Sanbaruf

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Summary

Thorin's company is separated in a snow storm atop the misty mountains. This is a slight AU where certain events don't happen and even a small catalyst, like a change in the weather can distort future realities.

Notes

Dwalin is a gruff potty mouth in this. Please excuse him, he means well, really he does. And also, this took forever to write! It’s so hard to include all of the characters, my goodness. Also note that there are scattered Khuzdul words throughout the story, all translations are in the end-notes if you want to know the words while reading.

As if the thin rock ledge hadn’t been enough. Not long after starting onto the mountain pass a downpour began. It turned quickly to sleet, and then to snow, with temperatures dropping to a drastic low. Winds were blowing hard, nearly throwing the members of Thorin’s company from the thin
ledges. Fabric whipped around bodies, the snow blinding them.

“It’s a blizzard!” Dori shouted. The Dwarves and Hobbit barely inched along the edge, holding on to each other and the rocks in a sad attempt to not fall to their deaths.

“We have to find cover!” Bofur yelled over the wind.

“How? Can’t see a damn thing!” Dwalin spat out. He was right, it was impossible to know where they must go. Thorin was unsure where to lead his company. He looked back the way they had come from but it was impossible to tell how far out onto the ledge they had travelled. Thorin’s eyes glanced down at the Hobbit next to him. He shivered in the wind, and his fingers clenched tightly to the rocks behind him. His teeth were chattering and Thorin noticed his toes were curled under, most likely frozen in the snow. Hobbits were unused to harsh weather like this, and not for the first time, he thought on how their burglar was unsuited for the journey.

“Grab the Dwarf next to you, and we keep moving. Be careful, don’t move too quickly!” Thorin belted out to the company. He squinted, trying to see his nephews through the thick snowfall, however all he managed to make shape of were silhouettes and he could not place them along the rock wall. Thorin started to inch along slowly again, and he felt the Hobbit grasp tightly to his furs. They had not moved far when the mountain began to shake and large rocks fell, crashing down above them.

“An avalanche!” someone yelled, and they held their arms up to try and cover their heads from the cascade of snow, dirt and rubble. A loud cry echoed as a chunk of the ledge was knocked away.

“Ori! No! Ori!” Dori screamed, and the company scrambled to gain their bearings.

“He fell! From the cliff, he fell!” Nori exclaimed as Dori practically grappled over the ledge to look down.

“Oh Aulë! I cannot see him! Ori!” Dori shouted and his screams echoed down into the depths.

“Get back Dori, or you’ll fall to your death as well!” Dwalin roared, and he pulled the other hard away from the ledge. Dori shook, his hands rising to grip in his hair with shock.

“No! He cannot...he cannot be…,” he stumbled over his words. The other Dwarves were frantically trying to find stable ground when another rock tumbled down, followed by a third and a fourth. The mountain wall was gradually crumbling away. Nori jumped out of the way, and Dori watched as he stumbled and grasped wildly at the ledge before falling away into the depths below.

“No! Nori!” Dori shouted. Dwalin turned quickly trying to pull the Dwarf next to him back when a rock slammed into the wall above him.

“Curse this passage!” he spurted and ducked heavily. Unfortunately he lost his balance, as a particularly violent gust of wind rushed into his chest. Dwalin slammed back into the cliff behind him and felt the rocks give way. He scrambled to grab at anything but felt his stomach lurch as his body fell. He barely had time to see another ledge beneath him.

“Motherfucker!” Dwalin spat out, and then he knew no more when his head crashed into the side of the cliff, his war hammer falling loosely from his hand. The other Dwarves were struggling to stay afoot as they listened to the cries as more fell from the cliff. Bombur had tumbled taking Bofur with him, his hand still gripped tightly to his brother’s pack. Kili reached for them but was unable to do anything, his brother gripping him firmly around the chest.

“Kili, stay with me!” Fili pleaded with him, and they tried to hold on to each other, but the winds
pushed them along, and the icy ground became too slippery. As Kili felt his feet slide away, he roughly pushed his brother from his body in an effort to keep him from falling as well.

“Brother no!” Fili shouted as he fell backwards in shock, but it was too late, Kili’s body was long gone down the cliff. Fili gasped and collapsed to his hands and knees. Bifur pulled him up quickly though, moving with Balin who gripped Dori and guided him along the ledge to follow Oin and Gloin. Thorin had frozen at the shout from Fili. One of his nephews had fallen? He felt panic settle in his gut and it was not until he heard a holler from the Hobbit that he regained control of his thoughts. The Halfling was looking down in terror, watching as the rocks beneath his feet broke apart and the mountain began to move.

“Giants!” Balin yelled from somewhere to Thorin’s right.

“As if the weather was not enough!” Thorin shouted.

He could not see his friend, or any of the other Dwarves, the only in sight was the Hobbit. The rocks tumbled and moved, and they slipped and glided across them with the motion. A large boulder hit the wall beside them hard, and the Hobbit screeched in pain as his arm was crushed. He let go of the rocks in shock. His balance was lost, and he fell backwards off the ledge in terror. Thorin reacted without thinking, gripping the Hobbit by his jacket quickly, but the force of the fall was too much, and he toppled over the ledge with him. They fell, scratching against moving rocks, and ice, as their bodies rolled along towards the ground. Thorin could hear the other’s screams mingling with his own, and with a heavy thud he fell unconscious in the snowy depths below.

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When Thorin woke it was with a groan. His head was pounding and it was far too bright. The snow was falling lightly now, without the aggressive winds they had faced up on the mountain. He stumbled as he moved to his feet, shaking off snow and gaining his balance. He coughed a few times then looked at his surroundings, nothing but white. He’d lost his pack in the fall, though luckily Orcrist still hung from his belt. Thorin glanced around trying to see any signs of other Dwarves. His eyes adjusted to the light and he blinked a couple times. Nothing, he could see absolutely nothing. Thorin started to move, his back aching from the fall. His boots dragged through the snow, his movement sluggish. He was mid thought when his foot caught on something and he tripped and fell into the snow. His hands were spread over a body and when he saw red staining the snow he rushed to turn the form.

He realised with surprise that the body of the Halfling lay before him, and then remembered they had fallen together. Blood was seeping from both his head and arm and Thorin quickly checked to make sure his heart still beat. He let out a breath when he felt a slow pulse. The Dwarf saw that the Hobbit too was without his pack. It was an unfortunate situation. Thorin had little experience with grievous wounds, and the Halfling’s arm was practically shredded. He supposed he could at least find shelter before he figured out what to do with the gashes. Carefully he hoisted the burglar into his arms, lifting him gently before he set out to find somewhere to rest.

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Dwalin sniffed a bit, his nose itching. He felt strange, a bit lightheaded, and when he opened his eyes he was greeted with a view of falling snow. He blinked a few times, and smacked his mouth to get rid of the stale taste in it. He glanced around a bit before starting in shock. He’d be lying if he said he didn’t scream. He did, and it echoed across the valley as an embarrassing reminder for many minutes to come.

His body hung precariously from a thin branch that protruded from the cliff side. His right boot was hooked around the branch and his left was barely caught between two rocks. He flailed his arms
wildly a bit, till he calmed himself. No wonder his head felt like he’d been in an ale drinking competition for thirty days. He was upside down, and probably had been for some time. He quickly glanced around, and saw his pack hanging not too far away. Lucky that, very lucky indeed. However his war hammer was gone, probably lost forever somewhere below. He felt wildly at his back and noticed with great relief that his axes still hung snug against him.

Dwalin sighed and cursed all that was holy in these lands. He was a warrior and he’d best compose himself like one. The Dwarf managed to twist his body a bit, gripping at the rock wall with one hand. He could probably get his pack if he was careful. It was hanging a bit unsteadily, and a small gust of wind would loosen it. Dwalin began to swing his body gently, watching as he gradually got closer to his pack. He reached out and snagged it, but on the swing the branch holding him snapped loudly.

“Fuck!” Dwalin shouted, and he struggled wildly to grasp a ledge. When he slipped further he reached back quickly, tossing his pack over a shoulder and pulling an axe around to wedge into the rocks. He slid for a bit, but managed to gain a grip with his blade. Dwalin groaned as his muscles complained, then shifted the pack around on both shoulders, reaching for his second axe. It was much easier to maintain a hold in the rock wall with two. He looked up then down, and decided the latter was the best choice, and he began to scale the cliff. Maybe he’d find his war hammer yet.

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The rock giants continued to move long after Thorin and the Hobbit had fallen down the cliff. The remaining Dwarves held to each other tight, and did their best to prevent another loss. Fili was overcome by grief at the loss of his brother, and Dori seemed in a state of shock. Bifur, though upset at the loss of his cousins, did his best to stay composed and focus on staying alive. Oin and Gloin stood on either end of the group, keeping them together, and Balin calmed them with his words. The giants fought each other until they fell, rocks falling around the group in hordes. When a fatal blow hit the giant they were perched on the Dwarves yelled out as it began to fall. Gloin spotted the approaching cliff face and shouted to jump. They moved as a unit, each Dwarf holding onto another and jumping in tandem. Their bodies slipped and slid along the rock surface they landed on and Bifur dug his daggers into the rocks while Oin latched onto a ledge with his staff. Together they managed to stabilize and huddle against a relatively safe wall, where they stayed until the blizzard passed. It was Fili who moved first, standing with purpose and unsheathing his sword.

“I must find Kili, I must find my brother,” He stated and peered over the cliff to find a way down. Balin moved forward and gripped him by the shoulder.

“Now is not the time laddie. We must find shelter and we must stay as a group. We have a better chance with numbers than we do alone,” Balin spoke gently. Fili turned outraged, shaking the other’s hand from his shoulder.

“But Kili is alone! What chance has he?” He yelled. Never before had he been separated from his brother in such a way. He’d always known where to find him at the very least, and usually they stayed not but a meters length from each other. Balin gripped both his arms and tried to calm him.

“Don’t be rash Fili; what good would it do your brother if you froze to death by yourself in the wild?” Balin asked of him, and Fili sighed heavily. He knew the older Dwarf was right, but still his heart ached at the thought that his brother might be dead, somewhere beneath the rocks. But somehow he knew Kili still lived, for Fili was sure his heart would fail the moment his brother’s did. He took one last longing look out over the cliff.

“Kulhu ma sakhizu ya izzûghizu, ma mahtadadizu ya 'agulhizu,” Bifur spoke, while gesturing to his
“Aye, quite right Bifur,” Oin nodded in agreement. Even Dori seemed to calm a bit at the words.

“He’s right Fili, you don’t know that any harm has come to Kili, I’m sure he will be fine. Gandalf had meant to meet us in the mountains. Perhaps if we wait for him, he’ll know what to do,” Gloin commented. Fili hoped that Kili was safe, and relatively unharmed. He would find his brother, eventually, even if he had to scale a mountain to do so.

“Come, let us find shelter on this dreaded rock wall,” Oin said and he led the group down a wider path ahead. Bifur gripped Dori and pulled him to his feet, ushering him along with a gentle pat on the back. Fili followed, relying on the knowledge that Kili was a skilled Dwarf warrior, just as he, and that he would be alright for now.

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Kili inhaled quickly only to immediately start coughing up a storm. He spat snow out of his mouth hastily and pushed himself up on his hands and knees. His hair was stuck to his face and he realized with embarrassment that there was a trail of frozen snot dripping down from his nose. He scrubbed at his face with his hands and shook his head to get the hair away.

He was sore, but manageably so, and his bow lay nearby thankfully in one piece. He picked it up and latched on to it. A quick glance around and Kili realized his pack was long gone, probably somewhere up the side of the mountain. He stumbled to his feet and brushed snow from his clothes with numb fingers.

He caught movement out of the corner of his eye and turned quickly, pulling an arrow and lining it up to shoot.

“Uhg, my shoulder!” someone complained and it sounded suspiciously familiar.

“Bofur? Bofur is that you?” Kili questioned, lowering his bow and running to his form.

“Oi, Kili? You alright lad?” Bofur asked, moving slowly as he tried to right himself. Kili laughed a bit and helped pull the other to his feet then paused at muffled yelling. The two Dwarves looked down and saw another half-buried under snow.

“Oh! No wonder my landing was so soft. Bombur you great oaf, get up,” Bofur said and began heaving his brother out of the snow. Kili helped and eventually they managed to get the Dwarf into a sitting position. He spat a glob of snow from his mouth, much as Kili had, then grumbled at his brother.

“No right to complain about pain that one! You landed right on me brother,” Bombur uttered with a glare at his brother.

“Ah, and look at yeh, no worse for wear,” Bofur said poking his brother in the gut. The three chuckled and relaxed amongst each other for a bit until Bombur noticed something in the distance.

“What’s that?” Bombur said, squinting a bit. The other two turned and sure enough, another form was huddled in the snow not too far away. Kili took off at a run, Bofur and Bombur leaping through thick snow behind him. Kili brushed the snow away to reveal Nori’s pointed hair then dug around him and shook him a bit.

“Gerroofff me!” Nori grunted out, waving an arm around. He was quickly pulled to his feet despite it and he hobbled around a bit.

“Ooooh, oh I don’t feel so good,” Nori spoke, bending over and gasping for air.
“What’s wrong with ya?” Bofur asked and Nori groaned and bent down reaching hands up into his hair.

“Just my head, I’ve hit it I think,” Nori mumbled. The other Dwarves waited while Nori composed himself, searching their surroundings for anything of use. They managed to find Nori’s bag, not far off, and Bofur’s was still attached to his back. They laid out everything they had; two blankets, a thick rope, a flute, a clarinet, some of Bofur’s toy making tools and trinkets, daggers, and lots of other useless items. Kili of course had his bow and arrows, as well as a sword, and Bofur had his pickaxe. Bombar’s ladle had been crushed beneath his body, though there wasn’t much they could do with it anyway. Nori’s mace was nearby as well. They had little to survive on, but luckily had a good supply of weaponry. Once the throbbing in Nori’s head had eased a bit, he chose a direction for the group to travel, and they began making their way, while looking for other survivors. It was at this point their minds began to wander.

Nori was worried for his brothers. He saw Ori’s body fall, and hoped the young Dwarf had managed to survive like him. He was worried that they had not found him yet. Ori would not fare well alone, he knew little about surviving, and had no more than his sling-shot to defend himself from the wild. Nori knew not what had happened to Dori, and figured his elder brother was probably sick with worry if he was awake and healthy. He mentally promised to find Ori, and ensure his safety first. Then he would focus on finding Dori.

Bombur and Bofur were both worried for their cousin, along with the rest of the Dwarves. It was bad business being separated as they were. Many beasts lived in the mountains, and any Dwarf alone would have a difficult time of it. They were hardy, but not all of them were warriors. Bofur cringed at the thought of Bilbo alone in the mountains. The Halfling wouldn’t survive a day in this mess. Bofur hoped the small thing hadn’t fallen from the cliff, as his skin was softer than a Dwarf’s and he probably would not survive a rough landing.

Kili slowly began to panic the longer they moved along. He had saved Fili, he hoped, from falling off the mountain. But now they were separated. Kili’s heart clenched at the thought that he might not see his brother again. They’d never been so incredibly far apart, and he had grown used to his elder brother’s presence at his side. Now that he was not there, Kili felt lost. Frequently he’d look up, thinking he’d see those blond locks and that playful smirk, but each time his eyes met emptiness. His mood turned sour quickly, and the others noticed.

“What’s ailing you Kili, you look troubled,” Bofur inquired, ever the concerned Dwarf.

“…My brother, do you think he’s alright?” Kili asked in a hushed voice. He knew Nori was probably feeling similar, having lost his own siblings.

“Fili? He’ll be right as rain laddie. The boy’s a natural with his blade, and he’s a fierce fighter. He’s well on his way to becoming a king! Wouldn’t worry about ‘im!” Bofur said cheerily and he smacked Kili lightly on the back. Kili smiled at him a bit, but it did not ease the pain in his heart. He glanced up the steep cliff, and prayed they’d find each other soon.

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Ori was so very alone. He sat huddled against a pile of rocks, his fingers shaking and bleeding, his body shivering. Even his knits couldn’t keep the cold away for long. He’d survived, somehow, managing to grip his way down the cliff until he’d reached solid ground. His thick layers had protected him from any real harm, but he still had cuts and bruises along his sides from the initial fall. He held his book between his legs, his fingers struggling to grip a quill. The ink was nearly frozen as he scratched the nib along the thick paper. He’d have to give up soon. He had his pack, but did not wish to get his things wet and so removed nothing other than his beloved journal. It was the only
thing that could keep him calm, keep him focused in the cold.

He missed his brothers. He missed Nori, and his confident demeanor. He missed Dori, and his eternal mothering. He missed their flute playing. He missed them. Ori felt tears welling in his eyes. He’d never been so alone before. He didn’t know much about surviving in the wild, and he had no idea where to go. He remembered once as a child, when he’d gotten lost and wandered a village for hours trying to find his way home. His brothers had found him in a panic.

“If you ever get lost, just stay put, and someone will find you Ori! It’s best not to move, if only one Dwarf is looking, they will get to you eventually!” Dori had said, and Ori never forgot it. But here, in the snow, and the cold, it didn’t much help. He could stay yes, but he greatly doubted anyone would find him, not in such a large open land. And who knew where the rest of the company was. For all he knew they had continued on their way, thinking him dead. Ori fretted at that thought. He might be left here, alone, until he died of cold, or starvation. Or maybe a wild beast would find him, and he’d have only his sling-shot to defend against it.

Tears ran down his face and he wiped them away quickly before they had time to freeze. The cold trails felt uncomfortable on his skin. He decided to stay put. There wasn’t much he could do if he moved anyway, so he settled for scribbling in his journal, while doing his best to keep warm. His brothers would find him, he was sure of it.

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Thorin had never been great with navigating. It took him ages to find anything remotely worth using for shelter. He settled for a grouping of trees. It wasn’t much but it kept out some of the cool wind and snow, and the ground was easily cleared. Thorin set the Halfling down, leaning his body against a tree trunk. He was still unconscious and Thorin realised just why as he took a closer look at the wounds. The Hobbit’s hair was matted with blood, and there was a large gash across the side of his scalp. The Dwarf cleaned around it gently with snow water and did his best to stem the bleeding. He felt slightly nauseated at the thought that the Hobbit might never wake up. He wondered how serious a wound like this was for a tiny being, and he hadn’t even looked at the bloody mess of an arm.

Thorin removed the Hobbit’s shirt sleeve with a knife and began checking for breaks. It seemed there was a dislocation, and the Dwarf at least knew how to fix that. He gripped firmly along the bones and wrenched them into the right place with a quick jerk.

“AH!” Bilbo screamed as he woke in shock. His body shook and he trembled at the pain that ran through his form. Thorin pushed him gently to the ground and held him still until he settled a bit.

“Hush, it’s alright, I just set your arm,” Thorin spoke then he looked over the rest of the Hobbit’s form. His toes were white, and his body shook from the cold.

“I can’t feel my hands and feet,” Bilbo whispered with a gasp, and Thorin quickly gripped at his toes to rub warmth into them. He ripped some cloth from his jacket and wrapped the Hobbit’s feet in it before moving to his fingers. Thorin glanced at the Hobbit’s body, wrapped only in thin layers and once again wondered at why such a creature would venture out on this quest. No matter how much Gandalf felt the Hobbit would help, Thorin could not believe it. This Halfling belonged back in the Shire, in his comfy Hobbit hole, next to a warm hearth, not out in the cold snowy mountains.

“You’re not very bright, wearing so few layers. And no boots at all, no wonder your feet are frozen,” Thorin chided, and the Halfling looked at him briefly before lowering his eyes. It seemed whatever spirit he’d had previously was gone now, as he gave no indignant remark back. Thorin hadn’t realised he was continuing to mumble about the uselessness of Hobbits until he was cut off.
“Why do you hate me so much?” Bilbo whispered through chattering teeth. It caught Thorin off guard and he frowned at it, his hands pausing in their movements.

“I don’t hate you,” the Dwarf said, and then he began rubbing warmth into the Hobbit’s fingers again. At that Bilbo did give him a disbelieving glance. The Dwarf sighed heavily.

“I don’t. I merely think you ill-suited for this journey.” Thorin elaborated. The Halfling looked almost ready to argue but Thorin stood quickly, removing his fur covering and placing it over the Hobbit’s form.

“Enough, get some rest, I’ll keep watch,” the Dwarf spoke, and he turned to look out between the trees. Bilbo allowed his eyes to close under the warmth, and the darkness claimed his mind quickly in sleep.

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Dwalin moved gruffly through the snow. It had picked up again, and he could barely see three feet in front of him. He was damn hungry too. His stomach continuously growled in reminder, and Dwalin cursed the day he’d set foot onto that wretched mountain pass. His brother may have known his way around these parts, but if you couldn’t see where you were going, that knowledge did little good. He briefly wondered if Balin was safe, but figured it best not to worry about such things.

He trudged violently forward but paused when he saw a shadow move in front of him. A wild beast of some sort? Dwalin was starving, and he figured anything was better than nothing, even raw meat. He gently pulled an axe from his back, and approached the beast slowly. When he was close he charged, whipping his axe around with a fierce yell, only to stop in a rush.

“By Durin’s beard! Ori?” Dwalin shouted in shock. The other Dwarf was kneeling before him with wide eyes, Dwalin’s axe resting hazardously against his neck. Dwalin pulled it away quickly and approached the small Dwarf.

“I nearly beheaded yeh!” he shouted, and Ori shivered and closed his eyes with an exhale. Dwalin noticed a small trickle of blood at the young Dwarf’s neck where his axe had barely pierced the skin. He reached out a finger to wipe it away and the other shivered and recoiled slightly at the touch. Dwalin knelt next to him looking over his form, feeling slight guilt at causing the other Dwarf harm. It seemed he was cursed to hurt those around him.

“How did you get down safe? Nori said you fell from the cliff,” Dwalin muttered. Ori looked at him and reached his small hands up, bloody fingers poking from the ends of his knitted gloves.

“I climbed,” Ori whispered. Dwalin was surprised at the Dwarf’s perseverance. It seemed that even Ori was capable of great determination, though he knew the other would not survive long alone. Dwalin sat next to him for a bit and noticed with relief that Ori too had his pack and supplies. They might survive this yet.

“We should get moving, find some shelter,” Dwalin spoke gently and he stood and gestured at his back.

“Hold on to me so you don’t get lost,” he said, and waited until he felt the other’s small hands grip at his furs. The two Dwarves trudged onwards like that as the snowfall thickened, with the hopes of finding cover, both secretly relieved at having the company of the other.

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In mid-afternoon Bofur and Bombur spotted a cave on the rock wall. The two walked in to explore
while Kili and Nori scouted from the outside. They hoped it would suit their purposes. It was difficult to tell with the mountains beside them but the Dwarves figured nightfall would approach soon, and it was better to have shelter. Beasts tended to come out at night in packs, and though they had their weapons, they certainly weren’t looking for a fight. Not with so few of them.

Kili hummed and tapped his foot in the snow. He knew he’d been annoying the living daylights out of his companions. Fili appreciated his jokes far more, and he had not stopped complaining since they started walking. He was hungry, and tired, and missed his brother, his muscles ached from the fall. The list went on and on. The others handled his complaints well for the most part, only giving him the occasional glare, or heaving a few long sighs. Kili turned his head when he heard a muffled yell from inside the cave.

“Hmm?” Kili said, glancing briefly at Nori, who was frowning in the direction of the cave opening.

“Ghar-khafush!” Bofur’s voice yelled from inside the cave. Kili and Nori looked at each other in confusion.

“Did he say…?” Nori started and they both turned in tandem as Bofur and Bombur came screaming and yelling from the entrance. Bofur had his hands flailing above his head and Bombur was ducking and pulling something from his thick beard.

“Bats! Bats!” Bofur was shouting, and Kili and Nori took off at a dash. The bats chased and pecked at the Dwarves for what seemed like miles. A sea of black screeching horrors raced after them through the snowy passages, until finally the last bat turned back to escape the sunlight, and they collapsed in a heap. The Dwarves lay on their backs in the snow until finally Kili broke out in a fit of laughter.

“You should have seen your faces! Scared out of your minds you were!” the young Dwarf chortled and he knelt and pointed heartily at Bofur and Bombur.

“Oh, Kiss an orc! Like you looked any better,” Bofur spat out through chuckles. The entire group burst out into snickers and they laughed for ages, until their guts could no longer handle the pain. Nori sighed heavily.

“Well, I guess that cave was out of the question,” he said a bit despondently.

“Yeah,” Bombur agreed.

“We should look for something else quickly, nightfall can’t be far off, especially not now,” Bofur said, and they all nodded and hurriedly rose to continue their search. Kili trailed behind, more tired than ever. Even Bombur seemed to be handling things better, though he supposed the large Dwarf at least had more protection against the cold. Kili did his best to keep up but paused slightly when something shifted beneath his feet. The others stopped and turned when he didn’t follow.

“What is it Kili?” Bofur asked. The young Dwarf looked down, puzzled, and figured it must have been a trick of the mind. The snow was thick beneath his feet and he felt no movement now.

“Just thought…it was nothing,” he stated, and then they turned and continued. Not moments later Kili stopped suddenly again at a loud crack. The others heard it too and paused with him. Kili hesitantly stepped towards them then suddenly the ground beneath him broke apart and he fell with a rush into freezing cold water.

Kili panicked. He’d forgotten to breathe in his shock and he coughed as freezing water filled his lungs. His body instantly tensed, and he tried in vain to grip the hole he’d fallen through. His arms
flailed wildly as he tried to swim up, but the current had moved him and he pressed into thick ice instead of the spot he’d fallen through. The Dwarf tried to punch and stab at the ice, but the water prevented him from doing much damage, and his thick clothing and armor hindered his movements. Kili felt fear overtake him as the last bit of his air escaped his lungs. He was going to drown!

He could vaguely hear muffled yelling and see shadows above him but his eyes were failing him and he could feel his body choking on nothing and struggling to hold on. He thought of Fili, and how he wished his brother was here to protect him, to whisper in his ear and comfort him, to hold him tight and never let go. He was just fading when a loud crash broke out from above and two arms gripped him and pulled him to the surface.

Kili gasped for air, and clammed up at the freezing temperatures. His entire body was wracked with shivers and he was sure he started to sob. He felt arms wrapping around him and heard voices shouting.

“Get his clothes off quickly!” someone cried. And Kili felt his jacket tearing and ripping from his body.

“Bombur get the blankets from our packs!” it might have been Nori. Kili trembled violently and his vision was filled with spots. He felt hands rubbing at his skin and pulling his hair from his face.

“F-Fili?” Kili whispered through chattering teeth.

“The lad’s hallucinating,” Kili heard. Who was hallucinating? Certainly not him. They must have been talking about someone else. His head felt strangely fuzzy and the rest of his body he couldn’t feel at all.

“He’s just in shock,” resonated above him. Oh, who was hurt? Kili wondered strangely if he should care more, if he should be helping, but his eyes were drooping and he felt so very tired.

“Stay with us Kili, stay awake!” a voice echoed above his body, and Kili hoped it was his brother, because he did not want to die without Fili by his side.

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Fili had found an empty cave not long into their trek down the mountain but Balin had said it reeked of something stale and so the group continued on. It would have been a nice place to get warmth and rest, however the size did seem unusual. Surely such a large cave must have been occupied, despite its current emptiness. It was much later that they decided on a smaller niche, after passing several other larger caves. The space was quite tiny, and they were crammed in with one another, however it helped stave off the cold.

Fili felt unusually restless. He stood often, to keep watch by the opening, looking out across the snowy landscape. As night began to fall he felt intense pain grip at his heart. Something was wrong. He could feel it. His brother was hurting somewhere and he wasn’t there to help him. He jolted when a hand rest on his shoulder.

“They’ll turn up laddie,” Balin spoke gently beside him. Fili turned with a slight frown.

“I should be out there, I should be looking for him,” He responded, and the older Dwarf immediately knew he spoke of his brother. Fili tensed and anguish passed over his face.

“I was meant to protect him, and with each passing moment I can feel him growing weaker. There’s something wrong, he’s been hurt, I know it,” Fili spoke and he reached a hand up to press over his heart. Balin eyed him, not quite sure how to respond.
“It’s not normal Balin, but I know what I feel,” Fili said and Balin watched him with great concern until he too looked out at the mountains. Bifur approached holding out two steins of ale, some of the last in their packs.

“Achùshôm ganagifi ughlekh ya ghureg, nidif binghureg,” he said, and Fili and Balin took the drinks from his hands.

“Âkminrûk zu, Bifur,” Balin said with a nod and Fili followed suit. They drank slowly, hoping for any kind of sign. The ale helped calm their nerves, but still it did not help stop their minds from worrying about their lost friends and family.

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Thorin looked out upon their surroundings for the rest of the day, occasionally moving to check on the wellbeing of the Hobbit. Bilbo had slept relatively soundly, waking only once for a very brief moment. As nightfall came however, the Hobbit started to shake violently and groan in his sleep. Thorin brushed a hand across his brow to find it burning with heat. The Hobbit was feverish, and his wounds were not well treated. The Dwarf king was unsure just what to do. He had no supplies, and short of leaving the Hobbit to look for some, his only option was to wait, and hope for the best. He watched as Bilbo took in raspy breaths and wished he could do more for his pain. Thorin was beginning to feel that this journey was a mistake from the beginning. He’d led his friends, his family, and innocents into this danger, and found himself unable to protect them and keep them safe. He wondered if it was cursed from the start. Perhaps Erebor was not meant to be reclaimed. Perhaps this was punishment for his grandfather’s greed, a punishment his kind would carry forever.

Thorin felt the heavy weight of the key around his neck and refused to give up all hope. Somehow these items had made their way to him, and he was sure now was the time. His eyes lingered on the shaking form of the Hobbit. Perhaps even Bilbo Baggins was meant to join them on this journey; the wizard certainly seemed to think so. Thorin’s head whipped to his right when he heard a low growl. He could not see well in the dark, but he was able to make out the reflection of two glowing eyes. He glanced around a bit more and saw several pairs gleaming at him in the dark. Snow leopards. They must have followed the scent of Bilbo’s blood. Thorin moved slowly, first gently shaking the Hobbit awake, while unsheathing his sword.

“Bilbo, wake up, but don’t move,” he said in a hushed voice. The Hobbit groaned a bit, but Thorin could tell he was doing his best to focus on the Dwarf’s words.

“What…what’s going on?” Bilbo whispered.

“We’re being hunted,” Thorin responded and Bilbo followed his line of sight, blinking owlishly at their surroundings. There must have been seven, or maybe eight of the creatures. They were prowling from all sides. Thorin braced himself, waiting for their attack. He would have to be careful and precise, and keep himself between them and the Hobbit as they moved.

“I need you to stay where you are, unless in danger, understood?” Thorin asked, and Bilbo didn’t have time to respond, two of the leopards charged, and Thorin managed to strike the first clean through with his blade, knocking it aside, the second however bit down on his arm. He yelled and rolled, kicking the creature off him, while three more attacked. Thorin moved between them, doing his best to keep Bilbo out of harm’s way while he punched and stabbed at what he could. Thorin had taken down two more when he was attacked full on by three of them. His body fell to the ground and he yelled out as sharp teeth bit into his chest.

Bilbo rolled his body, trying desperately to stop the spinning of his head. He hurt everywhere, but somehow got to his hands and knees. Thorin was in desperate need of help. The Dwarf was on the
ground, covered by leopards, as two more approached from the sides. Bilbo’s heart wrenched at the sight. He could absolutely not allow Thorin to die. With his good arm, Bilbo pulled Sting from its hilt and took a deep breath. He used the last of his energy and charged with a scream of pain. Bilbo tackled two of the beasts, throwing them from Thorin’s chest, before he stabbed at one viciously until he was sure it was dead. He had only a moment to feel disgust at the feeling of tearing flesh when the other rose from the ground and pounced at him before he could remove his blade from the dead one’s neck. Bilbo screeched as his skin tore, and his already injured arm complained as it smashed into the ground. Any strength he possessed was long gone, his sword falling from his hand as he collapsed under the beast.

Thorin watched in surprise as the Halfling saved him. He made quick work of the remaining leopard on his chest then slashed at another that was between him and Bilbo. Thorin killed it quickly, and ran towards the Halfling, kicking violently at one of the cats atop his body.

“A plague upon you sons of trolls!” He yelled, and stabbed through the side of the other still clawing at Bilbo. The cat he’d kicked away cowered, and ran quickly at the sight of his dead friends. Thorin bent to the Halfling quickly, checking over his new wounds before turning him on his back. The Hobbit stared up at him through glazed eyes.

“You fool!” Thorin bellowed.

“What were you thinking? I told you not to move;” Thorin chided, his voice gruff. The Halfling managed a weak smile before he licked his lips and spoke.

“It’s probably inadvisable to use your body as a shield, your majesty,” Bilbo uttered. Thorin gaped at him. At the questioning look Bilbo sighed lightly.

“You must survive T-Thorin,” The Hobbit uttered, closing his eyes in pain, and swallowing thickly.

“You should leave me, f-find the others, you’ll be better off without me,” he continued, and Thorin could not believe what he was hearing. The Dwarf ran his fingers down the side of Bilbo’s face, heat radiating from his small body.

“You must see your home again, Thorin, you m-must,” Bilbo shook out and he opened his eyes. Thorin looked into them with disbelief.

“Promise you what?” The Dwarf asked, unable to look away.

“You’ll leave me, i-if it comes to it, you’ll leave me, so that you can live,” Bilbo coughed and tears leaked from his eyes. His entire body was shaking, from pain or cold, Thorin could not be sure. The Dwarf felt his heart constrict at the Hobbit’s words. He had misjudged the Halfling. Suddenly he felt overcome with emotion. He would do everything in his power to ensure the survival of the being before him. Bilbo Baggins had saved his life today, and that was more than any other had ever done for the Dwarf. Thorin bent forwards pressing their brows together. Bilbo’s was boiling hot against his own.

“I’ll promise no such thing, Halfling,” he spoke, and Bilbo looked at him, startled, when he was taken into a tight embrace as the Dwarf pressed cool lips to his temple.

“I’ll see to it that we both see our homes again,” the Dwarf whispered, before he hoisted the Hobbit into his arms and trudged forward into the darkness. Bilbo clenched to him tightly and Thorin knew he would not stop looking until he found help.
Ori grasped his journal tightly to his chest, his other hand still encased in the furs at Dwalin’s back. Snow was blowing fiercely again, and he could see even less in the darkness than he’d been able to in the light. The larger Dwarf spoke rarely, only occasionally looking back to make sure Ori still hung on. It went unspoken that they were in a very bad situation. Ori hoped Dwalin had some idea of where to go, but figured he was merely looking for some kind of shelter. Anything would be better than this. Ori’s stomach grumbled, and he briefly thought that even lettuce would be edible in that moment. He was caught off guard when Dwalin stopped suddenly, nearly walking right into his back. The taller Dwarf turned, gripping Ori’s arm as he pulled one of his axes from his back.

“Mister Dwalin? What is it?” Ori asked in a low tone. Dwalin glanced at him quickly, his face set in a frown.

“Wargs,” He spoke. Ori did not know how Dwalin could possibly see anything in this weather, but the warrior was experienced, and he did not doubt him for a second.

“Stay behind me,” Dwalin ordered and he pulled Ori to his other side. The young Dwarf screamed when a giant creature jumped at them from the right. It came from nowhere, its teeth bared violently as it rushed towards them. Dwalin whipped his other axe from his back swinging them in tandem. The warg’s head flew from its body, and Ori trembled at the sight of blood covering the snow around them. Others attacked them and Dwalin moved quickly, yelling out as he hacked and sliced at their bodies. His muscles rippled with his movements, and Ori felt a bit of fear at the sight of such a powerful Dwarf. He jumped roughly to the ground when a warg lunged at his body, his journal falling from his hands to the snow.

“No!” He screamed, and he lunged to grab it but Dwalin was gripping him tightly around his arm and dragging him away.

“There’s too many, we have to move!” Dwalin yelled out, and he dragged a kicking and screaming Ori away from the beasts.

“My journal! I dropped my journal!” Ori begged him to stop, but the older Dwarf just wrenched on his arm, and they were running quick through the snow, Dwalin swinging his axe at any wargs that got too close. They ran until their breath came in choked wheezes, but finally the creatures gave up their chase. Ori collapsed in tears and turned to go back into the thick snow.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Dwalin asked and he pulled him back.

“I need to find my journal!” Ori screamed at him and began to run back, but Dwalin threw his body hard to the ground.

“Calm yourself child!” Dwalin roared, and he shook Ori by his shoulders.

“You’d walk into your death for a stupid book? Get a hold of yourself,” the larger Dwarf hollered, and Ori cowered a bit in fear. He let Dwalin pull him to his feet, and drag his body along behind him. Mercifully they came upon a hollow in the rocks quickly and Dwalin pushed him inside roughly.

“Take off your clothes!” He ordered, and Ori looked at him through his tears. Dwalin’s eyes softened slightly when he looked upon Ori’s face and he moved closer to the other Dwarf.

“They’re soaked through; you’ll catch your death,” Dwalin explained and he began helping Ori remove them, laying the pieces out to dry. Dwalin roughly searched through their packs pulling out a
blanket and wrapping Ori’s body in it. His hands lingered on Ori’s shoulders and his eyes grazed over his naked body. But when Ori flushed slightly and looked at Dwalin in confusion the older Dwarf pushed him away harshly and walked towards the mouth of the hollow.

“Get some sleep, I’ll keep watch,” Dwalin muttered.

“That hardly seems fair, you’ve just fought, shouldn’t I…” Ori began. It was only right that they take turns, but he paused when Dwalin punched the rock wall beside him with his fist.

“I said sleep child!” Dwalin yelled out, and Ori recoiled. The older Dwarf left no room for argument.

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Fili was unable to sleep. His thoughts were constantly preoccupied with worries for his brother. He could still feel his pain, though as each moment passed it was with relief at the knowledge that his brother was still alive. Suffering, but alive. His lids were heavy and drooping a bit, when he heard heavy footsteps and tapping on the rocks outside of the cave. He stood in a rush, pulling his sword from its hilt as he peeked around the corner.

“Gandalf?” Fili said in surprise. Then he broke out into a full on grin. The wizard stood before him, looking only slightly miserable at the cold weather that blew around his form.

“Gandalf! You found us! Everyone, Gandalf is here!” Fili shouted back into the cave, waking the others.

“Yes my boy, here I am, though I must say, it was not easy to locate your cave in this weather,” he spoke and bowed slightly as he entered the hole. He sniffled a bit as he looked upon them.

“There are…fewer of you than I expected,” he stated, and looked towards each of them for an explanation.

“We were separated in the storm,” Balin said, as he stood slowly.

“Many of us fell from the cliff side, we know not who has survived,” Gloin said. Dori was still silent and too upset to speak. Bifur offered Gandalf a drink which he politely declined and Oin continued to snooze.

“My brother lives! Though he is in great pain,” Fili said, his hand held gently over his heart, and Gandalf raised an eyebrow at him. The wizard was clearly troubled as he sat uncomfortably on the rough ground.

“Is there anything you can do to find them Gandalf?” Balin asked.

“I must think, there is not much I can do with the weather like this. Hopefully in the morning it will have passed,” Gandalf stated and the others sighed and sat back down to wait it out.

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Kili’s state had worsened greatly by nightfall. The other three Dwarves took turns carrying him, and trying to keep him awake, but it was a lost battle. Kili was feverish and chilled at the same time, and he passed frequently in and out of consciousness. They desperately needed Oin’s medicine, or Dori’s healing expertise. In the rather lackluster shelter they had discovered wild lynxes attacked them, and with the burden of Kili and their lack of fighting ability, they’d not had much choice other than running. They were unable to find another shelter and so continued moving throughout the night. When they fell upon a pathway that led up the mountain they settled for a bit to discuss whether or
not to take it.

Nori was hesitant to travel back up the mountain. He’d not yet found Ori, and he knew it was unlikely he would if they went in that direction. He wanted to go back and search until his little brother was safe in his care. But a glance at Kili and he knew it was unrealistic. In the situation he had to ensure the safety of those with him, and Kili desperately needed better care. He knew that Bofur and Bombur would follow him whatever choice he made, even if it was the wrong one, as they were dedicated Dwarves and trusted in his opinion. The two Dwarves looked exhausted. Bombur was breathing heavily and complaining about his hunger, and Bofur just lacked his ever-present cheer.

Nori could not knowingly lead them astray and back towards their possible deaths. He stood and lifted Kili’s body, giving Bofur a rest, and began to trudge up the mountainside, the other two following in his footsteps. It was steep, and Bombur had difficulty, his body tired from the events of the day. Bofur kept him moving and also did his best to steady Nori every time he stumbled on ice.

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Thorin walked slowly, Bilbo’s body hanging limp over his shoulders. He struggled to keep his feet moving in the deep snow. More than once he’d nearly collapsed from exhaustion, but he had made a promise, and he would not break it, not before he died. The cold was eating away at his body where his armor and clothing had torn, and snow pooled and melted into puddles in his thick boots. His throat was incredibly dry and his breathing was raspy, though it was nothing compared to the sounds that came from the Hobbit.

“Thorin I’m tired, and I’m c-cold, and...hungry, everything hurts,” Bilbo’s voice whispered beside his ear. The Hobbit’s fingers lightly clenched around one of the Dwarf’s braids. Thorin glanced at his small hand from the side of his eyes. He was secretly glad the Hobbit was complaining. If he felt pain, and hunger, he was still alright, at least, a little alright.

“So t-tired,” the hobbit slurred quietly and his breathing began to deepen slightly, his grip loosening.

“Stay awake, Bilbo,” Thorin muttered, desperate to keep the Halfling alive. He lurched a bit, then hoisted Bilbo higher on his back and kept moving with renewed determination.

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When Ori woke up he felt oddly comfortable. His body was wrapped gently in two blankets, and a thick fur was draped across him. He lifted himself and turned to his side. His eyes widened at the sight of a black book lying beside him. He reached for it and opened it. It was his journal. He flipped through the pages quickly. The edges were damaged but everything else was in good condition. But how? Ori looked quickly towards the mouth of the cave. Dwalin still stood there, looking out at the snowy landscape, almost as though he had not moved since Ori first fell asleep. But that was obviously not the case. On a closer look, Ori noticed the other Dwarf’s fingers were red with cold, as though they had been digging aggressively in snow.

Ori felt tears come to his eyes. He was so grateful, so very grateful. He pulled himself gently from the blankets, and walked towards Dwalin, shivering slightly as cold air washed over his body.

“Thank you Dwalin,” Ori spoke, when he stood directly behind the other. Dwalin showed no recognition of his statement, though his shoulders were tense. They stood in silence for some time, until Ori felt another shiver wrack his body.

“You should know, I’m not a child,” Ori stated. At that the other did turn, though his eyes widened
slightly as he saw Ori’s naked form. The younger swallowed a bit at the look in Dwalin’s eyes, and he stepped backwards slightly though he stood his ground.

“Is that right,” Dwalin said heatedly, and his eyes narrowed. Ori felt a bit frightened by the other Dwarf. He seemed possessed as he stalked towards him. Ori took another step backwards, but gasped when Dwalin roughly gripped his wrist and threw his body face first into the rock wall.

“You don’t know what you’re doing, walking in front of me like this,” Dwalin spoke and Ori started when thick fingers pressed into the skin around his waist.

“I’m not a kind Dwarf, Ori, I would fuck you right here against this wall,” Dwalin harshly whispered to him and he began to fondle Ori roughly, his fingers pressing between the other’s legs. Dwalin gripped around his neck with a thick hand while his other toyed with Ori’s entrance. When a finger pressed roughly inside him Ori couldn’t help wincing as tears came to his eyes. Suddenly the finger paused and both hands were pulled away.

“Oh Aulê, what have I done?” Dwalin whispered, his hands ghosting over Ori’s back, over the bruises and marks he’d made on him. His eyes looked upon the tears on Ori’s face and he felt such anger. Dwalin turned quickly, walking over to their packs. He leant heavily against the rocks, his head resting in a hand. He hated himself. He hated what he was becoming. War had hardened him early on, and now he was incapable of not causing harm to those that grew close to him, even those he loved.

Ori shivered against the rocks and looked behind him at Dwalin’s despairing form. He turned and wiped the tears from his face before walking slowly towards him. Ori bent and lifted his scarf from the ground, twisting the fabric in his fingers. He stood right behind Dwalin, and gently lifted the scarf to wrap around the other’s neck from behind. The older Dwarf started at the soft fabric before him and turned to face Ori. The young dwarf held onto both ends of the scarf and pulled Dwalin gently towards him with it.

“Dwalin, you didn’t hurt me,” Ori spoke and the other scoffed. “You didn’t. And I think you’re very kind. You found my journal, what is that other than an act of kindness?” Ori asked in a gentle voice. He stood on his toes and placed a chaste kiss on Dwalin’s lips. The older Dwarf wrapped a strong arm around his back and breathed against the other’s hot mouth.

“And you’ve been protecting me all of this time,” Ori continued, with another innocent kiss. “Though…I wouldn’t oppose to you being a bit gentler with me, it’s my first time after all,” he said with a playful smile, and Dwalin looked at him in wonder.

“You know not what you offer me,” he spoke, though his arms were pulling Ori tighter to his body.

“Yes I do. I told you, I’m not a child,” Ori assured him and Dwalin leant down and devoured the other’s mouth. He lifted Ori into his arms, and gently laid his body out on the blankets and furs, his hands running across every inch of exposed skin. Dwalin sucked at Ori’s neck, kissing a trail down it and Ori moaned loudly and bucked up into him when the older Dwarf’s hands brushed across his hips. They writhed together and soon Dwalin’s fingers had roamed between Ori’s legs again, though this time he was careful. He gently eased one finger into the younger Dwarf, twisting it a bit and waiting until Ori’s face showed only pleasure before beginning to thrust it in and out. Dwalin sucked at Ori’s nipples while he prepared him slowly, entering a second finger when the other’s moans became loud and wild.
Dwalin pulled back to watch as he fingered the little one mercilessly, and he hastily untied his breeches to remove his growing hardness. Dwalin stroked at Ori’s arousal until his legs quivered wildly then placed himself between the other Dwarf’s legs, removing his fingers with a wet slick sound.

“Mukhuh?” He asked softly, unwilling to go further without permission.

“Medrûnat!” Ori shouted and Dwalin groaned before coating himself with spit.

“Oh, please, Dwalin, please,” Ori begged, wrapping his legs tightly around Dwalin’s waist.

“Malur,” The older Dwarf whispered and he began easing inside the other’s lithe body. Ori’s scarf draped over Dwalin’s shoulders and the young Dwarf gripped at it tightly, pulling Dwalin down to kiss him deeply. They moaned as their bodies rocked together, and Dwalin could not stop his fingers from roaming everywhere. They grazed Ori’s nipples, then over his collarbone, passed down to his belly and wrapped gently around his leaking arousal. Dwalin stroked him gently for a bit, and then moved his hands around to grip at Ori’s rear.

They did not last long, both overcome with pleasure. Dwalin’s fingers clenched tightly into Ori’s sides and he pulled the young Dwarf’s body towards him in quick short thrusts. Ori gasped with each one, and he shook about Dwalin sporadically as he spurted between their bodies. Dwalin growled at the feeling of Ori clenching around him and could not restrain himself from thrusting wildly into the other body. He swiftly pulled from Ori and turned him on all fours, pulling his hips up. Dwalin thrust in with abandon, his hands resting on Ori’s abdomen. His orgasm hit hard and he spent himself deep within Ori’s body, gently moving within him a moment longer. He placed a kiss on the other dwarf’s shoulder before Dwalin turned Ori towards him, bending down to catch his lips, and they lay against each other, kissing softly, their bodies still joined.

“A blessing upon you my little one,” Dwalin whispered in Ori’s ear. The other shivered and tightened around him, and Dwalin lifted his body onto his lap, seed dripping from between Ori’s legs.

“Shall I have you again?” Dwalin asked, and Ori all but begged as the other Dwarf thrust gently within him once more, pushing his back against the rocks behind him.

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The morning light had just hit when Bofur’s voice sounded out at the top of the cliff.

“Oh thank Aulë,” he said, and collapsed in front of the cave where Fili sat. The other Dwarf woke from a light slumber and stood in shock. His eyes travelled over Bofur towards Bombur who was practically passed out on his back, then finally to Nori, who knelt on the ground, a body draped over his shoulders.

“Kili…?” Fili whispered, and when Nori looked up and nodded, Fili rushed over to take his brother from his back.

“My brother! My dear brother, is he alright?” Fili desperately asked as eyes-roamed over Kili’s limp form. Nori immediately passed out on the ground and Gandalf rushed to his aid. Bofur managed to sit up, and looked at Fili with worried eyes.

“He fell through ice, caught a fever, chills, don’t know,” Bofur gasped then lay back on the snow. By now the others were awake and at the entrance of the niche. Even Dori had approached, and his eyes lit up at the sight of Nori. He rushed to his side, checking him over for injuries, and he finally
relaxed when he realised his brother had passed out from exhaustion and not something fatal. Oin approached Fili and Kili, looking over the latter with keen eyes. He pulled various herbs from his bag, and mixed them together, placing them over the other Dwarf’s chest and brow, then told Fili to work on warming his body. Fili held his brother tightly, and kissed at his face, overcome with the sight of him and joy at just being able to hold him. Finally Oin rose and wiped his hands together.

“It’s manageable. His fever should break soon,” Oin spoke and he turned then to tend to the other three, giving them mild tea blends to soothe their aches and pains and to help them relax. Even Nori woke up at the smell of the herbs and managed to guzzle some down. Dori hovered over him, his fingers twisting together nervously.

“It’s good to see you brother,” Nori voiced, smiling at the other gently. Dori returned the sentiment with a relieved sigh then frowned.

“No sight of Ori?” he asked, and Nori looked away and shook his head.

“I’m sorry Dori. I wanted to look longer but, Kili needed aid, and I couldn’t lead the others back into danger,” he said, feeling as though he’d somehow betrayed Dori. His elder brother merely sighed again and settled beside him.

“It’s not your fault. He might still turn up, I won’t give up hope. For now, I’m glad to have at least one of you alive and well,” Dori said and embraced his brother gently.

Bifur helped pull his cousins up to settle inside the niche and he patted them both gently on the shoulders. They understood, returned the sentiment, and decided to get some rest, bodies on the verge of giving out after the steep climb. The group was grateful to find each other in relatively good condition, though they all lamented at the still missing members of the company, their king amongst them. Thorin was the soul of their company, and without his guidance the others felt unwilling to move on. Eventually Gandalf hummed deeply and stood to set out.

“I will return soon as I can, I’m not sure how far I must go to find what I need,” he said cryptically and the Dwarves watched him with hope in their eyes.

“Then you have a plan mister Gandalf?” Dori asked him.

“Hmm…something like that, yes. Rest, and stay put until I return, we will find your leader yet,” the wizard spoke, and he exited the small dwelling and left quickly. They sat and did just that while occasionally sipping on teas to ease the emptiness in their bellies.

Fili held his brother to his chest for hours. He kept him warm, rubbing his arms and body to stop the shivers. Fili’s body was tense as he watched his younger brother shake and frown in his sleep. Often he bent and kissed away the creases on Kili’s face, and though he felt the eyes of the other Dwarves upon him, he cared not. Oin had been right though, the fever did break, and Kili’s body trembled a bit less with each passing hour. It was not until mid-afternoon that the other woke. Fili watched as deep brown eyes opened and looked up at him, then all of the tension left his body when his brother spoke.

“I was so lost without you brother,” Kili whispered and Fili choked on a sob.

“And I you Kili,” he uttered then placed a kiss on his brother’s nose. His braids trailed over Kili’s face and not long after their lips found each other.

“Never again will I leave your side,” Fili mumbled against the other’s face. He cupped Kili’s cheek in his hand and encased the other in his brother’s dark hair.
“Fili, love you,” Kili murmured gently and Fili held him even tighter.

“Uzayang,” he whispered and they kissed each other breathless.

“Well, would you look at that,” Bofur commented, sipping on a cup of chamomile. The others watched with smiles on their faces, and Bifur chuckled a bit at the sight.

“It’s not all that shocking really,” Nori commented, leaning heavily against the rock wall.

“As long as they don’t start screwing each other, this hovel is small enough as it is,” Gloin muttered, and the others laughed at the joke. Fili just held his brother tight as can be against his chest, a hand gently pressed above his heart, and Kili weakly wrapped his arms around him in return.

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Ori refused to leave the cave until Dwalin had at least managed to get a little rest. The older Dwarf argued and insisted he was perfectly fine, but Ori put his foot down and surprisingly Dwalin had conceded. The young Dwarf was perfectly capable of keeping watch for a few hours and he promised to wake the other if he saw anything at all. The sun had risen and it sparkled off the snowy lands around them. The weather seemed calmer, the winds less aggressive, and a much lighter snow fell from the sky.

When the sun had reached what Ori thought was mid sky he woke the other and they set out together. Ori walked beside Dwalin and they chatted lightly, in much better spirits despite their hunger. It seemed Dwalin had led them true. Once mid-afternoon arrived Ori could barely see where the snow dwindled on the horizon, and the beginnings of a forest. The Greenwood, Ori figured with excitement. They moved quicker after that, trudging down a snowy slope with excitement.

Ori squeaked in shock when Dwalin grabbed him around his waist and pulled him down into the snow.

“Shh, don’t move, look,” he said, and Ori glanced up and saw huge furred animals stomping through the snow towards the mountains. He gasped lightly and rushed to pull his journal and quill from his pack.

“Mammoths! I have to sketch them, hold on,” Ori exclaimed and Dwalin chuckled as he watched the young Dwarf take down a quick likeness. The sight was endearing, Ori’s tongue stuck out from between his teeth, and his fingers poked from his knitted gloves while he scribbled quickly in the pages of his book. Dwalin was captivated by the other.

“They’re beautiful,” Ori finally whispered, lowering his quill and watching the last mammoth disappear with awe.

“Beautiful? Not perhaps a word I’d use to describe a wild animal like that,” Dwalin commented with a raised eyebrow. Ori turned to look back at him.

“There is beauty in all things, even beasts as big as these,” the young Dwarf stated, and he closed his journal and tied it, putting it back in his pack. The older dwarf watched him intensely.

“Even beasts such as me?” Dwalin could not resist asking. Ori paused, and then looked up at him again, his face serious.

“You’re no beast,” he spoke, and their eyes nearly penetrated each other’s souls. Dwalin moved quickly, pushing Ori onto his back and pressing down on his body. They kissed passionately in the snow as Dwalin nipped at the other’s lips and brought tender moans from his throat. They pulled
from one another finally, panting and breathing hard. Something about Ori had Dwalin smiling like a child, and he placed one last kiss on the other before lifting him from the ground.

“Let’s get out of these blasted mountains, before the night falls again,” he said while brushing snow from the other’s body. Ori grinned at him and they practically ran to the edge of the forest.

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It was dangerously close to nightfall when Gandalf returned to their cave in the mountain. He seemed rushed and insistent.

“Hurry, get up, we must move now, before it grows too dark to see,” he shouted in the opening, and the Dwarves were up and following him quickly down a path. Fili carried Kili in his arms, the other still too weak to do much walking. Dori gasped at the sight of giant winged birds perched upon the cliff.

“Eagles!” he shouted, and Gandalf beckoned them to approach. Within moments they were lifted and perched atop the birds, flying out across the mountain landscape with mixed cheers of joy, excitement and fear.

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Thorin fell to his knees completely worn out and lurched to the side when the Hobbit fell limply from his back. He turned quickly hovering over Bilbo’s still body and shaking him insistently.

“Wake up! Wake up!” He shouted, but the Hobbit showed no recognition, his head lolling to the side, his body frighteningly motionless.

“Melekûn, please, wake up,” the Dwarf begged, though he knew it was useless. Thorin slammed his fists into the snow and knelt over Bilbo’s body feeling more lost and hopeless than ever before.

“Achrâchi gabilu,” he whispered and shook above him.

“I’m sorry, so sorry, I have failed you Bilbo Baggins,” Thorin voiced, nearly collapsing atop the other. He looked up, tears dripping from his eyes as loud screeches echoed in the sky. Birds flew above their bodies, circling, and Thorin watched as they lowered around him, a recognizable wizard jumping from one’s back. He could not believe their luck. The Dwarf raised his arms to the sky and cried.

“Mahal, thank you!” He shouted, and finally he allowed his body to rest as strong arms pulled him and the Hobbit to safety.

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When Thorin woke it was in the home of a shifter. Beorn, he discovered, welcomed the company with open arms, and offered his dwellings for as long as they needed to recover. It seemed Gandalf had friends in all the right places. The Dwarves ate well to regain their strength, though lamented the loss of Ori and Dwalin. There was no sight of the two as the eagles flew across the mountains and they regretfully had to give up chase in an effort to tend to Thorin and Bilbo. The company was torn on whether to venture back and look for them or continue onwards without.

The Hobbit was recovering slowly. His wounds had been severe, though Oin and Dori were able to tend to them with the help of Beorn and his herbs. His fingers had blistered with frost bite and some permanent damage would most likely remain there. Thankfully, however, he would not lose any. Thorin’s wrappings had done their job, and the Dwarf was grateful to know he’d had a part in saving
the small thing’s life. He sat by Bilbo as he slept, and rarely left his side. It gave him much time to think. He mourned the loss of his good friend Dwalin, and the absence of their youngest member, Ori. Thorin blamed himself. He felt responsible for the company’s wellbeing and he had been unable to keep them together and safe.

His nephews too, had been through much. The two brothers were more inseparable than ever and when Thorin was not sitting next to the Hobbit it was next to Kili, who still recuperated in bed. Fili had not left his brother’s side, and Thorin was not blind to their growing attachment. When his heir had looked at him and spoken with determination Thorin could not be angry, instead he felt only great respect for his nephew.

“I am sorry Thorin, but he is more important to me than this quest. If it comes down to it, I will choose him over Erebor,” Fili had said, and Thorin nodded gently at his words. He understood them well, and the separation of their company in the mountain pass had brought similar thoughts to his own mind.

“As you are to me, my nephew. My time with our burglar has opened my eyes to a few things. I will do my best to see that no harm comes to any member of this company from now on. I refuse to become blinded as my forefathers before me did,” Thorin responded and he held Fili as he had when he was a child, understanding that family and friends were far more important than any jewels or kingdom in the world.

The more he looked upon the Hobbit the more he realised he’d underestimated him. Bilbo was heroic and determined, and the Dwarf would never forget how he fought valiantly even with his severe injuries. The Halfling possessed every quality Thorin held most dear and lamented when he thought on how close he had come to losing him. The Dwarf rubbed hair from Bilbo’s face and whispered such words to him through the nights. On one such night Bilbo jerked awake with a start, gasping and clawing at his blankets in fear.

“Hush, all is well Bilbo,” Thorin gently spoke to him, holding the smaller body down until he relaxed.

“Where am I?” Bilbo asked, his eyes desperate and fearful.

“Safe, you’re safe, and with friends,” Thorin had responded before kissing his brow and lulling him back to sleep. He looked upon the bandages that wrapped around Bilbo’s head and arm and felt pain latch onto his heart. Thorin knew he would do the same as his nephew if the choice presented itself. He would protect the Hobbit and give up on Erebor if it meant saving his life. Thorin monitored the Halfling’s wounds and changed his bandages frequently. After three days they were healing well and relief settled in his chest. He allowed himself more rest and woke to cheerful jeers the following morning.

When Thorin walked into Beorn’s main hall he was greeted with two familiar faces.

“Look who I found wondering in my forests!” Beorn hollered and he gestured to the two Dwarves behind him. Dwalin and Ori smiled and bowed and Thorin rushed forward to embrace his friend, while Ori’s siblings picked the other up and spun him with glee. Somehow, they had all been reunited and Thorin felt they had been truly blessed by Mahal. They sat together in a hall and everyone shared the stories of their adventures. Kili even joined them, feeling much better after a few days’ rest. Fili wrapped him in a blanket and stood behind him, pressing his nose into his brother’s hair. The group listened in awe as Thorin described the attack of the snow leopards, and Bilbo’s selflessness as he fought through the pain to save the Dwarf. The company had a newfound respect for their burglar and they all wished him a swift recovery.
When the conversation turned to Ori and Dwalin the young Dwarf blushed while Dwalin tactfully avoided much of their adventure. Dori looked his brother over with care and let out a loud exclamation at his state.

“You’re covered in bruises Ori!” he shouted, and the younger Dwarf flushed heavily and glanced at Dwalin who looked away with shame.

“From the fall! The rocks were unkind,” he reassured his brother, though Dori was having none of it, and continued to suspiciously glance at Dwalin. Nori sat twisting daggers between his fingers and watched him heavily as well. The tall Dwarf fidgeted in his seat until Ori continued to assuage his brothers with tales of Dwalin’s prowess, and how grateful he was that the other Dwarf had found his journal in the blizzard.

Eventually many of the Dwarves settled in for the night, just a few hanging around to converse. Dwalin turned to Thorin gravely and spoke of the creatures he’d encountered in the snow.

“Wargs found us. They were rider-less but still it’s worrying. Someone is tracking us, and rather determinedly if they seek even in such horrifying weather,” the Dwarf said and Thorin pondered over the news.

“I have come across troubles as well, it is worrying that more dark creatures are showing themselves in these parts,” Gandalf admitted. He smoked from his pipe and stroked at his beard before continuing.

“You must be careful Thorin, even more so as you venture on. Beorn can show you safer paths through the forest. The Mirkwood is a dangerous place now. I would recommend seeking any help you can,” Gandalf implied, and Thorin knew he spoke of elves and men. The Dwarf withheld his disagreement for now, understanding that many conflicts lay ahead.

“We will plan with him these next few days. It’s more important than ever that we stay together as one group,” Thorin admitted and sighed heavily.

“For now let us rest, we have much strength to regain before venturing out again,” Balin commented, and they all rose to seek their rooms. Thorin however returned to his usual place beside Bilbo’s bed. He realised with surprise that the Hobbit was awake and looking relatively unimpaired. Thorin sat gently on the bed and looked down at him.

“How are you today Master Burglar?” Thorin asked and Bilbo looked at him as though confused by his close proximity. His eyes raked over Thorin and finally he smiled at the Dwarf.

“Much better, thank you,” he said. Thorin checked over his wounds once again. The Hobbit seemed to have no issues moving his injured arm and though it obviously still pained him slightly, it was healing very well indeed. The gash in his head was completely scabbed over and Thorin decided to leave it unwrapped to breathe. They sat awkwardly next to each other until Bilbo spoke.

“Will you not call me Bilbo?” the Hobbit asked, and Thorin turned towards him with soft eyes. He lifted a hand to gently brush at Bilbo’s face and smiled softly when the other leaned into the touch. Thorin hesitated a moment, thinking about what he was about to admit.

“I would call you Ghivashel, if you would allow it,” Thorin finally spoke, the Khuzdul flowing leisurely off his tongue, and Bilbo looked at him and fumbled over the foreign word.

“Giv…a…shell?” he tried, and Thorin nodded gently.

“It means, treasure of all treasures, Bilbo,” he uttered, and the Halfling flushed deeply. Thorin rubbed
a finger across Bilbo’s lower lip as he stared into his eyes.

“We do not normally share our language with outsiders, but you, dear Bilbo, are no outsider,” Thorin expressed. Bilbo seemed flustered but overjoyed by the statement and he reached out a hand to stroke through the Dwarf’s long hair.

“And…what shall I call you?” he asked, his eyes nervously flitting away. Thorin pushed the other’s body gently to lie down on the bed and hovered above him.

“There are many things which you could call me. Thorin, if you wish. Or perhaps Melhekh,” he answered.

“It means king,” he elaborated when Bilbo looked at him with curiosity. Bilbo appeared to enjoy that one and Thorin smirked a bit and continued.

“And if you are particularly daring, Āzyungâl,” this one seemed to captivate Bilbo and he tried to say it.

“Azyun-gal, what’s that mean?” The word fell from his lips surprisingly easily. Thorin liked the sound and he leant down to kiss the Hobbit’s ear.

“Lover,” he whispered and licked along Bilbo’s neck, drawing tiny gasps from the other. When he raised his body to look in Bilbo’s eyes the Hobbit was trembling with lust.

“Which shall it be?” Thorin asked, though he thought he might already know the answer.

“Āzyungâl,” Bilbo voiced, the word slipping easily from his mouth. Thorin captured his lips quickly, drawing a deep moan from them, and ran a hand down the Hobbit’s side. He had no doubt that he’d found his one love. The two writhed against one another, kissing fervently. When Thorin heard the Khuzdul word pass from Bilbo’s mouth again he groaned and slipped his hands underneath the Hobbit’s loose shirt. He pushed it up and kissed down the other’s chest, pausing to nibble at him along the way. Bilbo trembled beneath him, and Thorin felt intense relief that it was because of pleasure for once and not from cold. He was so thankful they had survived, thankful he had another chance.

It did not take long to disrobe the Hobbit, and Thorin spread his thighs, kneeling between them. The Dwarf rubbed the pads of his thumbs in circles at Bilbo’s hips taking joy from the sweet sounds it produced. His Ghivashel was very aroused and Thorin eagerly licked his lips before bending to take him in his mouth. Bilbo threw his head back with a moan, and desperately fought against Thorin’s hands as he tried to thrust up into the wet warmth between Thorin’s lips. The Dwarf held him firmly, amused by Bilbo’s struggle before trailing a finger between the Hobbit’s legs to tease at his entrance. He was gentle, and breached him slowly, only thrusting when Bilbo’s muscles relaxed around him. He fingered the Hobbit liberally and pulled away when the other was shaking with excitement.

Bilbo’s eyes looked down at him, as though pleading for him to continue and Thorin chuckled, stroking gently at his bare thighs.

“I want you, I want all of you,” Thorin stated, and Bilbo spread his legs even wider.

“Please, Thorin,” he gasped out, and the Dwarf wasted no time removing his own hardness to place it between the Hobbit’s legs. He leant over him, his arousal resting against Bilbo’s entrance as he kissed him.

“Will you have me forever Ghivashel? Will you open yourself to me always?” Thorin asked against Bilbo’s lips. The Hobbit looked at him indignantly as though the answer was obvious.
“Yes, of course,” he spoke and Thorin was secretly glad to hear Bilbo’s nerve had returned. He thrust forward swiftly, but with care, slipping into the Hobbit’s body. They held each other tightly before Thorin began to move with long sure thrusts. Thorin gripped Bilbo to his chest and pleasured him until he keened, wrapping his legs around the Dwarf’s back and slipping his feet under his shirt. Thorin could feel the thick hair atop Bilbo’s feet scratching at his waist and he thrust harder, entangling a hand in Bilbo’s curly locks.

They kissed again and moved together, knocking the bed roughly against the wall. Thorin would regret this in the morning when the company teased him mercilessly, king or not. But right now, he could care less. Bilbo gasped out his name and their tongues licked at each other’s lips. The Dwarf lifted the Hobbit’s hips slightly and moved at a deeper angle causing great cries to come from deep in Bilbo’s throat. He knew the other was close, and wrapped thick fingers around his arousal, stroking languidly. Bilbo shook under him and released with a cry, spurting across his chest.

Thorin gripped Bilbo’s hips with both hands and thrust wildly, taking his pleasure from the body beneath him as it twitched around his arousal. His eyes locked with Bilbo’s when the Hobbit gripped lightly at one of his braids and he thrust thrice more before pulling Bilbo taut against him and spilling within his body. His eyes locked with Bilbo’s when the Hobbit gripped lightly at one of his braids and he thrust thrice more before pulling Bilbo taut against him and spilling within his body. The Dwarf breathed heavily and removed himself slowly, watching the evidence of their coupling leak from Bilbo’s body. He embraced the other, lying beside him and kissed over the Hobbit’s tired eyes.

“Thank you,” Thorin whispered.

“Whatever for?” Bilbo asked. Surely the Dwarf wasn’t thanking him for sex, how absurd. Thorin could hear the outrage in Bilbo’s voice and laughed lightly before stroking a hand down his back.

“For opening my eyes,” he finally said, his eyes crinkling with joy.

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The company did not rise until late morning, enjoying their extended rest before they sat together with Beorn around a large table and a great feast was presented before them. Thorin led Bilbo for the first time from his bed rest so he could eat with the company, and the Dwarves welcomed him with happy smiles and many comments of endearment. Bilbo flushed at them and denied his greatness though he knew they would have none of it. When Thorin sat next to him and interlocked their fingers on top of the table instead of beneath it not a word was said. However Bilbo met the sly glances of several of the Dwarves and Bofur winked not so subtly at him. Fili and Kili stumbled in a few moments later, looking rumpled and flushed. The attention moved to them as they sat beside each other in the remaining two empty seats.

“What have you two been up to?” Dwalin asked with a leer and Kili’s neck and ears turned red as he looked down at the wooden pattern on the table.

“I thought it was quite obvious,” Fili joked as he raised an arm over the back of his chair.

“Brother!” Kili shouted in embarrassment.

“A randy bunch you Dwarves and bunny are!” Beorn teased as he placed a final plate in the centre of the table. Bilbo’s brows scrunched slightly at the nickname and the others laughed with amusement.

“Eat well small friends, your journey is yet long!” the shifter bellowed, gulping at a thick stein. The table was full and yet the Dwarves hesitated to dig in, instead revelling in the sight of their company alive and well, and most importantly together.
“Thadulur kuthu barufizu oshmâkha ra tûm fulz muneb meregizu,” Bifur finally said and he raised a glass and looked at Thorin. The Dwarf king inclined his head and nodded with a smile before raising his own glass to drink. If there was ever a time for celebration it was now, and he felt quite prosperous even without the halls of Erebor surrounding them.

“Quite right, Bifur, and so let us feast!” Thorin stated, squeezing Bilbo’s hand gently in his own. The company moved at once, grabbing food, tossing it, and eating as excitedly as they once had at Bag End. Even Bilbo eagerly dug in to honey and bread, glad to stuff himself after so many days without food. Ori playfully tossed berries across the table into Dwalin’s mouth, drawing the attention of his ever watchful brothers who were torn between glaring at the large dwarf and smiling fondly at Ori. Bofur pulled out his clarinet halfway through the meal and with his brother and cousin started up silly songs that brought cheer to everyone’s faces. Gandalf bobbed his head along to the tunes, puffing away on his pipe, while Balin conversed with Gloin, Oin, and Beorn about the pathways ahead of them, sharing knowledge of the dark forests. Fili and Kili laughed heartily throwing playful glances at Bilbo and Thorin’s joined hands and teasing the Hobbit throughout the meal. Their journey had barely begun, but sitting there amongst each other, they felt closer than ever.

End Notes

I would have written a smut scene with Fili and Kili, but I felt that it didn’t really fit in this telling of events….so most likely I’ll write it as a separate chapter and add it on later. I stole some of the creatures they encounter from mob lists in LOTRO, because I’m sad like that. I also wondered if the close proximity of the one ring to Thorin influenced his actions at all/caused his lust for greed. I figured if they never found the ring, things might progress differently in the future in terms of how Thorin reacts and deals with situations.

And here are the Khuzdul words/phrases I used in order of appearance, and their relative meanings. Sorry for any mistakes to those Khuzdul aficionados out there:

Sanbaruf (the title): Literally means perfect/true family
Kulhu ma sakhizu ya izzûghizu, ma mahtadadizu ya ’agulhizu: What you don't see with your eyes, don't invent with your mouth. (A common dwarf phrase that I thought Bifur would say)
Ghar-khafush: Bat Cave
Achûshôm ganagifi ughlekh ya ghureg, nidif binghureg: Worries go down better with ale than without.
Âkminrûk zu: Thank you
A plague upon you sons of trolls: not Khuzdul, but it’s largely speculated to be an insult Gimli says in the LOTR films.
Aulë: the common word for the deity that created the first dwarves.
Mahal: The dwarven word for Aulë
Mukhuh?: May I?
Medrûnat: Please (in an inviting manner – “go ahead”)

Malur: With pleasure

Uzayang: Greatest love

Melekûn: Hobbit

Achrâchi gabilu: I’m sorry (literally: ”it pains me greatly”)

Ghivashel: Treasure of all treasures

Melhekh: King

Âzyungâl: Lover

Thadulur kuthu barufizu oshmâkha ra tûm fulz muneb meregizu: Only when your family is guarded and your halls are prosperous should you feast.

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