, and I thought the same, but it seems life is full of surprises. Come tonight so we can explain everything.” Éowyn said.

“Of course I’ll come, you sure you don’t mind Kíli being there as well?”

“No I don’t mind, he’s practically part of the family anyway, so he might as well come.”

“Alright... how are you and Faramir coping?”

“We’re shocked of course, though I think I am taking it better than him. He can’t believe it. The fact that Boromir never told him hurts immensely and if the woman hadn’t come... well, never mind that for now, you’ll hear everything tonight.”

“I am sensing it’s quite a story. Do you know how Arwen is doing, is she still pissed at Aragorn?”

“Not sure, apparently they talked at length last night after we heard the news from him.”

“Well I hope that went well. I’ve got to go now, but I’ll see you soon. Can I bring anything?”

“Great. No nothing I can think of now.”

“You know what, I’ll raid Thranduil’s wine collection. He won’t miss them, and if he does I’ll tell him it was for a good cause.”

“Haha that would be wonderful, I think we all need something to drink. How is he?”

“Fine I think; he’s away for business.”

“I see, well thanks Tauriel.”

“No problem Éowyn, see you tonight.”

“Okay! Bye!”

Hanging up, Tauriel stared at her phone for a while. Of all the unexpected things she could have heard, this beat them all. Checking the time, she saw she still had several hours until she was expected at Éowyn’s and Faramir’s apartment. She thanked Valar for having already had her only class today this morning. At least she had time to do some work. Checking the time once more, she calculated Kíli would be on his break right now. She send him a text about the dinner plans, but when he asked for a further explanation, she called him. She wasn’t surprised to find he had a similar reaction as she had, one full of disbelief. They planned for him to pick her up later at the Mirkwood Estate before driving, with wine and Ereborian whiskey that Kíli said he’d bring, to their friend’s place.

Hanging up once more, Tauriel opened her medical book in front of her to the right page, and tried to concentrate on its content. After reading several pages, her eyes slid to one of the photos on her desk. She kept several, all in neat silver frames with a leaf motive. The first was one of her parents, taken not long before the accident. She had several of her friends. New photos now also included Kíli and even Fíli and Arild. Faramir had taken photos during the archery competition and he gave her one that contained her with Kíli in the background. Their bows were drawn, a look of concentration and determination on their faces as they aligned their arrows with the targets. Though she normally was quite photo shy, Tauriel enjoyed the photo immensely, seeing her clear cut but delicate profile, her intense eyes and some fiery strands of hair that had escaped her braid. She had thought about getting it reprinted in a large size to hang on a wall, though at Kíli’s because hanging it in her own room felt weird. But currently her eyes were looking at a different picture. It was one of Thranduil, Legolas, and herself. It had been taken a few years back. Thranduil had felt better that year after years of sadness. They’d gone on holiday to the coast, just the three of them. It had been a lovely time with great weather as evident by her burnt nose and an overload of freckles. On the photo they were at the beach with the sea as their background. She and Legolas had asked a passerby to take their photo. The man had been a lot of fun and pretended as if they were doing a complete photo-shoot, which
led to hysterics. She and Legolas stood in front, his arm around her shoulder, pulling her sideways into him. She had put her large straw hat on his head, and it made him look extremely ridiculous with his long blond hair. He’d thrown his head back in laughter. Behind them Thranduil, had lost part of his usual perfect composure and was smiling widely at the two teens goofing around in front of him. It was one of the few photos Tauriel had of him, where the smile reached his eyes. Looking at the happy photo, Tauriel felt a pang of sadness and nostalgia, wishing they could go back to the heavenly place. They hadn’t gone on holiday as a family since, and she realised she missed it. Trying to focus on her book, she hoped the men were doing fine. When Thranduil got back, she’d suggest to him to go there again once Legolas would be back too. She was sure Lemaril would have approved of the idea.

The hours passed quickly and before she knew it, she received a message from Kíli that he was on his way. Closing her book and throwing on some nicer clothes, she made her way down to the Mirkwood cellars. Growing up in Thranduil’s household, it had been his ultimate goal to make sure his children knew everything there was to know about wine, especially red. Despite not being allowed to drink legally until their 18th birthday, Tauriel and Legolas had grown accustomed to the taste of wine by the time they were twelve. Once they came closer to the legal age, Thranduil had allowed them to go on a drinking spree at home. It had been the only time both of them had been drunk, waking up the next morning with a blasting headache. Ever since then they knew their limit and were responsible drinkers when they went out. Tauriel was glad her first and only drunk experience had been in the safety of her own home, with Thranduil taking care of them, though he had gathered lots of blackmail material from it.

Walking through the cool stone cellar, she inspected the wines on the oaken racks. She ended up picking three bottles. They were rich in flavour but not too heavy. She knew Thranduil tended to choose them when he had to digest information after long business meetings. Thus it would be perfect for this evening. She carefully put them in her bag and walked back up. In the hallway she put on her ankle boots and scarf. She was going through the cloakroom to find her winter jacket when Kíli arrived and rang the doorbell. With a smile she opened up.

“Perfect timing love.” She said giving him a kiss. Kíli grinned.
“Don’t I always?” He teased and handed her his spare helmet. Taking it she locked the door behind her, zipping up her dark grey jacket. The weather had taken a turn and declared autumn officially over. The days after the competition had become chilly. She put her bag with the wine in the compartment behind her and she spotted Kíli’s whiskey.
“Do you have an unlimited supply of this stuff?” And Kíli laughed.
“Just like you have an unlimited supply of wine. I hope you took Thranduil’s favourite.”
“All wine is his favourite, but I can say he’s quite fond of these.”
“Great.” Kíli grinned and started the motor. Not long after they were speeding over the highway to one of the neighbouring cities, Minas Tirith, where Éowyn and Faramir lived.

45 minutes later they stopped at the marvellous white apartment building that Éowyn called home. Faramir had grown up in the steward residence, which was a grand building more in the outskirts of the city. Boromir as heir had lived there his whole life, but Faramir, whose relationship with their father had always been difficult, had jumped at the opportunity to move into the apartment that lay in the centre of the city, especially since he’d helped design the complex when still in university. When he and Éowyn started dating and he brought her there, she fell in love with the place, thus not minding moving in with him there, instead of in her native Rohan.

Parking his bike, Tauriel went ahead of Kíli to ring the buzzer. Within seconds Éowyn’s voice came
through the speaker.
“Great, you guys are here, you can come up.”
“Thanks.” Tauriel replied and she and Kili climbed the seven flights of stairs. The door was open when they arrived. Éowyn was waiting to welcome them, smiling. The two women engulfed each other in a hug, while Kili and Éowyn exchanged a kiss on each cheek.
“I am glad you made it, dinner is just ready.” They entered and Kili smiled.
“Great timing again.”

They greeted Arwen and Éomer and finally Faramir.
“By Valar, I never expected to have dinner here for such a special reason. Is it alright for me to congratulate you?” Tauriel asked and Faramir gave a smile.
“It’s all very strange I agree, but I think it’s alright for you to say it. I never expected I’d ever be called an uncle.”
“It’s a long story I am sure.” Kili said as he gave the other man a firm handshake. “I can’t wait hearing it over this delicious smelling dinner.” And they laughingly agreed.

As they sat down, helping themselves to some wine and food, Faramir told them the story he’d been uncovering since last night.
“It appears my brother was a married man when he died.” This statement already earned him several questioning stares and remarks. “A few weeks ago, Aragorn got a visit from a woman at the hospital late at night. She is a lady from Harad. Her city had been under attack last year and she came as a refugee to Osgiliath, where she met my brother. I don’t know much more detail apart from the fact that they fell in love over time. Thinking about it now, it finally explains his continuing eagerness to return there as fast as possible. She became pregnant not long after. She told Aragorn she had been scared at first and tried to hide it, but of course Boromir found out eventually. They married soon after. The baby, they named him Echtelion, after our grandfather, was born in June this year. I remember when he was back here for a while and he was extremely rested. I thought it was because of reports that the enemy was advancing…not that…If only I’d asked him…If only I’d known…” Faramir fell silent and Éowyn took his hand, giving it an encouraging squeeze before she took over.
“He went back there to spend time with his family. It was during this time that Osgiliath was under heavy attack and out of fear for their safety, Boromir send them to North Ithilien, which was another safe haven at that time. Not long after the hospital was bombed that killed him. While we were burying him, Nashwa, that’s her name, got news of her death. I can’t imagine how devastating that would have been to hear. Being so young, in the middle of a warzone, with an infant and hearing your husband has been killed so many miles away from you.” The whole table became silent and Tauriel felt tears in her eyes. Kili must have seen them because his hand found hers, their fingers entangling.
“I just wish I’d known, than perhaps we could have gotten her out of there sooner, then Boromir wouldn’t have been there when they attacked…he might have still lived…” Faramir stuttered softly.
“But we didn’t and shouldn’t blame ourselves for it. God knows why your brother didn’t tell us, but we can’t change the past.” Éowyn told him and the rest agreed with her.

“How did she get to Aragorn?” Arwen asked.
“She walked back, an incredibly foolish idea.” Faramir responded.
“And apparently the only option.” Éowyn retorted.
“Indeed, no one in their right mind would do it unless they had no choice. It’s a dangerous and treacherous road. She’s lucky to have made it back in one piece.” Faramir said.
“Anyway, she surprised and scared the hell out of Aragorn when she arrived. At first he didn’t believe her either, in denial, just like us, but seeing the child, he noticed a strong resemblance and agreed to do a DNA test. He didn’t tell us why specifically so we wouldn’t get our hopes up, before he knew for certain. He got the results several days ago and reached us last night. Apparently he’d tried to call before but the lines were dead.” Éowyn finished and everyone fell silent once more,
trying to digest all the information. Eating proven fruitless and thus they settled for some light dessert and more wine.

“Does your father know, Faramir?” Arwen asking breaking the silence and he let out a sigh. “Yes, I told him this afternoon.” “And? He must be happy.” “Happy? No. He’s accusing me of being a liar, deliberately reminding him of his favourites son’s death and tearing up his good reputation. No, father refused to believe it and is very far from happy. I wouldn’t be surprised if he is currently altering his will, if he hasn’t already done so.” He told them, which led to words shock and disapproval and Éowyn look grim. “He’s such a despicable man.” She said loudly. “Éowyn...” Faramir muttered, sounding as if they had, had this discussion far too many times already. “He’s still my father.” “And he’s still an asshole, and I can’t believe you keep defending him after everything he’s said and done to you.” “Let’s discuss this later.” Faramir offered and poured himself and Éomer some more of Thranduil’s wine while Kíli refilled his glass of whiskey. Éowyn looked displeased but let it slide, downing her own wine.

“What’s the plan now?” Kíli asked. “Aragorn has made sure Nashwa and the child will be on the first available flight to Minas Tirith. From there they will go through some tough immigration routine, Gondor can’t be careful enough of course. We will do everything we can to support them. Of course, with the DNA test confirming the child is related it shouldn’t be a problem getting him in, but for her it’s a different case. She’ll probably be allowed in, but it’s not sure how long she can stay. She’s from Harad, came to Osgiliath as a refugee and her Westron is very limited. Éowyn has managed to secure housing for her in Rohan, where she will get language classes. But the Gondor and Rohan governments want her to work as soon as possible. They are afraid that refugees will start creating problems. So if she doesn’t live up to their expectations, there’s the fear that she might get send back.” “That would be barbaric! She’s obviously very determined and intelligent.” Tauriel observed. “I don’t think many would have been able to make the long journey with a child and being smart enough to go to the right person immediately. I am quite curious to see what’s she’s like.” And she saw the others nod in agreement. “Perhaps you can persuade her to shoot with you.” Éowyn suggested dryly. “Or you’ve found yourself a new sparring opponent.” “Who knows, she might actually be normal and into drawing and reading, or perhaps she’ll be a willing shopping partner.” Arwen sighed as she stared at her two friends accusingly, causing everyone to laugh, lifting some of the thick tension. “I am just curious about the woman who seduced my brother, the man who claimed to be unseducable – if that’s even a word.” Faramir said, his voice lined with a harsh edge. Éomer put his hand on his friend and soon to be brother-in-law’s shoulders. “I am sure she’s a fine person. Your brother wasn’t an idiot and he was very good at reading people. I think it is more likely he seduced her than the other way around.” And Faramir shrugged his shoulders. “We’ll see.”
That night they lay together in her own bed for once in Mirkwood, but sleep was faraway. In silence they stared at her ceiling that she had painted to resemble the night sky with its many constellations. “I think, if we’d ever be in such a situation, I’d rather die with you than go through all that pain.” Tauriel said softly and Kíli shifted and turned to look at her in the darkness. His hand traced her naked form.

“Perhaps, but if you’d have the choice, wouldn’t you try to save me?”

“Of course.”

“Even if that meant giving your own life?”

“…Yes I would.”

“I would personally be incredibly angry if I sacrificed myself for you, only for you to then follow soon after.”

“What would you do, ignore me for all eternity?” And Kíli laughed.

“I would never be able to do that, but I’d probably be angry for a long time.”

“Hmmm I think I would be too, the other way around.”

“It’s terrible to think about love, I’d rather think about living my life with you like this.” He said and Tauriel softly pressed her lips against his.

“Yes I would too. But it’s not all tragic.”

“No?”

“A part of Boromir still lives on in this little boy who came out of a short but loving union. Isn’t that also a wonderful thing, especially looking at what the child has survived already.” Kíli thought about it for a few seconds. Then he gathered her into his arms.

“Yes, I suppose it is love.”

And with that they fell asleep.
Kíli threw on his leather jacket and quickly descended the stairs of his apartment building. He was late. He had agreed to meet Tauriel at her place half an hour ago. Getting his bike from the garage, his fingers flew over his phone, texting her an apology en reassuring her he’d be there soon. He felt his blood boil.

Gimli had called him and told him what had happened during his mission. Of course the news of the recapture of Pelargir had travelled through the whole land. It has been a great victory. But he’d had no idea Gimli would in some way have been involved. Of course he had sworn secrecy on most of the information. But Gimli had asked him to rely some news to Tauriel from Legolas, which Kíli had found perfectly understandable. Apparently Legolas was in the infirmary and wasn’t able to call Tauriel himself. However that wasn’t the reason he was livid. No it was something else Gimli had told him. About Thranduil, who, as far as Kíli could tell, had masked his dangerous and failed mission on Gundabad, by calling it a ‘business meeting.’ On the one hand Kíli could understand the Mirkwood ruler and his heir. They loved Tauriel and went out of their way to protect her, both physically as well as mentally. But they continued to do so even when she didn’t want to be left in the dark. She hated secrets when they involved danger to those she loved.

They always told each other everything, and there was no way he’d be able to hide this news from his love, but he honestly didn’t want to. He hated being a messenger of bad news. He hated having to see her heart break in front of his eyes, her beautiful green eyes wide of disbelief.

His bike roared to life beneath him. Quickly he tugged his helmet over his head and took off. He sped along, probably faster than he should have. Normally, when he reached the stage of feeling weightless on the road, all his worries lifted. Not today though. It almost seemed that the faster he went, the more desperately the worries tried to cling on to him, digging into his skin and his heart.

He arrived at the Mirkwood Estate out of breath, as if he’d just run several miles. He prayed to Mahal that she wouldn’t immediately see something was wrong. He wanted her to have a good afternoon. They’d planned a quiet evening together, some delicious food, wine, maybe a movie. They had been very occupied lately with university and work. With the Christmas season around the corner, orders for jewellery were streaming in at Erebor Company. Thorin had asked Kíli to help with the designing and making of some of the orders. While Kíli enjoyed the work, it often meant he worked over time, and that, combined with his shifts at Café Bree, meant his schedule clashed with Tauriel’s, thus they hadn’t seen each other since the surprising dinner at Éowyn and Faramir, which frustrated him. And that was probably why he hated giving this bad news even more. He just wanted to spend some well-deserved happy quality time with his girlfriend.
The door of the manor was open slightly and through it came the most delicious smell. He knocked loudly before letting himself in.
“Tauriel?” He called.
“Kíli! There you are. I am sorry love, just come in, I can’t leave the stove right now.”
“It’s fine!” He replied and slipped off his jacket. “How was your day?”
“Good, busy. I swear they are trying to squeeze in every possible assignment before the exams.”

He strode through the large hall of a living room and into the kitchen. There Tauriel stood, bent over the stove, stirring something in a pan. When he reached her, he wrapped his arms around her waist, pressing himself into her, and planting a kiss in her neck. She squealed in delight. It was one of her ticklish spots, especially when he softly rubbed her neck with his scrubby beard.

“Why hello.” She said cheerfully, and he mumbled a reply back while continuing to kiss her neck. She laughed more, trying to twist her way out of his grasp.

“I am hungry.” He stated.

“It’s almost done love.” Tauriel reassured him and Kíli grinned. He twisted her at her waist so her backside hit the counter. He placed his hand on either side of her, essentially trapping her. A few spilled drops of sauce covered the floor.

“Kíli…” Tauriel groaned softly, but Kíli could see excitement in her eyes.

“I am not that kind of hungry.” She raised an eyebrow, playing innocent.

“What kind of hungry do you mean?”

“This kind.” He said simply before giving her a ravenous kiss, to which she responded fully. His hands slid up and down her body as her long elegant fingers entangled themselves in his long dark brown hair. When they paused for breath, Tauriel grinned at him, her eyes sparkling.

“I think this might need to simmer a bit longer.” She said and turned the heat low.

Kíli’s mind didn’t allow for a more sophisticated response than giving a grunt in approval, before he picked her up and carried her to the couch, the bedroom was too far away. He wanted to make love to her right now. His body and mind needed her. He wanted to satisfy her, make her deliriously happy, and enjoy their time while they could. He was able to push away the bad news and his furious mood aside right now. That would have to come later, right now all he wanted was Tauriel, and only Tauriel.

Later, after they had finished their dinner, they sat together on the couch, watching the movie The Silmarillion, Tauriel’s favourite. They sat snuggled up together. Kíli tried his best to follow along, but his mind had drifted elsewhere. He felt the pressure to tell her about Thranduil, it never was the right moment. How did one say that casually? ‘Oh hey by the way Tauriel, Thranduil has lied to you.’ No, he was in a shit situation and for the first time ever, he wanted to go home as fast as possible rather than enjoy every single second he could spend with his love.

Tauriel noticed his tensed body and looked up at him.

“What’s wrong? You’ve been quiet all evening. Is something bothering you?”

He looked into her green sparkling eyes. He could not lie to those eyes, yet neither could he bring them pain. But she would know if he lied, and that wouldn’t make him any better than Thranduil. So he sat up straight and cleared his throat.

“Actually, everything is not okay.” He sighed. Tauriel responded immediately. She shot up straight, tensing, her eyes wide and she reminded Kíli of a deer in the forest that had sensed danger.

“What is it?” She asked, trying to level her voice.

“I don’t know how to say it…” Kíli started.

“Just say it.” She snapped. Kíli sighed again and rubbed his hand against his face before dragging it back through his brown tangles.

“It’s about Thranduil.”
“Oh…” And Tauriel relaxed back against the couch. “What’s up with him? He’s coming back this evening. I hope the meetings went well, well they better have, he has hardly communicated with me. I mean he’s already bad at communicating in general, so when I mean he’s been bad, it’s actually been rather dreadful. Which actually surprised me because he has become rather good…”

“He wasn’t at meetings!” Kíli almost shouted. Tauriel raised an eyebrow at him.

“Excuse me?”

“There was never any meeting. He lied to you.”

“He lied to me?” she repeated and it seemed to take a few seconds to register, but when it did she narrowed her eyes at him. “And how do you know this?”

“Gimli told me before I came here, it’s why I was late.”

“Gimli told you…? Oh Valar! Where was he? What did he do? Is he still alive?” Tauriel’s voice seemed to rise with every word and she grabbed on to his shirt.

“Thranduil led the forces in an attack on Gundabad. It was supposed to be a surprise attack but it failed. They suffered major losses. Thranduil thankfully is not among those.”

Tauriel released him from her grasp and distanced herself on the couch. She pulled her knees to chest and pulled her fingers through her hair. Kíli so desperately wanted to gather her in his arms, protect her, sooth her. But he knew she needed her distance right now. And so he stayed silent, in the hopes it would help her collect her thoughts. And so they sat in silence, with her shallow breathing filling the air. Perhaps it was only minutes, but to Kíli it felt like hours, days going passed, perhaps even years before she finally broke it.

“Tell me everything.” She didn’t look at him, but stared in front of her to the lit fireplace, her chin resting on her knees.

And so Kíli told her everything Gimli had told him. About Legolas’ presence during the secret mission in Pelargir and how they found out about Thranduil’s mission. When he was done he ached to touch her but he didn’t dare. She just nodded and fell back in silence. Thankfully it didn’t last too long this time.

“Do you think Elrond knew about Thranduil?”

“Probably…”

“And Arwen?”

“I doubt that. Elrond wouldn’t want Arwen to worry more than she is doing currently. Legolas didn’t even know. Not many people will have known, being a secret mission and all.”

“A secret mission with a rat…no two rats, you said Angamaitë knew about Gimli and Legolas’ mission too?”

“Yeah, I guess that makes two.”

“Fools.” And then there is was, a slight tremor in her bottom lip, quivering slightly. But that tiny incontrollable movement was all Kíli needed. Within the blink of an eye he had her in arms as she burst into tears. And for the first time in their time together, Kíli had no idea how to make those tears go away.

Thranduil sighed heavily as his manor came into view. He and his driver had sat in silence since their departure from the airport and Thranduil had enjoyed it. He needed silence to collect his thoughts. He had a lot to do. The first thing he’d do when he arrived home, was to call Elrond. They would discuss extra protectionist measures. Elrond would suggest allowing the master Lothlórien archers to join the forces, as his father-in-law had suggested as well. But Thranduil would refuse the proposal as he had done for years. He hadn’t been able to stop Legolas from fighting, but he would do anything – anything to make sure Tauriel didn’t have to experience battle, ever. Then he would have to organise funerals, compensation and therapy sessions, as well as make sure all the medical expenses would be paid. He thanked Valar he had done the majority of those things at their camp. The majority of the soldiers were home, the rest reaching home tonight or tomorrow.
He felt angry, frustrated and guilty. Their plan had been perfect, absolutely perfect. There was a traitor among them. There had to be. Everything had been done in such secrecy. There was no other way. Thranduil hoped the traitor had found his grave in the battle a few days ago, but he knew that was wistful hoping. Of course the rat wasn’t dead, but he would personally pull the trigger if he found out who it was.

He had heard of the death of Angamaitë, knowing exactly what had happened from Legolas. It was crucial for him to know everything so he could plan his next move.

The manor was dark, Thranduil saw in relief. Tauriel must have gone to bed. He still sported a nasty bruise on the side of his face and a slight limp that he hoped would be gone tomorrow morning after a good nights sleep. He thanked Feren, his driver and entered his home. Putting his bag down, he hung up his coat. Silently he went into the living room on his way to the kitchen. There was something strange in the corner of his eye and he twirled around to face it, his body tense. As he focused he was about to thank Valar that it wasn’t dangerous when he realised this was possibly far worse.

A small table light was on, shining light onto part of the couch above which the portrait of Lemaril hung. Underneath a pair of grass green eyes were glaring daggers at him.

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“Tauriel…” He whispered her name.
“Good evening.” She replied but there was no warmth in her voice and a chill ran up his spine.

He pulled his face into a smile but even without seeing it he knew it looked incredibly fake, which was a pity, he usually was quite good at hiding his emotions under the mask of a smile.
“How was your week? Any new projects at school?” He was met with silence. Small talk wasn’t his forte. He cleared his throat.
“Well I am glad to see the house is still intact.” Her eye gave a smallest twitch. Wrong move, Thranduil cursed himself.
“Yes, thank god the house is, you’re not.” She said, her voice icy.

Thranduil sighed.
“Tauriel…”
“No! You lied to me! A business meeting? Business meeting!” She spat the words out as if they tasted bitter in her mouth. “Business…What am I? A six-year-old child that isn’t allowed to know why dad away? You, of all people know how much I hate secrets… And still you purposely deceived me. Legolas didn’t tell me where he was going but at least he didn’t lie to me!”
“It was for your own good! I didn’t want you to worry. It appears I’ve told too many people anyway.”
“What? So you think I can’t keep a secret? You think I’d blab?”
“That’s not what I meant!”
“Then what? Because you are under the impression I am some fucking damsel in distress?”
“You’re not strong enough!”
“You bloody well raised me! I know danger. I know what war means!”
“No you don’t! You never will either! You Silvans can’t deal with the real meaning of danger and death!”
“Excuse me? What? This is all because I am Silvan? What the bloody hell? I didn’t get a choice where I was born, but that doesn’t make me a weakling!”
“Well you are! And always will be! I do not need to justify my actions. I didn’t think, no, I know you’re not capable of handling the situation. Done!”
“Then I am done here too! And with that Tauriel twirled around and stormed away.
“Where are you going?” Thranduil shouted after her.
“Leaving!” She shouted back and around away. But right before she went out the door she turned back once more. “Next time I hope the rat does a better job. It failed this time.”

She didn’t wait to hear Thranduil’s furious reply back.

Kíli had been waiting for her the whole night. He knew her confrontation wouldn’t end well, and so he wasn’t surprised to hear his doorbell ring a bit past midnight. There by the door Tauriel stood, tears of anger and sadness dried on her cheeks. She had a large bag with her, strapped over her shoulder.

“Can I stay here?” she almost whispered the question. Kíli didn’t even hesitate to wrap his arms around her, and kissed her brow.

“As long as you like love.”

Éowyn moved her hand from her face. It had fallen asleep as she tried to support her head against the railing on the arrivals gate at the airport. They had stood there for almost two hours after sitting at the café behind them for another three. She was tired and hungry and tried desperately not to lash out at Faramir because of it. It was hardly his fault Nashwa’s plane had been delayed for so long. Neither was it his fault that she’d been held up and questioned by security. Éowyn was willing to bet anything Nashwa had the right forms, she, Faramir, and Aragorn had made sure of it and checked constantly. Now some son of a bitch had singled out Nashwa and her baby son Echtelion to pick on. The guard better count his blessings that he was on the other side of the gate where she couldn’t reach him, and she was decent enough not to cross the barrier… yet. Her blood pressure was rising by the second. She could practically hear the baby cry in discomfort as Nashwa tried to calm him down, while trying to answer everything the guard fired at her in her broken common tongue.

Her eyes travelled to the clock above her. She’d tried to stop checking it, but the temptation was too great. She sighed loudly in frustration. Five and a half hours! She was going to strangle that idiot. She felt a hand on her shoulder and looked up into Faramir’s blue green eyes. He looked amused. The bastard.

“Patience has never been your strong suit, has it?”
“I can be patient, I have been patient… but now I can’t, not anymore, and not like this.”
“It won’t be long I’m sure. They are running out of questions by now.”
“You said the same thing an hour ago.”
“I can’t think of anymore questions now.”
“It’s the child I am most worried about, he’s been crying for half an hour.”
“It will all be fine. Just a patient a little longer.”
“If you ask me, I’ll try my best.” She said sighing. Faramir’s hand found hers and lifted it to his lips to kiss.
“It’ll be okay love.”
“I hope so.”

Several more minutes passed and Éowyn couldn’t help but dramatically slump over the railing.
“Oh dear Béma! I am done! I’ll be back soon. It’s time to get uncle’s sword. I can’t believe you didn’t allow me to bring it in the first place.”
“I highly doubt the security would appreciate you stomping in here with a family heirloom. Besides you wouldn’t want Théoden’s reputation to suffer.” Éowyn raised an eyebrow at him.
“In what way exactly?”
“News of the day! Niece of Rohirrim Institute speared several security guards with her family’s heirloom sword.”
“You forgot to mention it was an accident…” Éowyn grumbled and Faramir laughed, which made her laugh too. Right then the guard let Nashwa pass.
“Oh Béma! Finally!” She exclaimed.

It wasn’t long before Nashwa came into the arrival hall, pushing a trolley with luggage in front of her. Baby Echtelion was strapped to her chest. He had stopped crying.

The three young adults looked at each other in silence. Through letters and phone calls they had been in contact with Nashwa, and Éowyn had felt like she got to know the young woman. But now standing across from her, she suddenly felt an awkward feeling and she wasn’t quite very what to say. What could possibly appropriate?

“Welcome to Gondor Nashwa.” Faramir finally said in his soothing voice and Éowyn mentally slapped herself. That was rather appropriate. Nashwa’s emerald green eyes were wide and tense at first. But then they seemed to relax and she gave them a small shy smile.

“Thank you.” She said and suddenly a single tear rolled down her tanned cheek. “Thank you for everything, for saving me.” Éowyn didn’t know how she could reach Nashwa fast enough, and to the surprise of the Haradrim woman, she was engulfed in a hug. This led to even more tears being shed.

“Don’t worry about a thing! We will take care of you and protect you. You are part of our family now.” Éowyn reassured the young mother.

Faramir smiled as he took over Nashwa’s luggage and looked on happily as Éowyn started to coo over the baby boy. It hurt him deeply that his brother was not there to witness this scene. It had hurt even more that he had kept it secret from him. But perhaps the gods had willed it this way. The only thing Faramir could say that this moment had given him back the feeling of true happiness and he knew Boromir’s spirit was there to witness it.
Yule Eve

Chapter Notes

Sorry everyone for the very long wait! My plan was to have this chapter in by Christmas...that obviously failed... but ideas finally started to flow on to paper, and I even had to split the chapter, perhaps will have to do it again... so good news is, I have about 4 chapters coming together really quickly. So hope to update you with those soon as well! Enjoy! And please comment and subscribe! I always love to hear what everyone thinks! Thanks!

-Yule Eve-

“A little more to the left!”
“Like this love?”
“No, now you’re too far, go back a little. A little!”
Kíli carefully moved his hand to the left until Tauriel made a satisfied sound.
“Yes! Like that!”

Kíli rolled his eyes as he hung the round silver Christmas ball on the tree.
“You could’ve just said to put it on the branch next to it, would’ve been easier.”
“Yes, but a lot less fun.” Tauriel said smiling and took a step back to admire their Christmas tree. The tree was not gigantic like the ones she was used to. Every year several huge, thick trees taken from the Mirkwood Forest would grace the halls of the Estate in their shining glory.

The tree in Kíli’s apartment was smaller, it’s branches sparser and wider apart, but Tauriel loved it, and poured all her energy into decorating it fully. Kíli was slightly afraid that anything more, and the poor tree would collapse under the weight of the decorations. It had a combination of stylish shining silver ornaments and clumsy mismatching things he had managed to gather. Yet, it blended together beautifully. Kíli had never been one to decorate the tree. As a child he had tried, much to his mother’s dismay, who had spent most of the time cleaning up the broken decorations. It did not take long before she told her sons that it was mummy’s job to decorate the tree and they were allowed to admire it with their eyes, not hands. And so the tradition was formed that Dís would decorate the tree during the day and surprise her family with the beautiful tree, covered with red and gold. Strings of crystals would swirl around its branches. Fíli and Kíli contributed by making something beautiful to hang in it. Knowing Tauriel was staying with Kíli, Dís gifted a box of old decorations that now adorned the glittering tree.

Tauriel clasped her hands together.
“It’s beautiful!” She breathed. Kíli watched her lovingly. She looked so happy, yet he could see the hint of sadness in the depths of her eyes. He wrapped his arms around her, placing a kiss on her temple.
“It is love, and look,” he said, pointing outside, “It has started to snow again.” Bright, delicate snowflakes glided down from the sky. Tauriel always said if you were quiet enough, you could hear the falling snow, and so they both held their breaths as they watched the falling snow. Kíli thought he might hear what Tauriel was talking about, but it could also have been the beating of her heart. Blissful minutes passed until Tauriel shifted.
“We should probably get going if we want to get to your mother’s on time for dinner.” Kíli groaned softly.
“I wouldn’t mind staying here with you.” He moaned and Tauriel laughed.
“I promised your mother, besides, I am helping her preparing Christmas dinner for tomorrow.”
“We call it Yule, and you promised her, not me. I swear, my mother sees you more often than I do!”
“Oh, you are so dramatic, that’s not true. And your mother is a lovely woman. You should be happy we get along so well. Besides, she’s been very helpful with studying for my exams. And we actually call it Feast of the North Star, but that’s a bit of a mouthful and Christmas just rolls off your tongue.”
“Fine, Christmas just to compromise. And yeah, yeah, she’s lovely alright. And I am glad you get along so well, she’d make it hell if it were not so. But still, can’t I be allowed to be a little jealous?”
“Maybe a little bit.”
“Good.” Kíli said and gave her a passionate kiss, entangling his hands through her hair. She returned the kiss with equal fervour. But before she could kiss him further Kíli pulled away, a wicked grin on his face. He moved away to get their coats. Tauriel gave him an evil glare. He shrugged his shoulders while winking.
“Like you said, we can’t be late.”
“You orc!” Tauriel cursed at him, following him outside. The snow thankfully wasn’t too dense, so riding the motorcycle wouldn’t be too much of a problem. Kíli wanted to admire his girlfriend as she flung her long leg over the backseat, putting her helmet on her head, her flaming hair falling down her back. He really wanted to stay at home with her, curled up on the couch with a glass of whisky. Against his will, he took his own seat, and soon they were cruising along the highway towards the Erebor estate, the Misty Mountains in the background.

Not long after their arrival Kíli knew he had made a major mistake in coming here, chastising him for not listening to himself in the first place. Fíli and Arild weren’t there. They had, very wisely indeed, decided to spend this night together, before the Yule celebrations tomorrow that would probably last, as was Ereborian tradition till New Years Eve. Visitors would come and go, with plenty of people staying over. Thorin would always throw a New Years Eve party. This year however, they would all migrate to the Dale Palace, and attend the major Bard Bowman’s Ball that Tauriel had always attended. So Kíli waved goodbye his dream of spending the cold winter nights cuddled up with his love, and fell into the large leather couch by the fire in the sitting room. It was the cosiest room of all the cozy rooms in the house. It hosted the Christmas tree and, most importantly, it had its own liquor cabinet. He grumbled to himself as he poured a large glass of whisky, and his uncle gave an amusing chuckle, looking up for his book.
“I was surprised you had come.” He said, and Kíli gave him his best Durin glare, before sighing in defeat.
“Mum has Tauriel wrapped around her finger. I wish they didn’t like each other so much. With Tauriel having nothing to do at Mirkwood, she’s pouring all her energy in helping with Yule here. I know I should be happy that she is so comfortable here, but sometimes it drives me crazy!” Thorin gave him a sympathetic look. Upon arrival, Dís had whisked Tauriel away to the kitchen where they were preparing tonight’s dinner and preparing for tomorrow’s huge feast. Sounds of laughter would dance into the sitting room, leaving Kíli to sulk.
“You could go help them?” Kíli scoffed.
“You know mum and I can’t be in the kitchen together.” And Thorin gave an agreeing nod, thinking back to all the times mother and son had tried, and failed. It either ended in a huge, heated and loud argument or burnt food, or in worse case scenario both. He shivered slightly and then looked gleefully at his nephew and Kíli groaned, already knowing what was coming.
“I still remember….”
“Please don’t start!”
“The taste of that horrid pie filled with…”
“How was I supposed to know how make that…”
“Raw turkey and chilli powder…”
“I’d never even been near a stove!”
“Burnt completely on the bottom…”
“You didn’t have to eat it.”
“I only had one bite. Still surprised I’m even alive.”
“Why do you bring it up every single year?”
“Because I will never forget it.”
“I was 14!”
“And I was still too young to die then.”
Kíli groaned and gulped down his whiskey earning him a rather stern from his uncle.
“You’re supposed to enjoy that with every sip…”
“Then can we please talk about whiskey then my failed attempt at making a Yule pie?”
“Fine. I am still disappointed I won’t see you for New Years.” Kíli signed as he refilled his glass, now with the intent of drinking it properly.
“I know Uncle. But that’s what happens I guess. Tauriel really wants to go to Bard’s party. She and her friends go there every year. I am actually quite excited to how it’s going to be. But don’t worry, we’ll come next year.”
“You’re quite sure of that lad. Think you’ll last the year.”
“It’s not easy… Things had gone really fast with Tauriel and I… but it just feels right, so natural. I honestly can’t imagine my life without her anymore.”
He looked at Thorin to see his reaction. His Uncle seemed deep in thought.
“I will never deny I had my doubts very much Kíli. You know the… problems… I have with Thranduil. I didn’t think you and Tauriel would last as long as you have. I never wished for you to take a fancy in each other, let alone fall in love. I’d only be a fool if I’d try to stop you. I just hope that you’re convinced you made a right choice here.”
“I think I have uncle.”
“Hmmmm time will tell. Don’t be to hasty lad, take your time to get to know each other. If it’s all right and true, then you will have your lives together. I will be honest, my doubts haven’t faded. But I like Tauriel and hope for both of you fate will be kind.” Kíli smiled at him, his uncle, his father-figure, the man who raised him as well as he could.
“Thank you uncle. I hope so too.” Thorin grunted a content noise. Then his eyebrows furrowed back together.
“Has she spoken to him yet?” Kíli could feel the anger in his voice at the mention of Thranduil. Clearly Tauriel’s fight hadn’t even left his uncle unaffected, a feeling of protection coming from his tone. Tauriel was becoming part of his family, and anyone who hurt his family would be damned. Kíli shook his head.
“No she hasn’t. I think she’s afraid he’ll be there at the New Years celebration.”
“Not a great place of confrontation.” And Kíli almost laughed.
“You love drama, you’d think it’d be the greatest place of confrontation.” Even Thorin cracked a smile.
“I am maturing lad. At my age parties should remain parties. Don’t want any fighting at my parties anymore.”
“Oin and Nori got into a fist fight last time.”
“Too much ale for the both of them. Besides, Oin only had a bruised eye, Nori a sprained wrist, nothing too serious.”
“You’re becoming a hypocrite.”
“Aye of course.” And Thorin winked and Kíli laughed.
“Starting to sound like Gandalf.”
“Ah mister Gandalf de Grey…” Thorin mused.
“Is he coming this year?”
“No, he declined again. Still busy apparently. Working on something in the West, close to Isengard if
I remember correctly.”
“I am sure he’ll come next time.” Kili said, almost surprised to hear the slight sad tone in Thorin’s voice.
“Aye, we think that every year.” Thorin took a strong sip of whiskey, swirling around the amber liquid in his glass.

They sat in silence for a while. The radio was playing the famous Christmas tunes as the fire-place cracked with flames. From the kitchen they heard rounds of laughter and the sound of knives and pans working through the piles of vegetables and meat. Kili thought back to his own apartment, longing for his couch and Tauriel next to him. But he also realized how much he enjoyed spending time with his family. Ever since he finished university, started to work at Café Bree and met Tauriel, he had been so busy, that he hardly had time to see his family. He and Fili rarely had time to catch up, only seeing each other on special occasions, and the same counted for his mother and uncle. Tauriel had seen his mother more often in the last few weeks than he had. He remembered Fili telling him the day he’d first gone to Lothlórien Academy that his mum missed him. That had been months ago. He really had to work on that. He grinned to himself. Making New Years resolutions already. And with that he also was happy he came tonight. As his uncle just said, if Mahal willed it, Tauriel and him would spend their lives together. Enough lazy days on the couch together would be in store. But his family also had the right to see him and spend time with him. Especially meeting Tauriel and seeing the difficulties she had of losing both her parents at a young age, not having blood relatives left, and a strained relationship with her adoptive family, made him realise how lucky he was with the family and friendships he had. He would have to work a bit harder for them too.

“Have you finished your gift?” His uncle’s deep voice came from seemingly nowhere ripping Kili from his thoughts. He nodded.
“Just have to wrap it.”
“Then I suggest you do it now when they’re still busy. Will be hard to sneak away later. I’ll come with you.” And Kili laughed.
“You’ll just criticise!”
“You’re a Durin. Can’t give away jewellery that isn’t the best of the best. I’ve got a business reputation to uphold lad.”
“Haha fair enough! Come on!” Laughing the two men made their way to the far wing of the Estate. It was build as an addition to the house, and served as their small make-shift workplace. Although extremely downscaled from what they were used to at the company workplace, this space had everything they might need. Kili had brought the necklace he was working on for Tauriel to the Estate a few days ago to make some final quick adjustments. He hoped she would love it.

He presented it to his uncle who immediately began inspecting the jewel carefully.

It was a rather simple design. The star cut diamond was wrapped and held in place by a silver thorn branch that circled it. The pendant was carried by a fine silver chain, that had a shine of its own. It was clean cut and had simple lines but the branch still held a flow and soft design to it. It was completely how he saw Tauriel. She was a brilliant star on both the in and outside. But she was also strong and sometimes harsh. She was a girl who loved the forest and wilderness. So he chose the stem of the rose to wrap around the star, for it represented beauty as well as strength. His uncle twirled it around in his hand, turning it to expose every angle. Then he handed it back to Kili.
“Thank you uncle.”
“I still hope you will come back to the company Kili. You have great skill, and I think you and your brother would make a great team.” Kili almost sighed as the old discussion was brought up again.
“I don’t know uncle. I loved making this and designing it, but I don’t know if I want to do that my whole life. I didn’t even study for it.” Thorin huffed.
“I never understood why you decided to do Politics in the first place.” Kíli was about to protest but fell silent when Thorin put a hand on his shoulder. “But I don’t want to discuss this further. I will support you in whatever you choose, just know that you are always welcome if you want to come back.” Kíli felt a great sense of relieve go through him. He looked his uncle in the eye, and slight bend his head in both respect and gratitude.

“Thank you uncle.” Thorin smiled.

“Now c’mon. Let’s get this wrapped and done before those women come calling. I hope dinner’s ready soon, I’m starving!” Kíli laughed, his own stomach also starting to rumble at the thought of food.

He carefully placed the necklace in a black box with velvet lining and wrapped the box in the navy blue colours of the Erebor Company complete with silver bow. In silver ink he carefully wrote Tauriel’s name, in the best calligraphy and steady hand as possible. Looking at it he was quite pleased, though reminded that calligraphy had never been his strong suite, but at least it was legible and that was all that mattered.

They went back to the living room. Thorin was about to pour another glass of whiskey when Tauriel popped her head in to tell them dinner was ready. The Durin’s didn’t need to hear that twice and were at the table before anyone could say ‘Tom Bombadil’, to great amusement of Dís and Tauriel. Tonight’s dinner itself was not very elaborate or fancy, but a nice hearty meal that everyone enjoyed. All their energy was put into the feast for tomorrow evening when the four of them would be joined by: Fíli and Arild, Balin and Dwálin, Oín and Gloin with his wife. Dwálin usually would have been there now as well, but he had been called away rather suddenly for business, much to Dís chagrin. Between Yule night and New Years, the rest of the Company would come to visit the Erebor Estate, before launching into full party move on the last day of the year.

After dinner and cleaning up, Dís and Tauriel moved back to the kitchen to put finish the last few cakes and meals that they could. Dís always wanted to be able to relax and enjoy the Yule celebration fully and not spend that day in the kitchen as well. She was very happy Tauriel was there to help. Usually her boys would help and last year Arild, who was a brilliant cook and worked in a restaurant, was a gift sent from heaven. But Thranduil hadn’t neglected teaching his children how to cook as well, as she and Tauriel worked well together in the Estate’s fine and large kitchen. After another two hours, they both felt tired and the huge fridge was completely overloaded.

“I think we are done here dear. Thank you so much! You’ve been a tremendous help for me today! Lets go make some coffee and give them a slice of cake. My favourite movie is coming on and I don’t want to miss it.” Dís said patting Tauriel’s hand lovingly. Tauriel smiled back with a wide grin.

“No problem at all! I’m very glad I go help! Haven’t made anything this big for a long time. Usually we celebrate the Feast at Rivendell so we don’t have to prepare anything at all. But this feels very nice! I am dying for a coffee though.” Dís grinned and turned on the coffee machine. Then she quickly disappeared to ask the men if they also fancied the hot drink. Tauriel could hear their agreement for her and took out the extra small cake they had bake in the afternoon cutting off four healthy slicing. Dís returned and smiled at the slices as she made the coffee.

“Good, good. You can do with two slices love.” And Tauriel laughed.

“You’d be surprised how much I usually eat. It’s actually hard for me to gain much weight. I guess I am blessed with a fast metabolism.” And Dís laughed.

“Well blessed you are then. But be careful if you want to keep that lovely figure, the older you get the harder it becomes. Children don’t help either, let me tell you that.” And she gave her future daughter-in-law a sly look. Tauriel slightly blushed.

“I don’t have any plans for children.” She said and heard Dís gasp. She looked at her shocked face. “Oh, no!” she started to realise what she’d said. “I mean I do want children, just not yet. I don’t have plans for now.” And she could see Dís relax.

“Oh thank goodness. No of course don’t have them now dear, of course not. They are a huge
responsibility that you have to take very seriously. But I do want grandchildren…from both my boys.” Dís said and winked at her. Tauriel laughed.

“You are very excited with that prospect.”

“Yes of course. I think every mother is once you reach my age and your own children have left the nest. I think being a grandparent is best of both worlds. You get to play with the little ones and enjoy their company, but also give them back at the end of the day, it’s brilliant.”

“Gosh, now I am even more excited…” Tauriel muttered, earning her another laugh from Dís.

“Come on dear, no more talk of children. Wouldn’t want my dear brother to get a heart attack. Now let me warn you, this movie of mine it very romantic, full of drama. I don’t know if that’s your thing, but I always make the boys watch it every year. Against their will obviously.” And they walked towards the living room, armed with the coffee and cake.

“You are quite evil.” Tauriel teased and Dís almost seemed to straighten her back in pride.

“Well of course, I was raised the youngest with two brothers and I only had boys, I had to fight for all the romantic movies that I wanted to watch. They finally accepted they couldn’t take this night away for me. And besides, being evil runs in the family.”

“Sure Dwalin is happy to miss it.”

“Yeah the bastard’s lucky this year. Still think he did it on purpose.”

“I am sure it wasn’t. He’d gladly watch all those sappy stories with you. Actually Kíli and I are rather convinced he’s a hopeless romantic.” And Dís laughed as they entered the living room.

“Oh he is indeed! Cries every single time. He thinks I don’t see it.”

Kíli turned his head as they came in.

“Who cries every time?”

“Dwalin when watching The Tale of Tinúviel.” His mother said and gave him his cup of coffee. He nodded his head in thanks. Thorin groaned.

“Durin’s Beard! Is that movie still on? Do they have to play it every single year?” His sister shushed him with his coffee, in which he promptly dumped his whiskey. Dís put her hand on her wide hips, waving a mean finger.

“Thorin Durin, I don’t want to see your drunk ass tomorrow so that’s your last whiskey. Shame you have to waste it in coffee.” Her brother groaned again, but everyone knew he’d obey. His sister could have a frightening temper.

As Dís started to flip through the channels to find the movie, Tauriel curled up on the couch next to Kíli, who had dug into his slice of chocolate cake. He put his arm around her, pulling her even closer.

The four of them enjoyed their coffee and cake as The Tale of Tinúviel began, sharing the story of two star-crossed lovers. Tauriel knew the movie. It was one of Arwen’s favourites and she was happily surprised to know it was Dís’ favourite as well. How happy Arwen would be to hear it. Tauriel liked it as well. It was different from the movies she used to watch with Legolas and Kíli preferred action movies over anything romantic. But here, snuggled up together, in good company, he too could enjoy it. Perhaps even more than he ever had before, with his own gorgeous maiden beside him. Tauriel’s head was on his shoulder, as his fingers stroked her flaming tresses. His other hand was intertwined with her long slim fingers. He pressed a kiss to her temple.

“I am glad we came here.” He whispered, trying not to attract attention. She shifted slightly, snuggling even more against him.

“Me too love, I really enjoyed it. I can’t wait for tomorrow!” Kíli softly laughed.

“You know you don’t get your presents until the morning after.” And Tauriel laughed back. It was different then how she celebrated it usually. At home they would also give presents tomorrow morning and then finish the celebrations with a feast. But the Durin’s apparently loved to drag out every celebration and had a day full of food on Yule itself with a feast and did presents and more food the day after. She started to regret slightly what she had said to Dís earlier. She was pretty sure these next few days, would help her gain a significant amount of weight.
“Yes I know that love. Should I be very excited?”
“Hmmmm maybe. Should I be?”
“Of course! You are always excited for presents anyway.” And Kili laughed, louder this time, earning him a glare from his mother. On a quieter tone he answered.
“That’s very true. But recently I am not as excited anymore.”
“Oh no? And why is that?” Tauriel asked, but she already knew what is cheesy answer would be. She didn’t mind hearing it though.
“I already have my greatest gift here love.”
“Your mother?” Tauriel teased earning her a poke first and then a kiss from Kili. He ignored her teasing but simply whispered in her ear.
“Amrâlimê…”

And with that they snuggled up and watched the beautiful movie, pretending not to see Thorin wipe away a single tear...
Yule Dinner

Chapter Notes

Finally I have been able to update this story! I am very sorry to all my readers for taking such a long time, life and inspiration got in the way of writing. I have guidelines for the next 4 chapters written down, but I can’t say when I will be able to upload. But do stick around and review. All those comments you have given me have motivated and inspired me to continue writing, so thank you all very much. Now I hope you will enjoy this (extra long) chapter! Best - Melanie

They awoke late in the morning and heard noises coming from downstairs. Apparently Dís was already awake and making breakfast. Kíli went off to take a shower in their on-suite bathroom. Only Dís had lived in the Erebor Estate. Whenever she stayed over at her brother’s place she would use her old room, even though there were enough rooms in the large house that were perhaps even nicer than the one she used. But Durin’s were creatures of habit. Even Fíli and Kíli, who stayed in guest rooms, had used the same ones for the past 10 years, when they wanted their own rooms, instead of bunking together in one. Tauriel had to admit that the rooms were lovely, all rather spacious and nicely decorated, and almost all had their own adjoining bathroom, which was a huge bonus. Thorin had mentioned that his parents and grandparents had done a lot of renovation to the estate. Especially his mother had mainly been in charge of the décor, which was probably one of the best things to ever happen to the estate. Fís Durin had had an impeccable taste for anything stylish.

Tauriel had showered the night before to make sure her hair would be dry in the morning and got dressed and styled her hair. Then she listened for the shower. She could hear Kíli softly sing and smiled to herself. It was one of the most surprising quirks she had found out about him. She had never expected him to be a shower singer. But as she got to know him more, she discovered that under all the tough façade, was a loving and caring man, who also happened to be a cheesy romantic. So singing in the shower definitely fit him well. She gathered the presents that she had bought for everyone. It had been a hard task. Of course she was starting to get to know everyone, some better than others. But she didn’t consider herself very good at gift giving. She always found it hard to give something that was personal and also wanted by the receiver. Sure she was good with practical and easy gifts, a bottle of wine or nice perfume were never wrong but they weren’t personal.

Fíli and Arild’s gifts had been the easiest. For Fíli she had bought two typical Mirkwood daggers to add to his collection. He had often expressed his love for sword fighting but he enjoyed blade throwing perhaps even more. His interest also lay with the history and design of weapons. Leading to him gaining a huge collection of all different types and sizes. After every holiday he went on, he brought back a knife, and marvelled at its uniqueness compared to those in his collection. Arild wasn’t a fan of knives and daggers at all, but had accepted it as part of the package deal that came when dating Fíli. However, when she moved in, the daggers were given their own private room. She didn’t want any sharp objects in the bedroom or really anywhere apart from the kitchen. Tauriel had seen his collection, and noted the absence of Mirkwood daggers. So she had gone into the heart of the town of Mirkwood that lay on the edge of the forest, completely opposite the estate where she grew up. It was an isolated town. Not many people from Dale or surroundings had gone there, which was surprising because Dale and Esgaroth had strong trade ties with the Mirkwood Estate and thus automatically also with the town of the same name.
Tauriel’s parents had both come from the town and she and Legolas had gone there often in their free time whenever they got bored of Dale. The town had an ethereal look to it. It was small and the houses were built mainly from wood. But while they weren’t large houses, they were all elegantly made and beautiful. Thus giving off a wonderful vibe. Tauriel loved coming there due to the relaxed atmosphere. Most people lived off their land and whatever they had left or had made, they traded for luxuries from Dale or Rivendell, sometimes even from Erebor, but that was rare. Tauriel went to her favourite smith in Mirkwood, Lagorhael. She had known him practically her whole life. Thranduil had brought her and Legolas to him whenever they needed something of a blade. Her own pair of daggers came from him and she absolutely loved them; Lagorhael even made some of Thranduil’s kitchen knives. So she knew he would be able to make the most beautiful daggers for Fíli and once she saw the final product, she wasn’t disappointed because they were wonderful!

For Arild she had bought several handmade leather pouches, filled with local herbs and spices because being a cook, Arild loved trying new ingredients and seasoning all the time. Tauriel had even managed to get hold of Kingsfoil. It wasn’t actually a herb commonly used for cooking, but rather a healing one that she hoped Arild could put to good use. Perhaps whenever Fíli got the terrible ‘man-flu’ or after the night of too much drinking, the Kingsfoil could help him back to his feet.

For Dís, Tauriel has bought a cookbook filled with Rivendell cuisines. Her future mother-in-law, like Arild, loved to cook and wanted to make her dishes a bit diverse than the delicious but basic steak and mashed potatoes. While most in Rivendell were completely vegetarian, those who weren’t, generally ate fish instead and thus had perfected cooking and baking with fish for the past centuries. Dís loved seafood unlike her brother and sons but Tauriel hoped that with these delicious recipes and Dís’ own special touch, would change their minds completely.

As for Thorin, Tauriel figured that a Mirkwood wine or anything from there wouldn’t be hugely appreciated and so she had to think of something else. She knew he was an avid whiskey fan; Kíli didn’t get it from a stranger. She had asked Éowyn and Arwen for advice. Éowyn happened to know a glass blower in Rohan who had specialised himself in drinking glasses. Rohan was well known for its glass blowers. They still used ancient techniques to get their unique quality and appearance. Together with Éowyn she travelled to Rohan to visit the man in question. Tauriel had a love for anything made of glass and felt utterly amazed to look at all the gorgeous work. As she was led through the workshop her eye had fallen on one piece. It was a whiskey glass but what made it so special was that the bottom of the glass had a mountain protruding into the glass. So when pouring in liquid you would flood the see through mountain and then drink it away, creating a gorgeous as well as entertaining effect. Tauriel wasn’t a whiskey drinker but she knew you could drink it with ice, and the glass mountain looked like an iceberg drifting in the drink. She thought it looked absolutely great and didn’t have to look further for a gift. How could Thorin not be happy with the mountain Erebor literally in his whiskey glass? Perhaps she would have to come back one day to get one for Kíli as well. But she didn’t want to give them the same gifts.

The present for her love had probably been the most difficult, surprisingly enough. She knew him so well and what he liked, but most of those things just didn’t seem special enough or just not something he would every really use. Sure, an engraved silver flask was nice, but he would never have to use it. All the parties they went to had a running alcohol supply and he would never drink at work or training. And he was always careful not to drink too much when he would be driving. He had started to motivate Tauriel to start taking driving lessons, especially because it would give them both more freedom. And he could enjoy a drink whenever she didn’t feel like anything stronger than coffee. Also Kíli wasn’t someone who wanted grand gifts, and Tauriel knew he would probably would be happier just getting to spend an entire day by her side than anything expensive or nice she could ever get him. But she did want to give him something nice. Perhaps something they could enjoy together. It was then that inspiration struck. Archery gloves! The gloves he had, had been old
and worn thin to the point that he hadn’t worn them the last few sessions. He hadn’t made haste to buy new ones, mainly because his dad had bought them for him. Kíli was still a young lad at the time. His dad had first just bought him one pair, but knew his son was likely to grow out of them soon, so he discussed with the tailor to get the same type but for adults as well. Luckily Kíli hands had grown into the large size that the second pair had fit him perfectly. They had been one of the few things Kíli physically had left from his dad. He had put the worn gloves in a box to preserve what was left of them. Tauriel did find it a bit scary to give him new ones because she didn’t want to take away the memory of his dad. But she hoped that these specially made gloves coming from her as a gift would feel like a new chapter rather than a replacement.

She had gone back to Mirkwood to get the gloves custom made. It was a family business that made these beautiful leather items. They also had a shop in Lothlórien, but she knew the family in Mirkwood better, and always chatted with the daughter that helped her parents in the shop. The girl was a true artist and designers, and great at getting customer ideas on to paper. The gloves were made with black shining leather, with a silver clasp to tighten them. On the back of the hand, Tauriel had asked for an embroidery design, a Mirkwood tree beneath an Ereborian archway, a symbol for their unity. She prayed to Valar that he would like them.

Softly she slipped out of their room and made her way downstairs towards the Christmas tree, carefully balancing her gifts as she descended the stairs. She saw she wasn’t the first one up. Several presents and gift bags were already lying beneath the thick green branches. She took her time placing her gifts, spreading them out, hoping Kíli wouldn’t immediately find his. She knew he would be a child enough to try and guess his gift. Once she was happy with the result she followed the sound of Christmas music coming from the kitchen, where she found Dís already busy with breakfast.

“Good morning dear! Although it is starting to get closer to lunch if I’m honest!” Dís said with a smile. She had gathered her thick dark hair into an enormous bun, that swirled elegantly in her neck. Her red sweater was decorated happily with snowflakes around the neckline, arms, and trim. Her curvy full frame reminded Tauriel of the Christmas decorations in the tree, and that thought made her smile.

“Good morning Dís! I’ve never slept so well in a new bed before. If we hadn’t heard you in the kitchen, I’m sure we would still be asleep.”

“Well yes, I can imagine that. Whiskey and chocolate cake are the best way to make anyone fall asleep. You cannot tell Kíli, but whenever he and Fíli got too hyper and annoying, I would sometimes spike their hot chocolate before bed, and they would sleep so peacefully. Even letting me and Kaelin sleep in.” Tauriel laughed as Dís got a happy faraway look in her eyes. “Those were great times.” She mumbled softly.

“I’ll remember that for later.” Tauriel said, and looked around the kitchen. A dozen eggs were waiting to be whisked and baked, as well as some to be cooking. Bacons and sausages were already sizzling in the pans, on the gigantic stove. “Can I help you Dís?” Dís also looked around and nodded.

“Yes dear, if you can prepare the toast, also watch the oven, I’ve got several buns in there. Oh and the table, still have to set the plates.” And Tauriel nodded and started to move with the small woman through the kitchen, getting everything prepared. She would probably never get used to the sheer amount of food the family could get through. Apart from the hearty breakfast, Dís had also prepared a huge fruit salad that could last Tauriel a week, as well as yogurts and homemade granola. She couldn’t resist laughing.

“Are you expecting more people for breakfast?” and Dís laughed as well but also gave her a serious look.

“My dear, if you ever have sons, and especially sons like mine, you will never have enough food. They are bottomless pits I swear to you. And my brother! Well, no pit in Mordor in deeper. And all our kin that comes by! Besides, whenever it isn’t all eaten in one sitting, it will be gone the next day.
I hardly ever have to throw food out.”
“I cannot imagine what it must be like.”
“Oh don’t think I am in the kitchen all day. I enjoy it very much, but my boys can cook themselves, and will do so whenever I ask. Besides, now that they don’t live at home anymore, it is rare I make so much, but I also then enjoy it even more. And knowing Fíli, I wouldn’t be surprised if he came early.”

“Is Fee here already?” And both women turned around. Kíli had come downstairs, wearing a dark grey sweater, decorated in a Christmas pattern, with stags jumping along his chest. His long hair was gathered into a messy bun. He had trimmed his ever thickening beard. Tauriel loved what she saw.
“No honey, but he might, you know your brother.” Dís said. “Is your uncle up yet?” And Kíli nodded.
“Yeah heard the shower stop when I came down. He should be done soon.”
“Oh good, then you can get the coffee ready.” Dís said, snapping her fingers as she turned to get the eggs and meat from the stove.

It didn’t take long for Thorin to appear in the kitchen, with a blue, also Christmas themed sweater. Tauriel felt a bit out of place without wearing one. As if Kíli sensed this he came over.
“Don’t mum will have one ready for you next year. Any colour you’d prefer?” And Tauriel laughed.
“You know my favourite colour. And I shall treasure it. For us Christmas is always a very fancy affair, not as cosy and comfortable as this.”
“And what do you prefer?” Tauriel thought about it.
“Neither. Both are great in their own way.” She said and thought about Christmas at home. Yes it was more formal, but that was also nice about it. It was a grand affair and something special to look forward to. Everyone was happy during that time, she and Arwen would dress up, especially Arwen enjoying to use her great talents to dress her friend. And Tauriel always felt very special afterwards. It was also more organised than Yule at the Durin’s, which sometimes Tauriel preferred, she knew exactly what would come next. At Rivendell they would always spend the day after Christmas engaged with charity events, such as helping out at shelters or orphanages. Giving to those who could not afford a special celebration.
Kíli wrapped his arms around her.
“Well, I am glad we can celebrate it together. Happy Yule my darling.” And he gave her a kiss, that she happily gave back. Thorin made a protesting noises.
“I just woke up, do ye mind. Besides, breakfast is getting cold, and Kíli, yer gonna have to clean up the mess of presents.” And Kíli turned red as Tauriel gasped.
“I knew it! I knew you would tried to find mine.”
“Oh stop your excuses!” Dís said, waking her son over his head with one of her spoons. “Let’s eat.”

Kíli didn’t let anyone tell him that twice and quickly dug in to the great breakfast with Tauriel, Dís and Thorin joining in. Kíli had warned Tauriel to make sure she had enough to eat in the mornings, as soon after the first of many rounds of eggnog would start. Tauriel was wise enough to follow that advice.

They had only just finished that crumbs of their plates when Fíli and Arild came in. It had started to snow even more, and both where covered. Fíli was carefully balancing the stack of presents in his arms, and busied himself displaying them by the tree, as Arild greeted everyone. Both were wearing matching red sweaters, with bears and snowflakes, although Arild’s looked more like ice flowers to give it a more feminine touch. As they sat down, Kíli made their coffee and with one knock on the door, announcing his arrival, Dwalin came in.
As Dwalin happily greeted the party, Dís most enthusiastically, she began to strip the layers of clothing of the, slightly frightening rough man. But hidden under the layers of heavy leather jacket and scarves, was a bright purple sweater, with alternating pattern of Christmas tree and snowman, that had Tauriel running away to the bathroom as she suffered a laugh attack, tears streaming down her face. Kíli ran after her, laughing with her. She didn’t want to embarrass the man by laughing at him. But Dwalin was a good sport, knowing fully well that the sweater is combination with his tough physique, bald head, tattoo’s and beard, made him look entirely ridiculous. But Dís had made it for him, and he couldn’t bear to disappoint her by not wearing it. Besides, the purple did bring out his incredible blue eyes.

His arrival brought on the first round of eggnog together with a slice of chocolate cake that Tauriel and Dís had baked together the day before. They all settled into the living room as Thorin kept the fireplace burning. Thorin and Dwalin started to talk about happenings at the workplace, with Fíli and Kíli joining in. Fíli was in charge of the newest addition to the company, reaching out to the more average people who wanted special and custom-made jewellery of the highest quality, but for a reasonable and affordable price. It was something Fíli especially had felt very strongly about. Several years ago, it would have been impossible to venture into that market, as Erebor still had to rebuild from its horrid collapse after the failed business with Thranduil, as well as the constant negative influence by Smaug. But now things were stable and Fíli had been able to make it work. Now that investment was starting to show. Never before had they had that many orders come in during the holiday season as this year. Thorin and the entire Durin clan couldn’t be more proud of what Fíli had achieved. He was the next great heir to the family business. Kíli sometimes wondered if he would ever find his place in the company without walking in the shadow of his brother and uncle. But that was a thought for another time, and he was incredibly happy and proud of his brother. It felt great to see him move towards a stable and good life, together with his love Arild. Kíli had wondered with Tauriel when they would get married.

The afternoon passed happily and got more cheerful when Balin, Oin, Gloin and his wife Nalia arrived, who joined in the celebrations. A black cloud did cover the excitement when they heard that Gimli had decided to stay in Mordor during the Yule time. Especially Nalia had found that very difficult. She longed to put her arms around her son and hug him tight, especially when they had heard about his role during the special mission. She didn’t want her only baby getting hurt, not even is scratch. Gloin, who tried to lift the mood whenever he could, joked that if they ever needed extra troops, he would send Nalia to the front and have someone give Gimli a bruise. Nalia’s wrath would singlehandedly win the war within minutes. The second round of eggnog and more drinks appeared on the table, as well as huge amounts of finger-food Gloin and Nalia had brought. Everyone also happily dug into the immense pile of Arild’s infamous Yule cookies. Several group started to be formed as stories were being told, the next more ridiculous than the first and games were being played. Tauriel happily drank along and played with every game. Sometimes teaming up with Kíli, at other times they played fiercely against each other, both stubborn and a winners mentality. It wasn’t long before things started to get a bit to rowdy for Dís’ tastes and she decided to settle everyone with the dinner.

Dís proudly presented her ginormous stuffed roasted turkey, its skin crispy and a perfect golden brown. The table was decorated with beautiful plates and silver ware, with large candle centrepieces providing the light in the dining room. Ale and wine were constantly refilled, as were the large plates of mashed potatoes, vegetables, and gravy. They were all rather basic meals, but they were warm and delicious and gave a festive yet homely feeling to Tauriel. At Rivendell they always had fancy diners with an array of different and exotic food, which had been delicious too and she had enjoyed them. But this really made her feel warm and welcome during these cold winter days. There was nothing truly fancy about the dinner apart from Dis’ treasured polished silver ware. Everyone was
wearing their favourite and most festive, decorative, and warmest sweater. She felt a bit out of place in her newly bought cream cashmere jumper she had bought with Arwen last week. Legolas had once gifted her a matching necklace and earrings of shining snowflakes, made of silver and tiny set crystals. They decorated her otherwise rather plain outfit. Not that Kíli thought of it that way. It was simple yes, but the jumper hugged her lean figure in all the right places, and her brown leather pants, showed off her legs. Kíli couldn’t wait to take it off her. One of his reasons was due to the bag he had noticed standing in between Tauriel’s Christmas shopping bags. It was a dark red colour with golden writing spelling out the name Dragon’s Lair. And every man and women knew that the Dragon’s Lair specialised in very particular and lovely women’s garments. Kíli himself was a sucker for anything with the colour red and lacy. While her flaming hair could conceal many things, he could swear that he had seen a red bra strap peek out from under her jumper in the beginning of the evening. He hadn’t been able to put that out of his mind. He had tried to give her a knowing look, hoping to get some reaction, a slight smile or blush, out of her. But to no avail, Tauriel had the perfect poker face. They would never play strip poker he decided in that moment.

But apart from being distracted by some devilish creations, he was enjoying the dinner, as he always did during Yule and served Tauriel and himself healthy portions of turkey and mash. He hoped his love would still have room for dessert, his mum’s famous spiced cake, with a layer of white frosting and rum-soaked raisins inside. But he was very happy to see her eat so much. Ever since the fight with Thranduil, her appetite was lacking and she had lost a bit of weight. Kíli was desperate now to return some of it and could only feel more relieved with every serving she finished. She caught his eyes on her and smiled, her eyes sparkling, and his heart fluttered. How long would he still feel this fluttering when she looked at him? He hoped it would last forever. He smiled back and she turned back to Arild with whom she was having an animated conversation. She had always liked the blonde, but in the last couple of weeks, she had gotten to know her a lot better and grown very close and fond of the small but lively woman. Like Kíli, Tauriel enjoyed seeing Fíli and Arild getting their own live sorted with the successes that came to them. Arild had graduated from culinary school the same time Kíli graduated and she was working incredibly hard in one of the most prestigious restaurants in Dale called Yavanna, serving the most exclusive meals with organic and locally sourced ingredients, something Arild was very passionate about. She was already planning to open up her own restaurant, and with her skill and passion she had received several offers to work in other places. But for now she enjoyed her time at Yavanna and was only happy with everything she was learning there.

“So Tauriel, are you almost done with your study?” Arild asked as she eyed the few pieces of turkey. She felt full and knew she won’t be happy when she stood on the scale tomorrow. She really ought to lose a few pounds. But whenever she tried, Fíli immediately took over cooking duties and talked the idea out of her head. He loved her curves, admiring her in everything she. Besides, he would tell her, he wanted something to hold on to whenever they made love, after which they always wound up in the bedroom as Fíli proved his point. Having convinced herself, Arild reached over to slice off another piece of turkey as Tauriel turned to answer her.

“I have two more years to go after the summer. It’s a six year program, after that I will have to choose a speciality I want to work in.” Arild nodded her head, impressed.

“I always forget how long the medicine track is, you should be very proud of yourself. It must be hard work.”

“Yes it is, but I enjoy it. I am lucky to have Arwen by my side. We help each other immensely. And Dis is helping me a lot now with several herbs. And of course Kíli is very supportive.”

“Yes Kíli is a darling, you are very lucky. I though Arwen was a few years older?”

“Yes she is 24 now. She first started art and design, and she is incredibly creative and would definitely have succeeded in that too, but she wanted to do something more worthwhile in her opinion. I think because her whole family is into healing and with Aragorn also a doctor, I think encouraged her to also pursue medicine.”
“Well, I am sure she could also model if she ever wanted a career change.” Arild said and Tauriel laughed, thinking of the times Arwen had indeed participated in model contests and especially during her first study, she would often model the clothes her colleagues had designed.

“She definitely could, her whole family in fact.”

“Oh yes, Elladan is gorgeous.” Arild said, getting a dreamy smile on her face, which resulted in a jealous look and jab by Fíli. But she laughed at him. “Oh darling please, it’s true, but don’t worry love.” She softly tugged at the ends of his moustache, bringing him close. “He’s got nothing on you.” And with that he received a kiss. Kíli and several other men groaned at the display. Laughter and banter ensued, which Dís allowed for a little while until she had enough and decided to silence the table with dessert.

Together with Tauriel, she carried in the giant rum cake covered in creamy white frosting, looking like the snow outside. Kíli was willing to swear his mother had made a bet with herself to see how many layers she could stack until the poor cake fell over. Currently he guessed there were around 8, even taller than last year. As planned the room did indeed fall silent at the sight of the cake, with greedy eyes fixed on it. Like small children at a birthday party, they silently watched as the Durin matriarch cut up the cake in slices and divided in over the guests. Thorin meanwhile was pouring some more drinks into the fancy glasses. When everyone had a piece, Kíli grabbed his fork and cut up a small piece and put it in his mouth, closing his eyes. The fantastic taste that he remembered as a kid and would look forward to every year exploded in his mouth. This was what Yule tasted like for him. The soft cake was spicy with cinnamon and cardamom and a bit of orange zest. But the slight bitter taste was countered by the sweetness of the raisins and rum. And to top it off, the sweet just fresh icing of vanilla and lemon just made a great cake perfect. He was in heaven. The look of his face, so happy and enjoying every bite, made Tauriel laugh, and she loved how he could let his feelings show so plainly, unlike other people she knew. Moments like this brought out the always present child in his heart, and it was endearing to see. Having heard her laugh, he opened one of his eyes to look at her, a huge smile grazing her face, making her eyes sparkle. His heart melted even further. How he loved to make her smile. He made sure to watch as she too tried the cake and like the rest of the guests fell utterly in love with it, wanting a second slice immediately after finishing the first. She could hardly believe herself, having already eaten far too much for a whole week. But Dís carved up another slice for her as she looked at Kíli’s grin.

After dinner, everyone rolled themselves back to the living room, where the hearth was still burning. The smell of coffee and minty tea filled the air and sound the bellies of the guests. More games were brought out to be played. Tauriel and Kíli had snuggled up together on one of the couches with her curled up into his chest and he playing softly with a strand of red hair. They had been watching the intense card game between Fíli, Dwalin, Arild, and Gloin, with Gloin winning, when Thorin came in with the family’s chess set. The board was richly decorated, made from white and ebony marble stone. Markings were made by plated gold and silver. The chess pieces themselves were marvelous. Made from solid gold and silver and set with precious gems and diamonds. Tauriel couldn’t take her eyes of the wondrous glittering jewels shining at her. She carefully picked up the Queen to admire her. It was very heavy and she was impressed by how carelessly Thorin had been able to carry the entire set into the living room. This was completely different from the delicate set Thranduil owned that was carved from the most beautiful pieces of wood. Thorin eyed Tauriel as she rotated the piece in her slim hands. She met his piercing blue eyes.

“You play lass?” She raised a smile eyebrow, as a competitive smirk graced her lips.

“Oh of course I do.” Without another word Thorin set the pieces on the table nearby, clearing it of any glasses and snacks. Within no time, the chessboard was set next to the Christmas tree, but as Tauriel sat down on one of the chairs it felt like she was in the centre of the room, and most people had out of curiosity started to form around them to watch the match. Dís had made them a quick cup of
Thranduil had always taught her and Legolas the same technique and strategy in playing. It was an offensive game, hidden behind a defensive scheme. They could usually out-smart their opponents with several turns. However Thorin had laughed, saying that he knew this strategy very well, and indeed, with every move, he countered, knowing her weaknesses. It frustrated Tauriel immensely and so, like Thranduil had also taught her, she took a deep breath and paused, sipping her cooling coffee, as she carefully analyzed the board. They were almost equals, having played all but three pawns. However she had lost two towers, a horse, rook and two bishops, while Thorin had only lost one of each. She tried to see what strategy he was playing. It was far more offensive and aggressive than hers. After her second move she had constantly been on the defensive, rebuilding her defenses. He on the other hand had ransacked the board. She tried to replay his moves in her mind. It was a skill Thranduil had taught her.

She remembered how one particular rainy afternoon they had been playing chess. She was perhaps eight years old, and it hadn’t been her favourite game yet. She had just moved her horse to counter his advancing tower, when his long elegant fingers moved in and swooped her horse in a fluid motion with his Queen that she hadn’t seen. She let out a cry of frustration.

“How did you do that?”

“You must always watch my every move Tauriel. If you had you would have seen it. Now think back, what did I do last turn?” she huffed, kneeling on her chair to point directly to his side of the board.

“You moved the tower from here to here!” Her long braid moved along with her movements.

“Yes, and before that?” Tauriel moved back as she tried to remember. She had seen his tower coming and focused on it intently wanting it gone as soon as possible. But because of her focus she hadn’t been watching all that carefully. Her eyes scanned the board as Thranduil looked at her face amused. Her cheeks were reddening. She was an active firecracker, always focused on her goals, but at times he had to calm her down, just as now. He waited patiently, putting his hands together.

Slowly a smile appeared on her face.

“You first moved your Queen here, then your tower, and your bishop to distract me!” She smiled brightly at him, pleased with herself, and Thranduil felt his own heart flutter at her excitement. “Ada always did that too.” She stated as a matter of fact as she set back down and begun to plan her next move. With her eyes fixed on the board she didn’t see the look Thranduil gave her. It was the first time she had mentioned his dear friend Feredir since he had passed away. Not knowing whether to go further into it, Thranduil simply gave a soft, knowing sigh.

“Yes he always did.”

The flashback over, Tauriel smiled, now seeing very clearly through Thorin’s game. Without hesitation she picked up her horse on the other side of the board and moved it up. There was a universal sound of confusion by the audience around her, and even Thorin looked puzzled, but he focused back on her previous move and countered it. But as he did so, he created an opening and Tauriel moved right in.

“Check.” Thorin gasped as did those around her. Kíli looked at her and the board. He was impressed. He had never been able to beat his uncle. No one ever had, expect for Balin, who won every game. The old man was sure to challenge Tauriel to another match, another time. Thorin was looking around his King to see if he could still defend it, but he had nowhere to go. He moved his King in defeat, and then Tauriel moved her Queen to capture the King.

“Check mate.” She said softly but grinned from ear to ear. Thorin laughed and shook her hand.

“A great game, yer play very well. Sure the bastard taught ye?” He asked referring to Thranduil and
Tauriel laughed. “Yes he did, but my dad did too.” Thorin smile turned more thoughtful. “Yes,” he mused softly. “Feredir could play very well. He’d be proud.” Kili didn’t think he’d ever seen Tauriel smile more brightly than she did then. “Thank you.”

The sound of the huge clock in the hallway, sounding for 2 am brought everyone back to present. The realization that it was late seemed to make everyone aware of how tired they felt. Balin, Oin, Gloin, and Nalia quickly said their good-byes with promises to see them all in a few days. And with that the remaining Durin’s and Arild and Tauriel said goodnight and all went to their rooms upstairs. Kili, having seen his family’s faces knew that he could sleep-in the next morning, which was a relieve, he was feeling knackered, the alcohol and food taking its toll. However, the closer they got to their room, sleep wasn’t on his mind anymore, as he remembered that red bra strap and teasing Dragon’s Lair bag. He would have to thoroughly admire it and the wearer before he could even think about sleeping.

A while later, when Kili snuggled close to Tauriel’s now sleeping form, he could say that he appreciated this Dragon’s Lair creation, but nothing could improve the goddess that lay beside him, completely bare of anything but his arms around her. No, she was already perfect in every way.

Softly so not to wake her, Kili placed a kiss on her temple before falling asleep next to her.

“Merry Christmas Amralime. I love you.”
Yule Morning

Chapter Notes

A long overdue update but I hope you all will enjoy!

Time for the final day of the Dwarves Yule Celebrations and gift giving!

-Yule Morning-

Christmas morning had arrived. Tauriel awoke slowly. Her limbs were entangled together with Kíli’s under two layers of thick, checker white and red blankets. Tauriel lazily stretched herself and rose. Softly she untangled her arms and legs from Kíli’s, careful not to wake him. As soon as she left his arms, he shifted, appearing unhappy at the lack of body. He then curled himself in the blankets and settled back into a soft snoring sleep. Tauriel smiled at him. His long hair was in disarray but his face peaceful. His dark short stubble beard contrasting with his light skin and his long dark lashes splayed his cheeks. He looked like a sweet yet strong angel. For a second Tauriel debated whether to actually leave his strong and warm arms, but then she gracefully slipped out and towards the window. She moved aside the curtain and peered outside and was greeted by the Durin garden completely covered in a new thick layer of snow. Happy butterflies filled her stomach and she propped her head up to stare at the falling small snowflakes. Looking at the light, Tauriel judged it to be the beginning of the morning, the whole house was still quiet.

She didn’t know how long she was staring outside, but after what seemed like blissful hours, she heard small movements in the house, faint signs of life in the Durin household. She heard someone go downstairs. Based on the heavy footfalls she was pretty sure it was Thorin. She quickly slipped into her jumper and jeans. She loosened her braid and gathered her hair into a bun. Then she walked out of their room, almost tripping on her new bright red Dragon’s Lair bra, that Kíli had admired and then hastily discarded when they went to bed last night.

She descended the large stairs to the main lobby. Happily she saw that all the decorative lights had been turned on, the huge Christmas tree by the stairs shining bright. Softly her ears picked up a low deep humming. It was a cheerful Christmas tune. Tauriel smiled, poor Thorin had been listening to the radio too much. Christmas songs stuck in his head. Tauriel had never imagined him to hum so very happily to those songs. Suddenly she wondered whether it was a good idea to join him and disturb his peaceful happy moment. Yet his tone also sounded inviting and she was longing for a cup of his famous hot chocolates. She met Thorin in the kitchen. He was wearing a large rough knitted burgundy sweater that Tauriel assumed was a present from Bilbo at one point, remembering when Bilbo told her he loved to knit in his spare time. Thorin hadn’t trimmed his beard yet and his mane still looked a bit wild. Despite his singing he still looked a bit grumpy, perhaps nursing a bit of a hangover after last night’s party. The eggnog was quite dangerous Tauriel had found out. He turned on the coffee machine and then noticed her standing there.

“Good morning.” His voice sounded a bit rough.

“Good morning!” She answered, trying not to sound too cheerful. She knew that could get on people’s nerves. But he merely nodded, a ghost of a smile on his face. Then he nodded at the machine.

“Want coffee as well?” Tauriel shook her head at first but then started to reconsider. Maybe this wasn’t the best time to ask for a hot chocolate.
“Well, what do you want then?”
“No, actually I’ll have coffee…”
“Nay, you wanted something else. What do you want?”
“Well actually…” she felt nervous and started to twirl her hair. “I’ve heard great things about your hot chocolate. But if you rather not I’ll be very happy with coffee.”
“You Greenwoods are too damned polite. You want a hot chocolate, you get a hot chocolate! Don’t tiptoe around me.”
“Only if you’re sure…”
“Absolutely! Sit down there.” He huffed and pointed to the bar on the kitchen island. Hesitantly Tauriel sat down and observed him make his coffee and her hot chocolate. They stayed silent for a while until he looked at her, a sneaky grin on his face.
“Guess you want marshmallows as well?” Tauriel’s face lit up completely at the mention of marshmallows. Thorin had to laugh at her huge smile and sparkle in her eyes, like a child being given the biggest ice cream that was on offer.
“Oh yes please!” And it was that look of pure joy that Thorin could really understand why Kíli had fallen for her so badly, he completely understood. With a smile of his own he put the steaming cup in front of her.
“There yeh go madam.” He said and she grinned back and very carefully took a sip.
Thorin always, absolutely always, used dark chocolate when making his hot chocolate. The rich and bitter flavour would wake you up, with just a sweet after taste. If Thorin could he would always drink it this way, but over time to please the rest of the family, he had perfected his recipe to include milk and a spoonful of honey, to make it a bit lighter. It was the darkest, and most bitter hot chocolate Tauriel had ever tasted, but it was at the same time it was delicious. Usually she found most hot chocolates to be too sweet, but this was amazing. The marshmallows just topped it off perfectly.
“It’s fantastic!” She told him, and Thorin smiled, his smile slightly arrogant.
“Of course it is. Anything us Durin’s make is perfect.” He raised an eyebrow, asking her to challenge him, but she was too fond of her new drink to take the bait. So instead he turned to the fridge. The normally full fridge was now filled up to the max, anything more and it might explode.
He started going through it to find something to eat this early in the morning that would help wonders with a hangover headache, that wasn’t sweet. Tauriel looked at him amused as he went through all the selves. Her eyes lit up when she saw something.
“Oh, is there still cake?” Thorin turned to look at her in surprise.
“Yeh want cake? Now? Don’t need something stronger for that headache?” Now Tauriel looked at him confused.
“Headache? I don’t have one.”
“Yeh don’t? You drink more than Kíli, and he can drink!”
“I can handle it better than he does.” Tauriel said with a sly smile.
“So yer fine?” Thorin asked again.
“Yes, perfectly fine.”
“No headache?”
“No.” and Thorin shook his head. He muttered under his breath, but Tauriel was willing to swear he said something along the lines of ‘bloody elves’. And she laughed.
“Then why are you up so early?”
“I just woke up Thorin, I am well rested.” Again he shook his dark head. With a shrug of defeat, he picked up the tray with at least a quarter of the entire cake still balanced on it. From behind him he grabbed a fork and put it in front of her.
“There yeh go, miss-I-don’t-feel-anything-after-last-night.” With a mocking bow Tauriel accepted the towering cake remains.
“Thank you sir-I-can’t-hold-my-liquor.” And Thorin burst out a laugh, and started to gather all the ingredients he needed. It didn’t take long before, to Tauriel an insanely amount of bacon, sausages, and eggs were crackling in a pan, awaited for four slices of browned toast.
Triumphantly Thorin placed his ready-made plate opposite her together with his second black coffee. “Now this is a Yule morning breakfast!” he said and without waiting her answer dug not so elegantly into his food. Tauriel laughed at him, as she too dug into her cake, taking small sips of the hot chocolate after every bite. They ate quietly for a few minutes.

“When will we open the presents?” Tauriel asked him and Thorin gave her a grin as he swallowed his bacon.

“Excited are you?”

“Of course, especially to see if you like my presents. We do it very differently at home.”

“Yer a smart lass, I am sure yeh made the right choices. How do yeh celebrate at home?”

“Well, we only celebrate it one day, so yesterday. We start off giving presents and then finish with a feast.” Thorin snorted.

“How very efficient…” And Tauriel laughed.

“You can understand how weird it is for me that you all drag it out for days.” And Thorin shrugged his shoulders.

“Why only have one party when you can have three?”

“I never said I didn’t enjoy this.” Tauriel laughed giving him a wink with her bright green eyes. With her cheeky grin and naughty eyes she looked so much like Feredir it hurt Thorin’s heart. The fact that she had her mother’s thick and long red hair, made people assume she looked like her. Instead she was a mix of both. Her slim figure and sharp nose covered with freckles definitely came from Meriliel, however her taller and strong physique, as well as her slim wide mouth and almond shaped bright green eyes were a copy of Feredir’s. Her flaming temper came from her mother, but the witty humour was something her father had been famous for with the people he knew. The Forrest’s had been great people. Usually people from the Greenwood area weren’t Thorin’s type, it had been hard enough to endure Thranduil when they had worked together. There was just something about them that made Thorin uncomfortable, and made his skin crawl. But not Feredir and Meriliel. They had been down to earth, kind and open-minded. At the same time, they were tough, strong and intelligent. All skills required when in charge of the Greenwood guards and Thranduil’s second man. Even though Thorin and Thranduil had already gone their separate ways years before, Thorin had been shaken when he heard of their untimely deaths. Looking at this young, proud and intelligent woman in front of him, Thorin felt something he hadn’t felt in a very, very long time. He felt admiration for Thranduil for raising such a woman. If it hurt him at times when interacting with Tauriel when she reminded him of his dear friends, for Thranduil, who saw it daily, it must have been horrible. All of them owed it to Feredir and Meriliel to care and look after their daughter.

“You should talk to yeh father lass.” Tauriel’s eyes grew in confusion at the sudden change in topic and tone. She let his words sink in and felt anger bubbling in her stomach. Her eyes narrowed.

“He’s not my father.” She said coldly and Thorin sighed, earning him a harsh glance.

“But he is, he raised you into the woman you are today. He is always trying to protect you.”

“I am 21 Thorin, soon 22. I know I am young, but I am not a child anymore. I don’t want nor need constant protection. I am a grown woman and not as oblivious to the dangers in this world as Thranduil thinks. I know it’s a dark place.” She said and her last words chilled Thorin’s bones. It sounded very bitter, too bitter for a girl with her life.

“You have to accept lass, that parents or guardians try to protect the kids they raise, even when they are old enough to care for themselves. If I could I would kill anyone that tries to hurt my nephews… anyone.” He paused, his ice blue eyes piercing into her. Then he relaxed himself, giving her an almost puppy-eyed look, showing Tauriel from where in the family Kíli had gotten it from.

“It’s Yule time, time to be together with family. A time to put the past behind us.” Now it was Tauriel’s turn to sigh.

“I know that Thorin, and I have thought about it. But it’s been lie after lie and so many secrets, even more than I probably know…and I am tired of it. He needs to understand how much it hurts me and I need more time to forgive him. You of all people should understand that.” Thorin gave a cold laugh.

“Oh lass it’s been 25 years, and I haven’t forgiven him yet.” Tauriel couldn’t help but truly laugh at
that statement.
“Well we can’t all be that stubborn.”

“Absolutely not!” Tauriel and Thorin both turned to the new voice. Kíli was standing behind them, unruly hair, wearing fitting jeans and a chic jumper. Tauriel had the urge to drag him back upstairs and enjoy the rest of the morning in bed. But she could never be that bold in Thorin’s own home. So she settled just to look at him. As Kíli got closer he caught her longing stare and winked.
“Missed chance. Don’t leave the bed so earlier next time.” Earning him a laugh from her and an uncomfortable cough from his uncle. Looking back at Thorin, Kíli saw his uncle’s plate and eagerly made his way to the stove to make his own.

As the sausages hissed in the pan he looked over at his love.
“Would you like some too?” Tauriel smiled and shook her head.
“I already had some cake love, and after last night, my stomach could do with a little break.” Kíli shrugged an okay and focused on his cooking. Thorin had made himself and Tauriel another cup of coffee.
“What is your family doing now Tauriel?” He asked and her thoughts went to Arwen and Thranduil.
“Arwen and her whole family celebrated Christmas yesterday. They always spend the day doing charity work and in the evenings dining formally together. It’s a very special time for them. Although I am sure it must be difficult for her this year. Aragorn hasn’t come back from the front so I am sure she’s worried sick. I am here, because I want to be, but also because of Thranduil, so while I know she understands, that must also have disappointed her. I hope I can make it up to her during New Years.” Tauriel sighed. “She told me Thranduil didn’t come this year. Legolas also stayed in Mordor with Aragorn and Gimli. And with me not being there, I’m sure he’s miserable, drinking his evening away, as usual.” The last came out with a sneer and Thorin and Kíli gave each other a look of concern. Tauriel took a deep breath before smiling back at Thorin.
“It’s a mess basically. But I guess even without the fighting, that’s what happens when we all start to leave the nest and create lives of our own. Everything will become a bit tangled up and messy.” Thorin gave her a thoughtful look. Here was that down to earth reasoning that the Forrest’s were known for.
“Yes,” he grumbled thoughtfully, “everything is messy indeed.” But before they could talk any further, Dís and Dwalin had come downstairs, with Fíli and Arild following suite. Neither Tauriel nor Thorin saw Kíli’s own pounding gaze as he had looked at his uncle. There was something in his words that chilled him. Something was not completely right. But his family didn’t allow him to deepen his thoughts and soon enough the words ‘presents’ had captured his inner child.

They all assembled their chairs and thick pillows by the Christmas tree to start giving their gifts. As head of the household Thorin started. His first present was in a little box, wrapped in blue fabric. Gently he handed it over to his sister with a lovely kiss to her brow. Smiling Dís unwrapped her gift to reveal a sapphire pendant surrounded by small diamonds, hung from a delicate chain. She looked at Thorin with slight surprise.
“I recognize this!” She said and Thorin smiled.
“It was mother’s, but I had it resized for you.” Small tears entered Dís’ eyes and she gave him a hug.
“Thank you.”

Thorin’s next gift for Fíli was more a symbolic one. Fíli had looked slightly puzzled when he pulled a large heavy key from his gift box. His uncle had laughed and held his nephew’s shoulder tight.
“It’s the key to yer new office lad.” Fíli’s eyes grew large.
“My own?”
“Aye! You’ll need the space with this new adventure of yours. I’m sure you’ll make me proud…” If he had wanted to say anything, he couldn’t because Fíli had wrapped his uncle into a back-breaking bear hug. Laughed he messed up his golden locks. “Alright! Keep me alive will ye!”
For Kíli he had made a large Ereborian sword. Kíli couldn’t stop smiling from excitement at the prospect of trying out his latest weapon. It was long, with a wide blade. In the middle the blade elegantly narrowed before widening again, ending in a thick cut edge. It was a beautiful but also modern and angular. A style that fit Kíli perfectly. Tauriel knew that the beginning of spring marked a new sword battle season in which Kíli, Fíli, and also Éowyn and Éomer participated. This new sword would certainly be used.

After giving Dwalin and Arild their gifts, Thorin finally turned to Tauriel, and she was excited to see what he had planned for her. It was only the past few weeks that they had truly gotten to know each other, so she wasn’t expecting anything as amazing and personal as he had gotten the others. Thorin, she had discovered, despite his harsh exterior was a great gift giver. His striking blue eyes looked at her.

“Now for you, lass, I had originally planned to give you something else, but I had to change my mind at the last minute. I hope you can forgive me that it’s not wrapped.” Tauriel looked at him in confusion as did the others, particularly when he turned and walked out of the room without another word. She looked at Kíli for any explanation, but he shrugged his shoulders. Not long after, Thorin returned, a beautiful black stone box in his hands. Around her she heard murmurs of understanding, although she was still at loss. None the less she received the box with all her grace.

“Welcome to our weird family Tauriel Forrest Greenwood.” Thorin said, and she felt touched that he had spoken all of her names. With a smile she turned her attention to the box, that was rather heavy for it’s size. But looking at it closely she saw it was decorated with alternating black and white marble squares that she would recognise anywhere. It was a chess set. She carefully opened the lid and saw small delicately carved chess pieces in white and black stones. It wasn’t as ornate was the one she had played with last night but simple and far more her taste. It reminded her of the wooden set Thranduil owned.

“After our game yesterday I believe you earned it. Us Durin’s like to collect chess sets. I believe this one comes from the Blue Mountains.”

“Thank you Thorin. I don’t know what to say, it’s simply gorgeous. I will treasure it.” Tauriel said and smiled at the usually intimidating man.

“There’s no need to thank me. Keep practising with Kíli, perhaps one day he’ll beat me.” This earned him an impolite remark from his youngest nephew. He looked at her once more. “You are more than just a pawn in this game Tauriel, don’t forget that.” He said but Tauriel didn’t get a chance to question that remark as he turned to Fíli to signal it was his turn. And so the question on her lips quickly disappeared and she was swept up in the Durin festivities.

From Fíli and Arild she received a beautiful golden clasp for in her hair. It had a leaf motif and lavender-like flowers, set with white stones. Tauriel knew instantly she could wear this with the beautiful crème and gold dress she bought for Éowyn and Faramir’s wedding.

What perhaps had delighted her the most was her gift from Dís and Dwalin. She couldn’t contain her smile when she pulled the emerald green material from its box. It was her own Durin Christmas jumper. Dís’ expert hands had woven the soft but warm thread into a comfortable fitted jumper with a pattern of large and smaller silver snowflakes along her chest. She had never owned such a jumper in her life, and Thranduil and even the Rivendell’s wouldn’t be caught dead wearing one, but Tauriel loved it with all her heart. To the delight of everyone she quickly changed into it and nestled happily in Kíli’s arms as she watched everyone one her gifts. She has been nervous beforehand, hoping they would be personal enough. She didn’t have to worry. Everyone loved their gifts. Fíli expertly started to try out his new daggers, and Thorin immediately used the opportunity of the new glass to pour himself a stronger drink. He smiled with true delight as he saw the mountain in his glass.

“This is beautiful. Thank you Tauriel.” He said and Tauriel made sure to treasure that rare smile.

Arild and Dís quickly huddled together to see how they could use their new spices and cookbook and it didn’t take long before an entire dinner menu was thought out.
“Please ma!” Kíli pleaded, “I am getting hungry just hearing all of that!” He turned to Tauriel.
“I still have to give you my gift.” He said and Tauriel smiled.
“So do I.”
“Ladies first.” He said with a wicked smile on his face. Laughing Tauriel handed him his gift. Carefully he unwrapped the burgundy wrapping and opened the black box inside. Then he grew very still as he saw the gloves, drawing the attention of everyone. Tauriel immediately grew worried. Perhaps she had overstepped a boundary.
“Kíli… I am sorry if… if this wasn’t the right choice… I don’t want to replace him…” As she muttered Kíli had turned to her, emotion clearly visible in his eyes.
Tauriel…” he said, his voice rough, but he couldn’t finish his sentence, so he kissed her. There were no interruptions. What Tauriel hadn’t known, was that every person in the room, had once either offered or given him new archery gloves. But every time he had refused them. This time, when gifted from someone who truly knew the sport and loved it and him with equal passion did he finally accept them. He lay his forehead on hers for a few seconds. Then his brown eyes locked with hers. “Thank you love.” And with that Tauriel softly kissed his brow.

As if awoken from a trance, Kíli turned back to his cheerful self.
“Now time to open yours!” He smiled and gave Tauriel the navy blue box. Delicately she opened it and gasp at its content.
On a black velvet display lay the silver charm necklace. A star cut diamond, wrapped by a single thorn branch. It was simply stunning.
She looked up into Kíli hopeful eyes.
“It’s gorgeous my love.” She said and gave him a kiss. Kíli beamed at her.
“I am glad you like it! Designed and made it myself. Here let me put it on you.” And he swiftly moved around around her, delicately pulled her hair to one side and fastened de clasp. Then he admired her. “It fits you perfectly.” He was about to kiss her again, when Thorin spoke up.

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“Alright! Enough with all the mush. I have one more gift to give you all. They are from Bilbo who wants to wish us all a Happy Yule.” With blushes on their cheeks, Kíli and Tauriel parted. Everyone eagerly looked at the packages that Thorin handed out. They all had a little name card on them. “How sweet of Bilbo.” Dís voiced as she opened hers. Out of every package came a lovely quilted blanket. Tauriel couldn’t believe how beautiful and soft they were. Everyone had their own colour combinations. Hers looked like the colours of fall, with beautiful greens, reds, gold and oranges. Several of the squares were embroidered with some of her favourite things. A tree, bow and arrow, stars and the herb Athelas, also known as King’s Foil, to show her healing ambitions. Kíli’s had a variety of blue’s, brown’s and silver, with a varying array of motives. He grinned at her.
“At least we don’t have to share, you blanket hogger.” To which Tauriel maturely stuck out her tongue.

Dís stood up.
“Alright! Time for some lunch!” and within seconds she disappeared into the kitchen, followed by Arild. It didn’t take long before large plate where brought make into the room. Large platters full of left overs from last night. Its wouldn’t have surprised Tauriel if the left overs would be on the menu for the next week or so.

The company spend the next of the afternoon entertaining themselves with some games and movies. At one point the photo albums of young Fíli and Kíli were brought into the room for their girlfriends to squeal over. How adorable those boys had looked, and how hilarious their red faced looked now as they desperately pleaded for their mum to put them away.
Kíli at one point muttered angrily at Tauriel.
“I swear, she does this every year. She loves to poke the dragon.” Tauriel laughed.
“You and Fíli are anything but dragons.”
“Okay fine, we’re not Smaug, or Thranduil…” the last he said with a sly look.
“Thranduil isn’t one either, I’ll say that.” Tauriel said, taking the bait. “No you’re right love. Say, he’ll be at Bard’s New Years Party right?” Kíli asked. She nodded her head. “Yes, he and Bard are quite close. Honestly I think one of his few friends, excluding Elrond and Celeborn that is. So yes he will be there.” Before Kíli could say anything else Tauriel interrupted him, giving him a look with those vibrant green eyes. “I know what you want to ask love. And I promise I will talk to him before that.” Kíli gave her a surprised but happy smile. “Your uncle and I talked about it earlier this morning. I didn’t want to hear it then, but he was right. It’s a beautiful time of year and I don’t want to go into the new year fighting. So I will swallow my pride and talk to him.” Delicately Kíli picked up her hand, looking at her warmly. He kissed her hand. “I am glad to hear it love. I know he’s very difficult, exhausting at most times. But he is a good man to you, in his own special way.” Tauriel snorted at the word ‘special’ and Kíli laughed, poking her new Christmas jumper. “A very special snowflake.”

A tickling battle ensued with the whole Durin clan joining in after a while.

Finally, as the sun had set yet again, people started to pack their bags again to make their way home through the snow. Kíli and Tauriel warmly said their goodbyes, receiving huge bear hugs from Thorin and Dís, that even Beorn couldn’t rival. “We will see you all again soon my dears.” Dís said, almost teary eyed. She was so happy to see her boys so happy with their lives and partners. It is what parents lived for, she thought. Making sure that their children were happy and healthy. Nothing could make her feel better. Despite all the potential misgivings in the family, Tauriel was a great new addition to the family, and a great partner for her wild child Kíli.

As she engulfed the young woman she told her exactly that. “If ever you need help or advice my dear, or just a warm cup of tea, you know where to find me.” She said, gaining a warm smile from Tauriel. Then finally, they pulled their scarves tight and threw their helmets on. Before long the pair was cruising through the snow-lit night.

Back at home, Kíli pulled her close on the couch. He stroked strands of her long hair, twirling it with his finger. “You know what?” He said and Tauriel turned her head to look at him, as she rested on his chest. “What love?” “I like it that you live here.” “I do too Kíli.” “I want you and Thranduil to make up soon but…” “Hmmm yes..?” Kíli sat up a bit straighter. “Would you like to stay living here with me?” He asked and felt his heart skip a beat when she smiled brightly at him. “I would like that very much Kíli, very much.” Kíli smiled at her too. “I am glad to hear it! I can’t imagine my life without you waking up beside me every morning.” “Neither can I.” Tauriel and gave him a long kiss.

With the New Year Celebrations literally around the corner, both felt the next year would be a great one, with both of them together.
He had sat in his green leather armchair. All the candles on the table had been lit surrounding a now empty plate. He sat slouched in the chair, looking to any outsider haughty and arrogant. But the person staring at him, knew he wasn’t either, not truly in his heart.

Wine swirled around in his glass. Occasionally he took large gulps of it, while always appearing elegant. He had forgotten how many glasses he’d had. Thranduil’s lips formed into a scowl. He hadn’t spent Christmas day alone in a very long time. And despite the fact that he had chosen this isolation by himself, he truly did not like it. His face and limp had healed over the past weeks. But there were more wounds waiting to be healed.

“I know.” He mumbled at Lemaril portrait as her knowing grey eyes bored into him. “I know I was wrong. I am just worried for her. She’s… she’s my daughter, the child we could never have…” He had to stop himself from falling into that pit of grief and regret. He didn’t want to be reminded of the time when he and Lemaril heard that they wouldn’t be able to get more children after Legolas. At the time he had thought that that pain had been unbearable. How wrong he had been. With another gulp of wine, he pushed those thoughts away. He just hoped Tauriel was alright. With Legolas gone, they needed each other, they were family after all. He owed it to Feredir and Meriliel to make things right again. Now was not the time to be prideful.

He stood up, straightening himself on the armchair to keep him balance. Before turning towards the stairs and his waiting bed, he looked at his beloved wife one more time.

“I will talk to her, my love.”