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### An adventure of a life time

by shishiwastaken

**Summary**

All she really wanted was pancakes but she'll settle on a dragon slaying quest. After literally falling into the lap of the dwarf king, Thia decides to give adventuring a try. Sure there danger, the threat of death, and over all discomfort but what's a little inconvenience amongst friends? Not that they are friends... or something more?

**Notes**

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!
Chapter 1

CHAPTER 1

It all started in a hole in the ground. Yes, a dirty, smelly, wet hole. It had sleeted earlier in the day and the streets were a mixture of caked on dirt from tires as well as muddy, clumpy, half-frozen water. You see, this hole in the ground was a New York City pothole and that means discomfort. My name is Thia and this is my story about how I had the adventure of a lifetime.

Sitting on my bed, hugging my body pillow and practicing japanese on my 3DS as I often do, my brother walks into my room as if he owned it. Being that we live in an apartment, you can guess that in all honesty us freelading children own very little. Without looking up I can see him leaning his thin frame against the door as he haughtily informs me that our family is going to IHOP and that I need to get a move on. I take my time responding, but not because I dislike the destination of the outing. Quite the opposite really; I love pancakes almost as much as I love sleep. 'And that's saying something.' I hesitate in answering simply because I hate being told what to do by people I feel have no authority over me. And because I'm probably too stubborn for my own good. WAY too stubborn.

"Get dressed, we're leaving."

"Hn."

"Did you hear me?" he says, sounding a little more irritated. Not that I can say I really care. He is the younger sibling after all; I'm supposed to annoy him "I said get up."

"Hmm."

"Don't make me come over there little girl."

If it isn't for his audible grin, he would almost sound like he means to intimidate me. 'Cute.' Now let me just be clear: I am the second oldest child of eight children. Don't cry for me; I cry enough for myself. This has given me an "I tell you, you don't tell me" mentality. Not to say I don't have respect. On the contrary, I am very respectful and honor titles and placements as well as I am able. However I require that respect in return. I'm not a lady or a baroness but I don't take kindly to being called out of my name. As such, none of my siblings tell me what to do, except my only older sister and she isn't here at the moment. However my brother, who is only a year younger than I, is trying to get me to roll over. And he wouldn't be the first. Standing at only 5'2 with a petite build and a baby face, often gives people the impression that I am 14 instead of my full 22 years. Being quiet and avoiding eye contact doesn't help my case. The whole kid thing annoys me greatly, and my brother knows this. Well then, two can play at that game.

"Don't get smart with me, shorty."

His smirking face quickly turns south into a deep frown at my retort. At 5'8 he isn't really considered short, but the men in my family are all at least 6'0; making him the shortest by a landslide. Waving my hand dismissively at him I rise from my bed like the queen I'll never be and with a huff, he turns from the doorway and disappears. I save the progress of my game and hook it up delicately to the charger before searching for an outfit to wear. I have to hurry; pancakes are waiting. I probably said this already but, I love pancakes.

"I love pancakes, yes I do. I love pancakes, how about you?"
After selecting my favorite pink hoodie and placing it on over a plain white camisole, I begin to hunt for my jeans in my floor turned dresser space. I rarely put my pants away, thus the floor became their permanent place. Locating the elusive garments, I dress and pack my bag. I always carry way too much stuff, to point where I look like I could spend the night out when I only intended to go… well… eat for example. I was a girl scout for about 5 years and I take the motto "be prepared" very seriously. Picking up my green, fuzzy frog bag I shove my stuff into it while murmuring a list as I go along.

"Pens… scrunchy… keys… wallet. What else do I need? Phone… iPod… kindle… money."

Glancing in the bag I notice that it already holds lotion, hand sanitizer, a comb, and pads. Remembering that I had used the bag for my visit with my grandparents the week before clues me in since I usually don't carry lotion. 'A little ash never killed anyone.' Too lazy to take them out, I close the bag and set about dealing with IT.

"We meet again…"

Cautiously I grab a brush and run it through my hair. At least, I would have if it hadn't gotten stuck. The mass of dark cottony curls gather atop my head like headphones in a pocket. The joys of being mixed. With more than a few meaningful tugs and a heavy duty head band, I consider myself as ready as I'm going to get. Snatching up my coat, bag, and glasses I head for the door only to nearly run smack into my brother. He is once again smirking as a result of my near collision. Due to my social anxiety I have a …. slight aversion… to social situations, including but not limited to a distaste for physical contact. Another thing my brother likes to exploit with his creepy attempts of hugs in the false pretense of "sibling bonding." Shudder.

"What do you want now?" I question in exasperation

"Nothing. Just checking on you. You're taking forever."

We would have stayed there and argued but my mother calls for us to help her with our two youngest siblings. At just a mere seven and four years of age, they can a handful at times. Eventually, everyone is thankfully ready and the five of us set out. It isn't the whole family but that is rare since there were so many of us. With the children's schooling, us older kids in college, and my parents long time divorce it is unlikely for the whole family to gather. We are all spread nicely along the East coast better than the ocean.

We file out of the house and begin our trek to the wonderful International House of Pancakes. There isn't much to see, living in a city can be rather repetitive. 'Car. Car. Light post. Homeless man. Car.' Then again, I'm sure a country girl would say the same thing about grass and… cows I guess. Speaking of the county, not looking where I am going I walk into one of the few trees on our block. 'A tree grows in Brooklyn. A tree as in singular.' Bouncing back, I rub my nose and check for blood even though I knew there would be none. Thankfully, my family wasn't paying attention either and the only punishment I suffer is a bruised ego and a sprint to catch up to them.

"No one saw that? Good."

Looking back, I honestly don't know how they got far enough for me to have to run to catch up to them. Nor do I know how I missed a TREE. Or how a giant hole in the ground didn't alert me to, oh I don't know, go around? Still, it happened and in my mad dash across the street I fell into a deep dark hole that wasn't called depression. No, it was called middle earth.

They better have pancakes here.
Welcome to the reupload...tion... of An adventure of a Lifetime. Some of you may have enjoyed this story before, and some of you may be new. I welcome you all the same. Some of you may ask why I deleted the original story and the answer is simple: It had so many typos that it was too difficult to read without sighing. Since I have to go through each and every chapter, I decided just to start over. That being said, everyone should be happy to know that since the story is fully written, that there shall be no delays. Unless I am physically or technologically incapable of uploading. Other than that, you can expect at most multiple uploads a week and a single upload if push comes to shove. I do love comments and I encourage you to do so, please and thank you!
Chapter 2

You know that dream where you are flying and it's amazing before you realize that humans can't fly and you start hurtling towards the earth like an asteroid that's late to kill the dinosaurs? Well that's how I feel at the moment but less space rock, more bird with one wing. The wind whips me like a slave before the trees have their turn and I begin to feel more like a human punching bag than a dying creature of slight. 'Is this my punishment for not recycling?' All thoughts of my carbon footprint are pushed away as I crash land hard and upright. I groan softly, knowing that after a fall like that, most people are dead. Most being a very loose word; It is surprising that I do not break every vertebrae in my spine landing like this. Whether I'm lucky, blessed, or cursed is a choice I'll decide when I know what the heck is going on.

Testing my limbs, I wince at the squishing sound only soaked matter can make, regretfully accepting that the ground is wet beneath me. I sway in the aftershocks of the fall, refusing to give into the nausea as I reach behind me to rub my sore bottom but pause when my hand meets fur. Now I could be wrong but last time I checked, the earth was not fuzzy. Then again, that's not really something I ever checked for. Slowly turning I give a silent prayer that I have not landed on a rat. Now THAT would be awful. Instead, I come face to face with the dwarf I had watched die a month earlier; Thorin Oakenshield. It takes but a moment to realize that this is no train station interactive poster. I can tell you this: he looks surprised to see me. 'So I guess this isn't a dream?' It's not every day a battered and bruised girl falls out of the sky and lands in your lap. I'm not saying it couldn't happen, just that... you know... it doesn't.

Rather than do the sensible thing and explain myself or better yet get off, I sit and stare at him. 'This can't be real; this only happens on the internet and dreams. Its not a dream, so must be the net.' Still... looking at him this close makes me want this to be as real as taxes. His thick hair is drenched from what I can guess was the rain but I can still make out peppered colors of black and gray. The locks are wild; ruthlessly untamed like a melano lion. I find myself wishing he would toss his head like in the shampoo commercials. His strong jaw encases a ruggedly handsome face with the most startling blue eyes. 'Oh gosh his eyes.' Forgetting that this is an actual person who probably doesn't want me touching their person, I stroke my finger tips across his dusted cheeks, just below his eyes. They showed clear confusion but I am in no condition to explain myself because I am too busy crying.

"Wahhhhhhhhh!" I wailed like a banshee.

I am in tears. I am meeting THE Thorin Oakenshield and I'm sniveling like a spoiled brat! I want to throw my arms around his neck but I doubt either of us would appreciate it very much. 'Snot's s'not sexy.' So I settled for covering my face with my hands and weeping into my palms. I can feel
Thorin awkwardly pat my back in an attempt to console me and I feel even worse for putting him in this situation. Here we sit. In the drizzle. Apparently on a pony by the smell. A dwarf and a woman. A fanatic and her obsession. I would love to stop my pathetic weeping but I don't know what to say. 'Hi, I read your story and watched your movie and I love it almost as much as I love Silence of the lambs. I'm so excited to meet you because you aren't real and you die pretty soon. Along with your heir and your backup heir. That probably wasn't the best idea, bringing the whole direct line of Durin to face a dragon. Oh! Did I mention I know the whole adventure better than I know my own face? 'Cause I do!' Yeah, not gonna happen.

So I sit here and sniff until my legs go numb and my tears run dry before I finally look up to gaze around. We are surrounded by lush green trees, bluish skies and… the company. Who are staring at me with looks of confusion and pity but mostly suspicion. I did stroke his beard and burst into tears so I wouldn't be surprised if they are offended. I hate making a scene but the whole sky falling thing made me the center of attention. It can't be helped now. I swirl on Thorin's thighs again, not having any room to actually back off him, in search of Gandalf. Finding him next to us with my wonderful skills of hat-o-location, I speak in the firmest voice I can muster after my impromptu cry fest. Looking at both of them between their eyes (I can't look people directly in the eye. Working on it.) I announce my intentions because dream, net, or hell I'm doing this.

"I want to join your... um... group." No need to make anyone suspicious just yet. I'll probably break an arm, a leg, my spine too on this trip though. But I can't let a chance like this pass me by! Not going is NOT an option, Call it American determinism or an overzealous fangirl; whichever fits your fancy "The fact that I fell out of sky, and lived, should be enough for you to at least hear out my proposal."

Someone behind us gasps, another snorts, and few grumble, but many just laugh. If I was them, I'd probably laugh too. But I'm me, so I settle for silently biting the inside of my cheek. I feel Thorin tense behind me the moment I make my offer while Gandalf merely raises an eyebrow. Omg, Gandalf just 'eyebrowed me! Must. Contain. Squeal. If Thorin wasn't behind me, I'd do the fake lady fainting spell. I suppress my inner excitement as the two share a look. With a nod Gandalf begins to dismount his horse while Thorin calls the company to a halt. The fact that after a girl literally fell from God knows where and this guy was still marching to his mountain, makes me think he must be the truly determined one.

"We shall hear what you have to say." he says sliding me from his lap and dismounting the pony "But that is all. I give no promises that you shall be allowed to stay."

There is a pause as I realize he is waiting for me to get down. Having only been on a member of the equine family twice in my life has left my riding skills nonexistent. Still, it's not that far so I could just hop down… right? 'And so begins my pattern of broken bones.' There is a chance that it could end well for me, being that I did just fall through time and space. Meh, I'm sure it'll be fine. Taking the risk, I leap from the pony and land on my feet. However, I can't stick the landing.

"Ding dong dang it!" I swear in my own personal way

Gravity continues to pull me down until I am kneeling on one knee with my hands in the dirt. I drop my head into a bow to hide my face in hopes that no one will notice my fluke. 'But lets be honest, everyone noticed.' After a moment I look up again to see Thorin staring back at me with a look of, is that amusement?! Almost all the fan-fictions I read portrayed him as haughty and pigheaded with the sense of humor that God gave a lemon. Thinking back to the movie I realize that he actually smiled, or smirked, quite often. 'Interesting.' The center of my thoughts interrupts my inner musing as the company chuckles around us.
"I know you are eager to join our... group," he rumbles like distant thunder as he offers me his hand "but let us first hear your tale before you accept me as your King."

Taking notice of my submissive position, I accept the offered assistance and jerk upright before mumbling a 'Sorry'.

"Fili! Kili! Water the ponies."

With that, he leads me over to a conveniently fallen log where the wizard already sits.

"So" he begins, placing his sword strategically on his lap. To some, it would look like a relaxed pose but I know it's just for easy access "Either you are a witch or you are very lucky. Tell us your story and let us decide."

His blue eyes hint at his curiosity and caution but otherwise his face was blank. This was going to be a long night. At least it stopped raining.
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CHAPTER 3

Inhaling deeply, I think of where I should start. Probably with an introduction. I have introduced myself plenty of times, as does everyone else at some point in their lives. I'm sure I can do it again; practice makes perfect, right? Taking another deep breathe I began to word vomit an introduction.

"My name is Thia Malcolmson and I am twenty two years old. Technically 5 1/2 since I'm a leap year baby." Pausing, I open my mouth before closing and reopening it again "Do you even have leap years?" I receive no answer, though I didn't expect one if I'm honest "Pink is my favorite color, and she's an alright artist as well." I laugh to myself at the joke before remembering that they have no idea what I'm talking about. Nor will they understand my goals and achievements in life "Uh... I'm currently a student... studying..." I don't think they psychology here "Behavior for better... interrogations...Yeah. And I work at a bakery."

"I am known as Gandalf the grey wizard. Perhaps you have heard of me. And this" the sorcerer waves a gnarled hand towards the stiff dwarrow "Is Thorin."

"And what does your husband" Thorin let's the word slip past his tongue as if he is tasting it for truth. It doesn't escape me that Gandalf left off Thorin's title, probably deciding that it wasn't needed if they decided to chuck me into a river "think of you attempting to join groups of dwarves in the middle of the woods?"

"I'm not married, so I don't know nor do I really care what he would think."

"And the people you with with? Apprentice under? Your family?" He shoots out my nearest and dearest like rapid fire, gaging my reaction "Will they not worry if you suddenly disappear?"

"I think I've already disappeared." Gazing around at the beauty my world has been stripped of, I know I'm not home anymore " I don't even think I'm in the right world any longer."

"Definately a witch then." He mutters, tightening his hands on his sword. I'm sure he'll kill me now but he offers me a look of pity. Not pity as in you wish to help someone, but pity like you give a mentally disturbed person. 'He thinks I'm crazy!' Great "What other reason would there be for you to come falling from the sky?"

"I'm NOT a witch, alright?" Unsurprisingly, he doesn't look convinced but he doesn't behead me so I guess he isn't sure in either direction. He still appears to think my mind popped out my butt when landed, judging by his clear need to place me in a looney bin. Turning to the wizard, I implore him to help "Tell him that I'm not a witch, please."
"I do not feel any witchcraft emanating from your being but you are clearly more than a mere girl having survived such a drop." It's morbid truth, knowing that if things were normal, I would have died on Throin lap. Gandalf drags his staff across my head and looks so deep into my eyes that it feels painful. I don't look away, however, feeling that this moment is a deal breaker. His staff heats painlessly and a moment later he bops me on the head with it softly. Rubbing the spot, I frown as he grins at me "No, not a witch. Nor do I feel any ill will from you."

"So she is not a threat." Thorin decides, looking ready to end the conversation "Nor is she an asset. What reason do we have to bring her along? I do not need another burden; the hobbit is enough."

"Well that's just-" I cut myself off as a blanket is draped around my shoulders and a warm cup is thrust into my hands. The grey wool is worn but not itchy and I'm thankful for its dryness. Turning, I'm met with the strongest and most proper dwarf in the group: Dori. I guess he was just waiting to make sure I couldn't turn him into a frog before he showed his manners "Thank you Mister Dori."

He pauses as he was about to turn away and looks stunned. None of them, aside from Gandalf and Thorin, have introduced themselves to me, so I should not know their names. 'Unless I'm a spy. Ugh. Not now brain!' I examine Thorin from the corner of my eye to see how badly he is flipping out. His face displays open distrust but his sword, though tight in his fist, is still sheathed. Before he can yell, scream, or kill me, I blurt out the only thing that I can to give me some sort of hope.

"I know the future."

His face freezes and I feel Dori's presence disappear from behind me. There is no thud so I assume he walked away of his own volition and didn't faint. I wait with bated breath for Thorin to do something. He is really frozen; not even his hair moves... I'm not even sure he's breathing anymore. Eventually he thankfully shakes himself out of his stupor and demands a very logical request.

"Prove it."

The thing about knowing the future is that it can only be proven by the happening of the event. I explain as such and Thorin growls deep in his chest with displeasure. Gandalf intervenes with a particularly straightforward solution.

"My dear girl, give us a small prediction of the near future. You may travel with us until the date has come and passed or when we chance upon a town. If your gift is true, we may further discuss this situation. Do you find this acceptable Master Oakenshield?"

Even though he asked him, I know the decision of my placement had already been decided without Thorin's input. What wizard wants, wizard gets. Still, out of respect we both look over at Thorin who seems to be having an inner debate. After a moment he nods his consent and asks me to work my mojo. He may have used a different phrase, but who's taking note?

"Ok. I can do that."

I take a second to think of which piece of information to impart. There is so much I would love to tell them but I don't want to give them too much leeway to muck it up. If I do, I can end up changing the whole story which will lead to damages in the next story. That's a big no-no. Not that I know much about the Lord of the Rings. I do know about the ripple effect however. So, best to keep things as similar as possible.

I know my two companions are becoming impatient with me so I choose something provable but vague. And because I'm feeling whimsical, I decide to do it all wizard like. A riddle to keep you guessing and keep me from giving a straight answer!
"Excuse me for talking in riddles but this is the best I can do at the moment."

At their reluctant but firm double nod, I give my best rendition of a sightly seer.

"A night on the edge,
Will bring memories of old.
With Kings and swords,
it will be as I foretold.
A white knight gets a head,
and to the crown he lays his limb.
A new tree will rise and then,
All will know to follow him."

I was always above satisfactory when it came to poetry but I never tried to perform it without a buttload of practice. Casting my gaze down at the cup of lukewarm tea in my lap I miss the look shared between Thorin and Gandalf. I lean back wide eyed as Thorin gets up and begins to walk away without a word. I know, I can feel it in my gut, that he is not happy. Swinging my head back to face Gandalf, I give him my best puppy eyes. Nothing compared to a fauntling but its all I have.

"So can I come?" I ask trying not to sound too excited "He's going to let me come?"

He gives me a searching look before answering with the classic "That remains to be seen."
Chapter 4

I may not have secured my position in the company permanently, however this is a start. Sure, the leader thinks I’m either off my rocker or a witch in training; And sure I’ve never slept in a sleeping bag, let alone outside; And SURE I couldn’t fight a quadriplegic pacifist but I’m sure everything will all work out for the best. Hopefully. As I watch Thorin walk away, I am reminded of a song I haven’t heard in years. ‘I hate to see you leave but I love to see you walk away.’ His legs are thick and visibly muscular even through his layered clothes. Had he not been wearing his cloak I’m sure I would have gotten an eye full of something else in his retreat.

I decide to plan my next move instead of singing outdated songs and oogling Kings. It would not do to get caught without a plan. First things first, find a buddy. Introducing myself to the whole company will be easier with a few friendly faces mixed in. With my personality though, this is going to be a lot harder than it should be. No one is looking directly at me; in fact they all appear to be avoiding my gaze. Yet, I feel the constant pressure of eyes so I guess they stare when I look away. Since I cannot bring myself to just walk up to just any of them and start a relationship, I stand on the edge of the camp and wring my hands. ‘Who should I talk to first?’

My knowledge of the company and their characteristics provide me with an automatic list: Bofur, Ori, Bilbo, Fili, and Kili. They would be the easiest to get along with. With that in mind, I start the process of elimination. As much as I would like to meet the young duo, it's unlikely at the moment. Fili and Kili are busy with the horses, so they are out of the running. 'No need to make myself a nuisance.'

I take a gander around the camp and spot Bofur assisting Bombur with lunch. It is too my understanding that women... and darfdams... and elleths... orcress(s?) too perhaps, in Middle Earth are natural homemakers. My cooking skills aren't too shabby but they aren't too great either. I doubt they have the supplies to make smothered pork chops so I don't think I could give too much aid in that endeavor. I continue to sweep my gaze around the camp and see Ori sitting with his brothers. Even if I was up to tackling three Dwarves at once, which I'm not, I'm pretty sure Dori thinks I'm a witch, which I'm not. Not to mention Nori is giving me the stink eye, just daring me to come over and face him... Bilbo it is then.

"A good choice indeed, my girl."

"Uh... yes." Hadn't meant to say that aloud "Thanks."

"Mmm." He hums lightly around his pipe as I continue to rub my hands raw "Go on then and introduce yourself. Do not be shy."
"I... I will."

I don't miss the twinkling in his eyes nor the icy stare that can only belong to Thorin at my back. Ignoring them both, I quickly finish my camp scan and find Bilbo sitting alone under a tree with huge roots. If I wasn't on a mission that could potentially end countless lives, I would demand we stop for night and climb it. Excusing myself from Gandalf's side, he had continued to silently me watch the Dwarves, I gather my courage and make my way over to the Hobbit.

"You can do this." I whisper to myself as I step through the suspicious group "No problem."

'I wish I had some theme music. It would help me walk with confidence.' As I step further into the camp I feel more and more eyes on my person and my stomach clenched at the attention. I'm two seconds from ducking my head when I remember what Daddy always says. 'I'm a King and you're my princess. Now keep your head up or you'll trip over your feet.' He may only be the King of his house but he carried himself like he owned the world. Lifting my chin I make my way across the camp without any more problems. Still, I reach Bilbo and let out a breath I didn't know I was holding but it is quickly recovered again when he jumps at the sound. I attempt to apologize for frightening the flustered Hobbit, but probably scare him even more with my wild hand gestures.

"I'm so sorry Bilbo." I say in dismay as he places a hand over his chest. His tweet jacket heaves in time with his breath as his calms himself, making me feel worse "I didn't mean to scare you."

"Oh... Um, you didn't." He denies poorly. He is obviously extremely surprised judging by his flustered appearance 'I just wasn't expecting anyone to... be here... with me."

"What do you mean?" I ask, slightly confused.

"I only meant that I haven't been engaging in conversation too often lately. I wasn't expecting you to approach me Ms... You know, I don't know your name."

Tilting his head to the side Bilbo performs the best expression of confusion I have ever seen. His frowned concentration makes his eyebrows nearly touch as well as puts the cutest little pout on his perky mouth. His curly brown hair bounces lightly around his pointed ears in an adorable dance and I almost want to pinch his cheeks just to see his reaction. I nearly giggled at my own silliness but instead, answer his unasked question.

"My name is Thia Malcolmson. Pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Oh, yes. Miss Malcolmson then." He chirps with a bod of his head, sending his curls tumbling. He only reaches the middle of my ribcage! 'Come on Thia, you can do it. Hold a conversation.' "It is wonderful to meet such a well mannered lass on this... adventure. Even if it shant be for long."

"Actually Bilbo, I plan travel with you all for a while now." I ignore the rude scoff from behind me and extend my hand to the hobbit; belatedly wondering if he knows to shake it "I would like us to be friends on this journey. So please, just call me Thia.

He looks genuinely surprised by my request but takes my hand in his. They are tougher than mine, making me internally grimace at the meaning: Bilbo has done more hard work then I have. I am over taken by another thought. 'Am I being too forward? Should I turn it down some? Be more Middle Earthy? How does one ask to be addressed informally in Middle Earth without sounded like a tart? Is it frowned upon? I can't remember, or maybe I never knew. Great, just GREAT! Now-' My inner meltdown is interrupted by a relieved looking Hobbit.

"That sounds wonderful Ms. Thia. I'd very much like to be friends with you as well."
I grin happily and sit down next to him before my communications skills make themselves scarce again. 'So, I made a friend. I don't have too many of those back home and none of them have ever been in a situation anywhere near this one. What should I say? Anything not pertaining to the dragon would be alright.' Bilbo thankfully saves me from asking about how he feels about having to fight a dragon. 'Screw you brain!' "How did you know my name? I don't recall anyone introducing themselves, let alone me."

Even though they are trying to look busy, I know the rest of the company is listening to our conversation. I'd already told Thorin and Gandalf my "story" however I am unsure of whether or not I am allowed to share it with the whole company. I glance around looking for Thorin only to see him sitting directly across camp with the Fundin brothers, examining me with an intense gaze. 'Intimidating much?' He gives me neither a negative nor positive reaction, so I gave a half truth.

"As this quest progresses, I will sometimes know events before they occur."

"Like a seer?" He asks wide eyed

"Something like that." Is the best answer I can give.
Chapter 5

"Do you think she can be trusted?"

"How can he trust a woman who falls from the sky?! I mean, I wouldn't mind a pretty lass fallin' onto my-"

"Dwalin!"

"Lap, Balin. I was goin' to say lap."

"Of course you were. Ill mannered as ever, I see."

"She seems to be quite taken with the hobbit." Thorin says, eyeing the two latest additions to his company. The girl is still a mystery but the hobbit has shown himself about as useful as a ball of lint "I hope she will show more promise than he."

"Give Master Baggins a chance." Balin admonishes lightly, patting the king on his shoulder "And as for the wee lass-"

"Give her a chance too; ye may like her." Frowning at his cousin does nothing to curb his behavior, not that Thorin expected it to "What? Ye need to lighten up or by the time we reach Erebor you really will be made of stone."

"This quest is not meant for dalliances with wayward women, Dwalin. She could be gone by morning for all we know" frowning deeply, Thorin continues to watch his company as they break "Did you not just state that she couldn't be trusted anyway?"

"...I did."

"Indeed. Besides," retying his boot laces to ready himself for the long ride, the dwarf king warily glances at his cousin "I do not need to 'lighten up' with fallen sky maidens."

"Ye do not need to trust her to-"

"Dwa. Lin." Balin forces his name through his teeth with a rough cuff to his skull "To speak of a maiden in such a away is highly IMPROPER."

"Well t'is a good thin' I intended to say 'GET TO KNOW HER' brother." The younger Fundin brother grins mercilessly with his eyes, lest someone see a grin on his face a take him for friendly "That aside... She may not be a maiden anymore."
"She is a young unwed-

Niether of which make her a virgin." The half bald dwarf interrupts "She is a strange women in the woods who fell pretty hard on yer-

"Dwalin!"

"Mahal's hammer, I was goin' to say sparklin' personality!"

"Wha- No you weren't!"

"I do not trust her nor will I introduce her to my... sparkling personality." Dwalin snorts a laugh while Balin scoffs in acknowledgement; the two turning away from their bickering to listen "Just... Keep an eye on her for now."

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

THIA POV

After a short break, Thorin calls the company back into order. We will be back on the road once again! Before that, I will need to find someone to ride with or risk being left behind. I'm not sure that Gandalf's horse is actually a horse judging from the sheer size and I doubt Thorin would appreciate me borrowing his lap again. 'And even if he wanted me to, I'd probably pass out from excitement.' The awkwardness of the situation has already nearly led to me dying from nervousness. Not that it wasn't a nice lap. I could ask Bilbo for a ride however neither of us are adept at pony back riding and I don't think Myrtle would fair well with two inexperienced riders on her back.

"A horse is a horse, of course of course." I riddle to myself quietly "Unless that horse is a pony."

I am not too keen on asking one of the other members of the company and risk getting turned down. 'My achy breaky heart couldn't take it.' So tightening the blanket given to me by Dori around my shoulders, I walk over to Thorin with the intent to ask what I should do. He is the company leader after all. Push come to shove, he could pull rank and just order one of the dwarves to ride with me. Though, I hope it won't come to that because I doubt he would.

Kicking little rocks and twigs as I go along, I am nearly upon the King when I notice that he is still not alone. Standing with him is Dwalin, though Balin seems to have vacated the vicinity recently. I know for a fact that the strong dwarf is an excellent warrior and would make a powerful ally. He would have been the first to arrive at Bilbo's house, 'smial, you dork,' but the two don't seem to be on friendly terms. In fact, Bilbo is unfortunately down right terrified of half the dwarves here. Building a friendship with him will be extremely difficult but ultimately beneficial. I am not prepared at the moment to introduce myself to this dwarf but I doubt that matters now. 'Roll with the unexpected.' He values strength of body and mind. I can't lift 1/8 of my body weight without huffing and puffing so I'll have to play up my strength of mind.

"Excuse me, Thorin."

Both dwarves look in my direction at the sound of my voice. I know that they already knew I was approaching before I even got anywhere near then, hunters that they are. Dwalin takes me in for all I'm worth before leveling me with a deliberately impatient gaze. Thorin just looks bored. I stare for a moment, as I'm prone to do, before continuing.

"I don't have anyone to ride with." His face scrunches up into a frown and thinking I have offended him some how, I attempt to appease him. Quickly shaking my head and moving my hands
violently in a windshield wiper motion, I speak up again "Ah, but I can walk. I wouldn't want to put anyone out or anything like that. Though I should warn you that I've never really walked more than a couple of miles at a time, in my life. I don't want to slow you down."

"You could always stay right here." Thorin offers almost sweetly and I'm sure he's at least half serious "It would be no trouble at all."

"Not on my life, sweetheart."

The term of endearment slips past my lips before I remember that I'm not in Kansas anymore. I internally wince at the how horribly forward that must have sounded and hope against hope that they take it as a weird human thing. No one pulls out a sword crying about offense so I think I might have dodged that bullet... er.. arrow. In fact, a look of beguilement is shared between the two dwarves before their eyes turn back to regard me again. Still trying to show my strength I don't look away… from their noses. Eye contact will come eventually. 'Just not today, and probably not tomorrow or the day after. Maybe by the end of this adventure.'

"Who would ye like to travel with lass?"

The question is asked by Dwalin and I am quite surprised. I did not expect he would willingly talk to me, let alone provide me with offers of convenience. None the less, I answer.

"Anyone but Bilbo would be alright." An offended gasp from behind me makes me turn around to find its source. Bilbo stands there looking very insulted and I swiftly strive to explain myself. I just made this friendship, can't screw it up so quickly "Bilbo, it isn't that I find your company unpleasant. On the contrary; I enjoyed the conversation we just had, so don't worry. I just do not expect that two unpracticed riders would be fair to the pony."

His face immediately clears and he nods his understanding before walking away to finish checking on his pony. 'I wonder if he knows her name yet.' I spin on my heel so I am facing Thorin and Dwalin again, who are still waiting to give me an answer.

"Ye will ride Balin." He answers simply.

"Balin? Thats a little unexpected." I say without thinking and like a suspicious mother, Thorin's eyes become slits, though it is once again Dwalin who speaks

"Is there something with him that makes ye believe him to be a bad partner?" Dwalin asked soundingly almost offended. 'Everyone here gets offended so easily.'

"No, nothing is wrong with your brother Dwalin." I say, apparently digging my hole deeper.

Thorin sucks in a breath and Dwalin tightens his hands on his axe. Had I the sense of a lemming, I would have taken a step back. Instead, I grow angry at Thorin's behavior. Refusing to even talk to me unless it's to offer an insult is not going to fly, especially when I've already explained the creepy bits about myself. Before either dwarf can question my knowledge of the company members, I give them a sour look of annoyance.

"I understand being suspicious about people you don't know. Stranger danger and all that good stuff. Caution is needed to survive, I get that. However the reason why I know certain facts will always be the same and I've already explained it. So lets move past that. If it will ease your minds, you may ask me questions about myself as we travel. I will answer them to the best of my ability. Now, can we please move on from this tiresome topic?"

I glare at them, in the eyes I might add, for a whole three seconds before I lose my steam and focus
at their noses again. With a nod, I dismiss myself and walk away from the duo to go meet my riding buddy. From the looks of things, we would be departing soon. I give Bilbo a smile before I arrive at Balin's side.

"Why, hello there lass."

The snowy haired dwarf is covered in soft brown leathers that look worn enough to be comfortable but new enough not to break apart during the trip. His eyes are a warm brown that rest between a plethora of crows feet, signaling an easy smile. If I remember correctly, Balin is a Lord but I can't remember if it's from birth. 'Does that make Dwalin a Lord too?' The old, and thankfully wise, dwarf is one of Thorin's advisers as well as cousin and friend. Second to visit Bilbo, he is no more friendly with Bilbo than his brother. He's polite and well spoken, well suited for his position. If the option of death wasn't present, I would almost feel that this was a game by how many character bios I have in my head.

"Hello Mister Balin. It would seem that I will be riding with you today. I hope I am not too much of a burden and that we get along well."

The short dwarf looks up at me kindly and offers a friendly smile before dipping into a swooping bow. Bent so low, his beard almost reaches the ground before he agilely snaps back to attention.

"It will be no trouble at all Miss… Thia, was it?"

Leave it to Balin to actually listen to me introduce myself to others and then bother to learn my name. At my nod he smiles deeper and begins to walk in the direction of his pony. I follow like a kid, with my blanket and cup. Taking my backpack off to rest on my belly like a pouch, I slip the items in before continuing after Balin.

"Do you know how to ride?" He asks cheerfully, checking the saddle. I shake my head and he nods his before smiling at me again. "Well, now is a good time as any to learn, aye lass?"

I can do nothing but agree with the dwarf. I traveled through to another world and I still have to go to school.

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

Hope you enjoyed the chapter. Special thanks to all for reviewing. I appreciate it! -Shishi
The ride with Balin is more enjoyable than I expected it to be. I mean, it's not like I expected him to try and toss me off or anything but I didn't think I'd 'enjoy' it. I have always loved stories and the dwarf seems have to have an almost grandfatherly feel to his personality. Not fatherly, mind you, as he appears too wise for the role. He is a patient teacher and answers any questions I can think to ask without getting annoyed with me. They are mostly questions about things I see such as trees, flowers, and animals. I can't boast of my interest in flaura or the fauna of either world but there isn't much else to discuss at the moment.

"You prefer ponies but can you ride a horse if you have too?"

"Of course lassie, but it would be a most uncomfortable ride."

"I can imagine." Shifting to try and get the feeling back into my butt "WHat is the difference though? I've never had the need to know."

"Well..." shifting again, I listen closely as Balin teaches me the difference between ponies and horses "It can be easily be attribute to their builds."

"Their builds?"

"Mmm. For example, ponies have thicker manes and tails than horses." I lean over slightly to compare the flanks of Thorin and Gandalf's steeds. Sure enough the smaller mare is sporting a longer tail "They can be bothersome is uncared for properly because of their lengths."

"They ARE long." twisting my mouth up to the side, I watch in anticipating silence for the tragedy to happen but it never does "Almost long enough that they could step on their own tails if they aren't careful."

"We groom them well enough to prevent that." He answers with an amused chuckle "In addition to their coats, ponies also have proportionally shorter legs, thicker necks, and shorter heads. They are also stronger than ponies if one were to judge strength pound for pound."

"So... Basically, ponies are dwarves and horses are men."

I make the statement just short of it being a question, leaving it open for any to deny if they felt the need. Not a single person does, so I guess I hit it spot on. Balin chuckles at me once more before we lapse into a comfortable silence. It doesn't last for too long though, as we are not even riding for two hours before he begins his polite interrogation. I expected him to start earlier but he is a patient one. It is such a smooth transition that if I was not waiting for it, I would have missed it and not
"So my dear, I take it your family is supportive of your... adventuring?"

"They... have always... encouraged me to get out into the world and explore" which is true. The book lover I am has worried my parents for years. While happy that I wasn't off catching any arrests or diseases, they weren't so excited by the prospect of me becoming an old maid "I'm just trying to be an obedient daughter."

"Yes." Dwalin scoffs from up ahead "I'm sure your father would be proud of the company you keep."

"Is there a reason he shouldn't be?" I ask snarkily

"You are in fine company, lassie." Balin consols, petting my leg softly before grasping the reigns "Where does your family reside, if I may ask?"

"I doubt you've ever been there." It is an innocent enough question. Still, any answer I could give would sound like a lie. I respond regardless, because I can't be impolite "I'm from a rather small, but at the same time large, city."

"Sounds like an elvish answer." I hear Dwalin grumbling from his spot next to Thorin.

"What's that suppose to mean?" I ask a little offended. 'Great, now I'm getting sensitive too.'

I personally have nothing against elves. I've never met one, unless you count the elves at the mall during the Christmas season. Those creatures are the minions of the elusive Saint Nicolas, my dreaded enemy. 'Seriously, who breaks into someone's house and LEAVES things? If that isn't creepy then I don't know what is.' The again, these are the first dwarves I've ever seen. Aside from the dwarves that dress up as elves and know my feelings about that. 'Dwarves pretending to be elves, Hilarious.' Even more so, while I don't dislike middle earthing elves, I know that dwarves do. Something to do I with one creator not wanting another creator to... Well, create. Thus began the Rocky relationship between elf and dwarf. This ultimately means that Dwalin's comment was not a compliment, but rather an under handed insult. 'Talk about rude.' Balin, being a natural peacekeeper, begins to smooth things over.

"He means nothing by it, lass." he says sending Dwalin a glare, which causes the younger dwarf to roll eyes. At least that's what I imagine happened; being behind them both I can't see their faces "Only that it is known not to ask elves for advice because they answer both yes and no."

"Oh." I say plainly. "So you want a better answer." It's not a question but they both answer affirmatively regardless "Then just say that next time. Don't insult me just because my answer isn't in-depth enough for you." I give an exaggerated eye roll of my own instead of sticking out my tongue when Dwalin glares back at me.

"He means nothing by it." Balin says again calmly, as is his way "Please, explain what you meant."

"Well alright then. But only because you asked so nicely."

With a grandiose movement I swing my arms in a broad arch to begin my tale, and promptly pinwheel before grabbing Balin around the waist again to keep from falling off the pony. Chuckles from behind us signify that my near death experience didn't go unnoticed. Even my riding partner laughs at me. I can feel his muscles quiver beneath my hands. And yes, even an old timer like Balin has better abs than anyone I know. I steady myself before offering up a giggle of my own. If you can't laugh at yourself, life is a whole lot crueler.
"Right. Riding. Shouldn't do any crazy stuff."

"Aye lass, that'd be for the best." The old dwarf peers over his shoulder to send me a look that could only be described as a grandfatherly 'stop-stalling-before-I-give-you-a-spanking—…-with-cookies-though' expression. It was a really strange look "You were just about to tell me about your home."

"Well." He is not letting this go, is he? Dwarves are truly stubborn little things "The city I call my home has an area of about 470 miles in total. That isn't small in theory but it really is."

"How so?" Balin asks curiously before Dwalin can call me an elf again. I had to do a project on my fair city in middle school and never forgot the information. Thankfully. I can also recite all the states and the books of the Bible. Talent "That is quite a lot of land for only one city."

"It's small in comparison to how many people live there."

"And how many people live in this 500 mile city of yers." Dwalin asks, sounding more than a little interested but still too annoyed to show it. I distantly wonder why the use miles instead of kilometers. Being that America is the odd one out in the metric system and neither the movie nor book are based in the States, it seems odd to use miles "If it even exists."

"Only 470 miles," I correct just to be me, while dismissing measurements. Perhaps it's just easier for my brain to compute the language if the words are as familiar as possible. I'm new at this, I don't know "and last time I checked it was about 8.5 million. The numbers vary by year however."

I feel Balin sputter, Dwalin turns to me with a look of disbelief, and Thorin is now wearing his deep frowny face. I know it because the skin on the back of he actually turns to give me the frown. Oh joy. 'I so totally knew he was listening.'

"8 million people?" Bilbo asks in a confused voice.

I knew Thorin was listening but not Bilbo. He's not even near us. I turn around to see how far back he is only to be greeted with ten curious dwarf faces. I even spot Ori taking notes. 'Woah, I feel like one of the cool kids.' Suppressing the song, I come back into my awesomeness that quickly turns into awkwardness. It would seem that everyone is listening. Oh how I hate crowds. I turn back around without further ado and stamp down the need to bury my face in Balin's hair. Barely I might add, barely.

"Yes Bilbo. But that's to be expected. It's really popular place, the highest populated city in my country." Attempting to get some of the attention off of me and my lack luster geography skills I ask "How many hobbits are there in the Shire?"

"Oh well I haven't thought about it..." he answers swiftly but when I don't continue, he hums deeply in thought "About 4,000 within the boundaries of the Shire, I'd guess."

"I have more people living within 2 blocks of me than you have living in the entire world." frowning down at my hands, I process the information "I honestly don't know how to feel about that."

"Where did you say you were from? I am not familiar with any Men settlements of that size." Balin's question pulls me back to the center of attention. 'Thanks Balin.' Here I am trying to avoid attention and he keeps tossing me the mic.

"I didn't give a name." which I was careful not to. It would be useless information at best "Even if I
did say where, you would have never heard of it since I'm not-"

I am rudely cut off by Thorin all of a sudden. I have a bad feeling that he's going to be doing that a lot and its already giving me hea ache.

"We stop for the night. Unpack the ponies and set up camp. Miss Malcolmson." I raise an eyebrow in his direction as he stares me down "A word please."

I am beginning to suspect that he doesn't want me to tell the others too much about my origins. Just a tiny feeling. We probably should have set up some ground rules before. I glance around at Balin and hope he can read the apology on my face. He pats my arms and gives me a smile but it is Dwalin who speaks. Coming over to the pony and pulling me over the side, surprisingly gently, before setting me on my feet.

"Ye'd best be goin', lass. Don't keep 'em waitin'."

I nod before sloppily making my way over to the king. Managing to keep my feet under me despite my legs' numbness, I smile at my achievement. I make an effort to walk only to have my hips creak in protest. 'One step at a time.' I slowly make my way to Thorin with the hopes that his face is from constipation and not anger. He does not look amused. Yikes.
Chapter 7

Reaching Thorin I immediately take off my backpack to give myself a few extra seconds to prepare. It's not hard to make it look necessary being that I have been carrying the bag all day and now my shoulders are hurting.

"Just uh... give me second."

I used to be able to carry my bag regardless of weight until hurricane Irene decided to pay us a visit. She knocked down a pretty old tree that I just happened to be walking under and of course I got hit. I didn't go to the hospital or anything but now one of my shoulders is a little lower than its supposed to be. This does bring up the question of why I was walking around during a hurricane. A story for another time.

"Miss Malcolmson." Thorin drawls out while watching me impatiently. He'll wait though. 'If he knows what's good for him.' ... Not that I have anything to back that threat up with. I proceed to reach into the bag and pull out the blanket and cup that Dori gave me earlier. They aren't anything special; a wool blanket and a tin cup but it's more than I had when I arrived. I feel like a miner, which makes perfect sense given who I'm traveling with. I twirl the items in my hands absently. 'They might need the cup back for dinner.' Dori didn't say I could keep the blanket, so I will return it as well. After Thorin and I have this talk I'm avoiding. Not to be mixed up with THE talk. 'ugh.' Unzipping my coat I put the cup in my belly pocket, gotta love a sweatshirt, and wrap the blanket around my shoulders. Finally, I face Thorin with a bright smile.

"What is it that you wanted to speak with me about, Thorin?"

He inhales deeply before beginning.

"I do not think it would be appropriate to inform the company of your supposed origins. It would merely cause undue duress amongst my men."

"Supposed?" I raise an eyebrow

"You have no proof of your 'other worldly' origins." He says, visibly holding back a sneer

"I do so." I deny, though trying not to sound whiny in my denial "I just don't plan on showing them to you."

"Why is that?" He questions, seeming almost bored.
"I'd like to keep our world's as separate as possible." Which is true. In getting back I don't need all the fangirls crossing over and blabbing about bagginshield. Thorin would probably have me shot when this whole adventure is done, I'll find a way back to it."

"It is not yet decided whether or not you will even be traveling with us." He scoffs after a minute hesitation "Keep your distance from them."

This is not what I was expecting but it makes such total sense that I should have seen it coming. He's naturally defensive and understandably not sure what to do about this current situation since it's totally out of his control and comfort zone. 'I kinda know the feeling.' I will not hold it against him and I hope he doesn't hold my response against me.

"With all do respect Thorin, no."

I say this as politely as I can manage. If he thinks for one second that I am going to just quietly tag along until he can drop me off at some whacked out, middle earth looney bin, then he has another think coming. I did not fall into this story/universe... thing... just to watch from the side lines. I can plainly see from his face that he is not pleased with my answer but I'm firm.

"No? Listen here little girl," I can see the vein on his temple pulse and almost reach out to poke it "you are not a member of this company nor is it any of your concern. As it's leader I demand that you limit your interactions with my company to only what is necessary. Is. That. Understood?"

This overgrown gnome just called me a girl. 'Deep breaths, Thia.' I nod because he seems a little aggravated but mostly so I don't punt kick him across the clearing. I hate riling him up but this now includes me. I doubt I will be allowed to go home until this adventure is over, not that I won't ask when I find someone to ask. I'll be sure to discuss it with Gandalf tomorrow. I nod again before answering verbally.

"I understand. You don't want the company to get attached to me or anything like that. Distractions can be a nasty business. I hope you understand when I once again say no."

I begin to pace, because walking always has a way of helping me think easier. I want to get my point across as clearly as possible. The dwarf growls at my defiance but does not toss me out into the woods on my behind. Probably something to do with honor.

"Number 1, if I don't talk to the company, I can't get to know them. It would make this whole journey very awkward to travel with strangers, don't you agree?"

"You have yet to even prove MINIMALLY useful. You are not-"

"Oh yes I am. I'm making the whole trip. We both know this, you just haven't accepted it yet. It's something I know for a fact."

Before he can contradict my statement, I continue. Silly dwarf thinks now is the time to give his opinion. Not before I give him a piece of my mind. 'You made a mistake calling me a little girl, buster.'

"Number 2, you said I am not part of the company. If that were true, then you would have no authority over me. Meaning, I don't have to listen to any of your demands and can follow you to the ends of the earth if it pleases me."

I am not going to tell him straight out that if I am not a part of the company, then his life would be a living hell. I'm not a loose cannon but as I said before, respect and authority mean a lot to me. The odds of me listening to someone without them are slim to none. Besides if not with them, who
else would I hang out with? Lobelia?

"Lastly, number 3. I like you guys. You don't know me, but I know you well enough. I'd still like to get to know you all better though. There is no way that I am going to lose a chance to interact and build friendships with you all. So get over it, because this," I gesture to the space between us "is happening."

I finally stop pacing and cross my arms over my chest while I wait for his response. He peers at me through hooded eyes again, trying to discern the sincerity of my words. I know I've given him a lot to digest so I search my surroundings while waiting.

The forest we travel through is filled with oak-brown trees that look to have survived the dinosaurs; each sporting deep grooves and crevices. While they are thick I know that we would be leaving the primitive forest soon. I stand with my head pointed straight up, looking for the tops. I am suddenly overrun with the need to reach up and grab a branch to climb. 'I doubt the dwarves would like that very much. And with my luck when I fall, I'll land on Thorin… again.' The trees are becoming thinner in number despite their thickness and the grasses we step on are changing from a vibrant green to a dull clover. The low melody of the birdsong we can hear has gotten lower each hour we moved though the forest. I doubt we will be able to hear it by this time tomorrow. I enjoy the sight, committing it to memory. I never saw too much nature back in the city and any nature I did see when I left, was through a car window as we drove through the states.

The sun is beginning to set and I know that the first stars of the night will soon be peeping down at us like silver eyes, glinting and shimmering through the night. Once again I am reminded of my limited world view. The only stars in my home are satellites and the one time I went Ireland, I did not bother to look at the night sky. Too busy looking at the grass and surf board instructors. 'What? I was studying!' I can see wild basil growing freely from the clumpy, mossy mattress on certain parts of the ground. It's one of the plants Balin pointed out while were on the pony. The gentle breeze carried a fragrance with it; a forest's natural scent.

I see Bilbo watching us and offer him a small wave before turning my attention back to the King. I feel that I have given him long enough and seeing that he has my attention again, he responds.

"While I do not fully agree with your idea that you can run around my company as freely as you please" he holds up his hands when I start to interrupt "I can see your genuine curiosity bares no ill will towards them. So long as you offer no threat to my men AND you make yourself useful, I will not complain about you 'getting to know them' as you put it. For now."

With a large smile I nod repeatedly before skipping away from his once again amused face. 'Yes, skipping. I do that sometimes, sue me.' Walking over to Dori, who is of course once again fussing over Ori, I thank him for the blanket and cup of tea from earlier. Ori peaks up at time through his eyelashes and bangs but remains quiet. I attempt to hand the older brother back the items but he insists that I keep the blanket.

"Think nothing of it, lass. You'll be needing it to sleep under tonight anyway."

I thank him again and walk over to Bilbo. I haven't spoken to him all day and can honestly say that I am eager to talk with him. 'Who wouldn't be? This is the hobbit who unwittingly saves the world.' I dodge a flying ball of garlic that is being thrown from Gloin too Oin as the two glare start me silently. Ignoring them, I barely have time to sit down next to Bilbo, on a once again conveniently placed log, before two shadows fall over us. I look up to see twin grins on two equally handsome faces.

"We have never seen anyone skip after having a conversation with uncle, have we Fili?"
"No Kili, I can not say that we have."

I almost groan in their faces. It's the infamous pair, Fili and Kili. Major fun, but total double trouble magnets. Save me.
Chapter 8

The two dwarves stand before me in all their glory. 'No, you pervert. Not naked.' ALIVE. Plain and simple. Just alive and I know at this exact moment 'probably a little earlier too' that I am doing the right thing. Death would not cross their grinning faces if I have anything to say about it. 'Just call me Pocahontas because I don't know what I can do. Still, I know I've got to try.' I'll rewrite the whole story if I have to! It has been decided.

"Brother, I think we have rendered this fair lady speechless with our devilishly good looks."

"Indeed, Fili. It would not be the first time our disturbingly superior visual personalities compared to other males have had women swooning."

Aaaaaaaand just like that, the moment is ruined. 'I have never swooned in my life.' Still, I'll be damned if I let this moment for an introduction slip by... Even if I am face palming by the end of it. I can feel Bilbo trying to sneak away and act fast. 'Oh no you don't!' Grabbing his hand, I almost cry out in protest at the contact. I force myself to keep my grip as I pull him back down and tuck him into my side.

"Hello, Fili. Hi Kili. While it is true that you are both fairly attractive, I'll give you that much, I'll have you know that I don't swoon. My immeasurable prowess of balance helps me avoid such embarrassing actions. On that note, how are you two feelings on this evening?"

They stare at me blankly, their smiles melting off their faces in confusion. I guess most people don't respond to their teasing like I do. They had better get used to it, or this trip is going to be awkward. Hopefully though, they will love me by the time this is over. In a friendship kinda way, no love triangles for me, thanks. The brothers don't answer quick enough, staring at me in bewilderment, before I continue my thought.

"Good? Great. Its a shame you forgot to pack your raincoat, Kili. I hope you didn't get too wet."

So maybe I'm being a little spiteful, bringing up his little blunder like that. The fact isn't mentioned in the movie but I'm pretty sure its in the book. 'Or was that fanfiction? Whatever.' Either way, from the state of his drips in comparison to everyone else's I can fairly assume that he forgot it. It's been hours since it stopped raining for goodness sakes. So, now I'll have to look for book and movie stuff. 'Thanks a bunch Peter Jackson. Beorn just got a whole lot scarier.'

The brothers are still taken aback from how I roll. 'They aren't the first.' I can feel Bilbo struggling to escape from my side, so I offer him a reassuring smile before tightening my grip. The contact is making me nervous but I need an anchor. The boys finally start to overcome their shock as I
continue the conversation.

"Fili, as the elder brother you should make sure that your little brother is prepared. This time it is a raincoat but next time it could be something much more serious. No more mistakes, got it? And Kili, you're not a baby. Be prepared."

Looking confused and chastised, the brothers nod. 'Take that Durin brats. SWOON. Don't make me laugh.' Feeling that I have gotten enough passive revenge, I beam up at the pair and offer them a place within our one sided conversation.

"Bilbo and I were actually about to start a riveting conversation. I haven't the slightest clue what we'll discuss but Bilbo is an excellent conversationalist. Isn't that right Bilbo?"

The look I receive from the hobbit makes me think I got the sequence of events wrong and there is a troll behind me. 'There isn't, I just checked.' I blame his Baggins side; way too proper. He will be assisting me in saving these guys' lives. He needs to attempt to at the very least be seen in a friendly light. Giving him a little nudge and head inclination finally gets a response.

"Oh, um. Yes, I am well versed in the art of conversation holding." he says nervously.

"See? I told you so. The more the merrier. Why don't you two join us?"

It's more of an order than a request but I say it with a smile. They will be joining this conversation whether they want to or not. But I know they want to; they are known to be insanely mischievous and curious. Plus, they want to know as much about me as I want to know about them. 'More than I already do.' Exchanging glances, they have a silent chit chat that reminds me of my older sister and my own. I smile at the thought of her. She's way more social, while I have to sit here and have a mini break down from being too close to someone. It has been building ever since Balin and the pony. Coming to an agreement they nod and look back to me and the subdued hobbit.

"We find that quite agreeable, my lady. Please, allow my brother and I to introduce ourselves. I, the magnificent Fili, am at your service."

Gosh, he actually said it. With an intricate bow the older dwarf concludes his introduction. I allow my brain to provide me with another biography for the blonde dwarf. 'Son of Dis, nephew of Thorin, brother of Kili, heir to the throne, about 82 years old.' He is one of the youngest dwarves and I can see a playful in his eyes, though he tries to hide it. I wonder where their father is... Fili must have gotten his locks from him. His braided blonde mustache strips are tipped with beads and I honestly want to flick them. The younger Durin steps up before I can dishonor his brother's face.

"And I am Kili, at your service."

His bow is a little less graceful and betrays his youth as well as personality. His smirk is adorable, a close second to Bilbo's confused face. 'Second son of Dis, second nephew of Thorin, younger brother of Fili, second heir to the throne, about 77 years old.' His dark hair makes a collapsed beaver dam look organized. On him though, it works. His beard is short, almost nonexistent making him closely resemble a human man. Only in the face, though. From what I can see his body is just as firmly built as any dwarf.

"Thank you." he says with a smile.

"Ah... sorry, pleased to meet you both."

Only would I do something so embarrassing. 'Dang it, brain! Keep my thoughts in my head, not my mouth!' With their introductions over, the brothers sit down. Right next to us. Dear Lord. Kili sits
beside Bilbo and Fili sits nearly in my lap. They are really close. 'A little too close if you ask me.' But they don't bother to of course. I quickly make a break for it and release Bilbo before standing, trying to look relaxed and not like someone stepped on my neck. I make an effort to calm myself before I have a full blown panic attack and start explosively vomiting.

"Are you alright, my lady?" Kili asks, sounding concerned for my sanity

"Huh? What... what?"

"My brother is asking about your welfare." Fili interprets " Are you well, my lady?"

"Oh yea. Just great." I say between breathes. Is it odd that they are calling me that like it actually has power? A lady I may be, but not THIER la- breeeeathe "It just seems like a three person log, you know? I'll just sit over here."

I gesture to a spot a few feet away the trio. Bilbo doesn't seem amused with my abandonment and I can understand why. 'I'd be unhappy too.' However now is not the time to explain my disdain for physical contact. I doubt they have a flattering word for it here on Middle Earth. Fili looks at me with ill concealed curiosity for a moment before a sickening smile makes a home on his features. 'I know this is gonna come back and haunt me later."

"My lady Thia," Oh gosh he knows my name. This means he's more perceptive than he looks. Not good. "does the idea of being so close to such... fetching dwarves make you nervous?"

"Huh?" I ask dumbly.

"I think that must be it!" Kili jumps in way too happily for my liking "You had no problem cuddling up to Mister Boggins."

"Baggins and we weren't-"

"No, it's not-"

Bilbo and I both attempt to deny their reasoning but the brothers have already warmed up to idea that they are so attractive that I can't be too close to them. 'I have created a two headed monster.'

"We would hate to make you uncomfortable, my lady. Please excuse us." They walk away while sending me terribly overemphasized winks. Low chuckles can be heard, meaning that others in camp have heard of my mistaken fondness for dwarven eye candy.

"Uggggh." I say dragging my hands down my face "Why me?"

"Perhaps because you are the only lass within quite a few miles." Bilbo whispers an answer to my rhetorical question "You have my condolences."

"Great. Just great."

First, I land in a King's lap, then I make the heirs to the throne think they are the best thing since sexy became a word, and now I have to pee. I haven't been here a day and I already want the ground to swallow me up again. 'Yup, facepalm time.'
Pee pee and dinner

Chapter Notes

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CHAPTER 9

My luck is about as good as a wedding cake during divorce proceedings: Distasteful at best. 'Gotta pee. What to do? Gotta pee.' I'm sure there are some rules about taking a potty partner but the idea of someone I just met listening to me power wash mother earth with my golden goodness is very disturbing. Bathroom stalls don't count... I'm not sure why, but they don't.

"My daffodils should be blooming nicely." Bilbo hums contently with a dreamy look on his face and I nod along when necessary "I trust my gardener to care for them even in my absence."

Still, Thorin quite literally just said not to make a burden of myself and going off on my own in the near dead of night would do just that. They'd start a search party and I'd get caught with my pants around my ankles, showing a fleshy full moon. NOT how I want to spend a (possibly) Friday night. Or any night for that matter. I could ask Bilbo...

"Just the other day, I cut my hand trying to pull up a pesky weed!"

... But then again, if anything were to actually happen he wouldn't be the best protection. 'The last thing I want is to get killed without any pants.' I try to distract myself by fully engaging in exchanging banter with Bilbo about the Shire residents. He seems deighted by my interest in who is courting who, what couple had a fauntling, and who is nearly at death's door. I'm especially interested in Lobelia and he is more than happy to complain about her. She truly is a dreadful woman. And the distraction helps! I've calmed down wonderfully from my minor freak out thanks to the mundane exchange. The conversation aids in my need for relaxation and I get to interact without saying too much of anything. Perfect. My bladder is doing alright as well, that is, until Bilbo mentions how wonderful his garden looks after a nice fall of rain. 'Dang.'

"I'm sure the flowers were well watered after today's downpour." He says not noticing my predicament.

"That does it. I can't take this anymore!" I whisper harshly, trying to conceal my pee-pee dance "I have reached my limit!"

Bilbo jumps violently at my sudden exclamation and looks around in search of some hidden enemy. A few of the nearby company members glance warily in our direction but after a moment, they look away in disinterest. 'So sorry if my urination troubles aren't exciting enough for you dwarves.' Determining with his hobbit sensibilities that there is no threat to our safety, Bilbo wheels back around to me and provides a harsh whisper of his own.

"Miss Thia, what ever on Middle Earth is the matter with you?"
I huff slightly of his hobbity version of 'Dafaq?!' but quickly fall back into an uncomfortable state. After an exceptionally speedy internal debate, I come to the conclusion that he, Bilbo...

"Bilbo... Do you have a middle name?"

"Wha... well Y-yes." he stammers, clearly lost in my craziness "It's Bungus... If you must kno-"

"Greeaaaat." I say making a decision. He, Bilbo Bungus Baggins, that's alot of B's, will be my pee partner. 'Every woman needs one.' If I have to tell him anyway, might as well make the best of it. "Well, you see Bilbo. After a long day of sky falling, tea drinking, and dwarf meeting, one must make time and take care of the basic necessities of life."

"Well of course." I can tell right away that he has no idea what I'm talking about and it's confirmed by his politely curt "What has this to do with you shouting a moment ago?"

"...I need to relieve my bladder, and you my dear Bilbo, will be keeping watch."

I expect some form of resistance from the little hobbit but he merely looks around again before giving me an understanding nod. 'How nice of him.' We share a silent communication similar to the Durin boys... or ninjas, before starting to inch away from camp one quiet step at a time. Whenever someone looks in our direction, we stop moving and act like nothing exciting is happening. Upon finally reaching the edge, we slink into the shadow of the trees seamlessly. 'Totally Ninjas.' I'm sure if we had run, we would have been noticed straight away but thankfully we make it without being spotted.

"You go that way." He offers lightly, pointing into the dark foliage "And I'll go wait over this way."

"Sounds like a plan."

We take turns dropping our bladders. It would seem that Bilbo is in the same boat as me. 'No wonder he was so helpful.' I would kill for some toilet paper but without a toilet or bathroom supplies I suppose I can *Shiver* drip dry. I feel so unclean. Thank God in his heavenly castle in the sky for hand sanitizer. Lathering up with the alcohol heavy substance, I offer some to Bilbo but he politely declines. Fully satisfied with the way things worked out, we make our way back to camp and hope no one missed us during our absence. As we mosey on back to camp we cleverly pick up some dry sticks as a cover story in case our wishes aren't in fact fishes. Of course, wishful thinking is just that: A wish. They noticed. Each and every one of them by the looks of things.

As soon as we break through the tree line we are met with glares from the older dwarves and smug looks from the younger generation. No one says anything, thankfully, but their displeasure is well heard. I smile as best I can before I usher Bilbo back to our previously claimed spot. The night is cooler than one would expect for this time of year, so I wrap my blanket around my shoulders again since I plan to use my coat as a pillow. The two of us sit in a comfortable silence until it is broken by the call for supper. Bofur, sweetheart that he appears to be, surprising brings over two bowls for us. 'No eyeballs or wing of bat.' I swish the spoon through the liquid before I take a sip, just to be sure. 'Not campbell's chicken noodle but not a bad taste either.,'

"Thank you, Bofur." My appreciation is met with a head inclination "This is a pleasant surprise."

"I wasn't expecting anyone to bring me any food." Bilbo adds

"Not a problem, lassie. Mister Baggins. I've been meaning ta come over and meet ya anyway. Y'er the talk 'round camp t'day," my face heats under his curious scrutiny but he grins warmly "I'd like
ta introduce myself, even though it seems that ya already know me. Bofur, at yer service Miss."

He takes his hat off and bows in a sweeping gesture that has me giggling before he sits, thankfully, a few feet away from me. His pigtails are pull worthy and make me giggle even harder when paired with his adorable accent. I tug at my own coiled locks in an effort not to reach for his. Quieting down I offer a dip of my own that is horribly hindered by my sitting state.

"Thia Malcolmson, at yours."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance."

"Mmmm. To answer your burning question" I say with a smile that brightens his own "you could say that I know of you on a very shallow level. I hope to get to know you better and the normal way. You know, exchanging conversation and such."

To my knowledge, he and his family are the only ones not related to the line of Durin in some way or form. What with coming on this adventure with his cousin and brother just for the heck of it, I guess he's spontaneous. Bofur's warm brown eyes match his smile and I just know we will get along on this trip. A toy making miner, I look forward to becoming friends.

"That's because you're a 'seer?' You just 'know' things about folk?"

The light hearted mood is sliced by a voice I hardly recognize. So unfamiliar it is, that it takes me a while to recognize it as Nori. He sits in the dark corners of the camp like a dubious shadow and I immediately dislike him. 'Better unfair, than stabbed in the neck with a hairpin.' From the tone of his voice, I can guess that he doesn't believe the whole 'seer' story. Not that I told it to him. 'Eavesdropper.' I glance at the dwarf from under my lashes. His face, what I can see of it, is dark; whether from dirt or shadow, I can't tell but his eyes are cold, hard, and calculating. I can see nothing of his brothers in him. Based on his expression, he likes me about as much as I like him and I just know that he's going to be a problem.

"Yeah." I say emptily, taking in more stew.

Bofur and Bilbo exchange looks that are universal for 'awwkward' but there is nothing to do about it now. I don't feel comfortable giving Nori, the possible serial killer, any more information about yours truly. Even if I could get over the fact he apparently thinks me a liar, I simply don't do well with cunning people. They are difficult to get along with because they are so hard to read and seem to always have an ulterior motive. So for the moment I dismiss him, finish off my meal, and turn my attention back to Bofur. From the dismissed's scoff, I know he isn't amused. 'Too bad.'

"Do you know any bad jokes, Bofur?"

"Bad jokes?" He asks, smiling in relief at the change of topic but confused nonetheless "I've never heard of anyone asking for a bad joke before."

"I know. I like a good joke just as much as the next person but bad jokes make me laugh more." pulling my knees up to my chin and folding my arms over them, I look at him expectantly "So, do you know any?"

"Alright. Alright. Let me think." he says and begins to stroke his mustache. With each stroke, he lets out a small hum. Setting my empty bowl aside, I swiftly look away from the scene, embarrassed. 'Don't stare, Thia.' He seems to select a joke and focuses back on me with a smile as if he hadn't just been feeling up his beard in my face. 'I might be exaggerating a little.'

"Knock knock."
"Who's there?" I didn't know they had knock knock jokes here!

"Little old lady."

"Little old lady who?"

"Wow! I didn't know you could yoddle!" He exclaims, wide eyed, as if he really learned something about me.

It's a terrible joke to be honest. 'My kind of joke.' I try to fight the smile by biting my lip but its futile. My eyes water before I finally give up as laughter bubbles up from my chest, causing my mouth to blow a suppressed raspberry. I clutch my stomach and laugh. It feels amazing to laugh, and I do it like I'm a maniac. Bofur just grins at his achievement.

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

"She's laughing."

"Aye… Lasses do that sometimes ye know."

"Yes, Dwalin, I know that." Thorin grouses temperamentally "It is just-

"That it's HER laughing?" Balin finishes sagely, unafraid as his King glares at him "Or perhaps that which makes you frown so is it being Bofur who make the young Miss smile?"

"… She can laugh with whomever she chooses. It is no concern of mine."

"I would hope not, though ye lie through yer teeth just the same." Folding the map they had been reviewing, Dwalin scoffs at Bofur's antics to make the girl laugh. And laugh she does. The sound is warm and sweet; endearing her to all who hear it "Anyone who knows ye can clearly see that ye fancy her-"

"I do no-"

"-DESPITE" the large dwarf presses "not knowin' a damned thing about her."

"She had the good sense to take a partner and didn't slay Master Baggins when they went to break water." The elderly dwarrow acknowledges before frowning "Though it proves both their naiveties of the wild that they did not hear Dori following."

"It's proves nothin' but that they are gentle folk-"

"-who can neither fight nor fend for themselves." Snatching the map from his cousin, Thorin shoves it into the section of his pack where he keeps the other parchments "You have made your opinions on the two very clear today as well as many before."

"And yet here they remain." Eyeing the hobbit and young woman visibly growing more tired with each passing moment, Dwalin spreads out his own bedroll "The hobbit is the wizard's choice, but why bring along the girl?"

"She is Tharkun's choice as well."
"A choice that was not his to make" the small group watches Bilbo fall over, dead asleep as Balin points out what the king wishes he would ignore "nor that you disputed."

"Perhaps…” the answer is a clear dismissal as the king stands and if perhaps he punishes the hatted dwarf for his chat with Thia, neither of his cousins make mention of it "Bofur! Take first watch!"
Chapter 10

The night progresses smoothly but quickly and I exchange jokes with Bofur continuously. They are horrible and we laugh like the lunatics we are; Bilbo even throws in a couple here and there. We've been talking for a couple of hours before we even notice that everyone else is starting to settle down for the night. My bowl has magically disappeared but I'm not going to stress it.

"Bofur!" I hear Thorin, none to gently, call to my new friend "You have first watch!"

He nods to the king before turning back to me with a grin. Bowing again he excuses himself with an exclusive dip before drifting off to complete his duty. With a final laugh I turn to Bilbo only to find the tiny hobbit asleep already, curled tightly against the light wind. 'The poor guy is all tuckered out. Cute.' Looking around, I make sure no one is watching before I lay down behind him; our backs close but not touching. I only feel nervous being near conscious people, probably because sleeping people can't judge/see me. Snuggling down, I bathe in the heat radiating from the small creature beside me and try to relax. A glance in Thorin's direction confirms that he is once again directly across camp. This time, he sits with his back pressed against a tree and his head bowed though whether or not he is asleep, I do not know.

"Goodnight." I whisper into the empty night, just in case

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

The first thing I notice when I wake up is how warm I am. Arching my back in a stretching manner, I find my movements horribly restricted. Having six younger siblings, I am used to waking up with the feeling of them in my arms or on head as they often sneak into my bed at night and take up all the room. However I'm not in my bed and the arms around my waist, while shorter than my own, do not belong to a child.

Peaking my eyes open, I find Bilbo cuddled up in my arms. His back is pressed against stomach as he murmurs in his sleep about scones. From our closeness I can assume that we must have gotten tangled up and around each other in our sleep. Bilbo's tiny pale hands are tucked under his curly... head. Both of his hands are under his head... 'So whose hands are on my waist?! BAD TOUCH!'

Not wishing to alarm my capture of my wakeful state, I swivel my hips delicately do my bum is on the ground, making it easier to turn the top portion of my body. I slowly ease onto around until I'm partially on my back only to find myself next to the one and only King under the mountain. Said King is using me as a teddy bear.

His normally fierce face is mostly smooth, save for his permanent frown lines. Even in sleep though, he doesn't appear to be fully at rest. One should breathe deeply, yet Thorin intakes his air
as if he isn't sure there will be anymore. How he can breathe silently while panting is beyond me. Still, the dwarf must have fallen over in the night because he is sprawled on the floor rather than leaning on the tree as I remember he was. Bilbo and I had to have rolled all the way over here... Unlikely, since I'm a light sleeper but not impossible. Thorin's long eyelashes twitch along with his lids before he inhales deeply and rubs his scruffy beard across my face. I quickly close my eyes before Sir Cuddles-a lot can damage my cornea. 'I need my sight orb. Thanks.'

I have no idea how I'm going to get out of this one. Even if I could escape his death grip, what about Bilbo. (Not to mention Balin, who is on watch) I can't handle a bromance right now thus I can't abandon Bilbo AGAIN. Not so soon at least. If anyone woke up, it would look as if I were stealing the company burglar. 'Joke worthy, but not an overall good look.' I look towards the place where we fell asleep originally and wish we had never gotten into this mess, but again: Wishes and fishes. I close my eyes again as I feel movement behind me, which can only mean one thing. The beautiful blue eyed dwarfgon is waking up and is going to kill me. I just keep my eyes closed and hope that he doesn't notice me.

Suddenly, my back feels cold. I wait, hoping upon hope that I don't die. After a few agonizing seconds of nothingness, I begin to wonder what's up. Glancing next to me I find Thorin still asleep but back across camp. Jerking my head around I realize that Bilbo and I are back in our previous spot. 'How the heck?' I glance around to Balin and find the guy staring at the sky, totally oblivious. I have no idea what just happened but my confusion in put on hold by the sun shoving the tree tops in an attempt to blind me.

The day starts fairly quickly after this and I forget about my little morning mishap in a flurry of departure preparations. 'Was probably a dream anyway.' We pack our few items, class the camp, and move out all within an hour. I once again ride with Balin while ignoring Fili and Kili's obvious hair tossing and eyebrow wiggling. It isn't hard, as Balin rides nearer to the front than they do. Occasionally Bofur will yell a joke in my direction and I will laugh until I grow tired of Dwalin's growls and Thorin's glares.

The trip progresses in this fashion for a week or so. Ride, Eat, sleep, ride. 'Baths? What are those?' We leave behind the calm forest and travel through tall grasslands and then rocky terrain, early passing anyone else. So dull and uneventful was the week, that I almost didn't notice that we finally reached the ledge I made my prediction about. Walking over to Gandalf after dismounting from my... mount, I aim to tell him that tonight is the night. I haven't talked to him since he confirmed my suspicions about my ability, or rather inability, to go home a few days ago. He gave a very wizardly answer; full of riddles and no real information. If I weren't so nice, off fearful, I'd have socked him in the mouth for his uselessness.

"Good evening, Gandalf."

"What do you mean?" he says, eyeing me as though I may be harboring a dragon in my sweater. "Do you wish me a good evening, or do you mean that it is a good evening whether I want it or not; or that you feel good this evening; or that it is a evening to be good on?"

"Well..." I can't help it. I smile and answer "All of them at once I suppose." He blinks up at me from his spot before giving me a smile from around his pipe "I have come to tell you that tonight is the night of my prediction. And just for the record, you all shouldn't let him sit in denial when you know it isn't true."

I see Bilbo slip away to feed his pony, whom I have informed him is named 'Myrtle.' Gandalf's eyes widen in surprise and confusion before returning to a reasonable size. He inclines his head and after returning it, I leave his side to go sit by the fire. Dwalin doesn't offer so much as a grunt as I
sit across from him but I know everything is going as planned as a screech cuts through the night. 'Unless things go horribly wrong and I end up looking like an idiot.' Thankfully Bilbo shoots across camp like a spring and makes his way to my side, a question spilling from his lips.

"What was that?" he whispers in a frantic voice.

"Orcs." Kili says in a low voice, eyes darting in mischief between Bilbo and I

"Orcs?" The poor hobbit cries.

"Throat cutters. There'd be dozens of them out there." Of course Fili has to jump in too, not noticing the angry approach of their uncle. "The low lands are crawling with them."

"They strike, in the wee small hours, when everyone's asleep. Quick and quiet, no screams." I try to still Bilbo's shivering by wrapping an arm around his shoulders, giving the pair of brothers my dullest look. Kili just turns it with a toothy grin, the whites glistening from the camp fire "Just lots of blood."

The two idiots laugh as Bilbo looks extremely worried, then confused, and finally offended by the joke. It takes Thorin finally thunders up to the group for the two to understand how deep in trouble they are. I only wish that he didn't have to stand directly behind me while he lectures them.

"You think that's funny?" The king asks with such dark venom that I shiver "You think a night raid by orcs is a joke?"

They have the decency to look ashamed of themselves but by now I feel bad for them.

"We didn't mean anything by it." Kili murmurs dejectedly.

"No you didn't. You know nothing of the world." He angrily storms off to go brood on a cliff. I can only hope that I don't roll off it tonight. I slightly turn in Balin's direction right before he begins his story, knowing it'll happen.

"Don't mind him, laddie. Thorin has more cause than most to hate orcs." Balin strides over tiredly to settle himself closer to the flames. I watch the action curiously, but think nothing of the change "After the dragon took the Lonely Mountain, King Thror tried to reclaim the ancient dwarf kingdom of Moria."

"Khazad-dûm" I whisper just low enough that no one hears me "Dwarrowdelf"

"But... our enemy had gotten there first."

"W-what enemies?" Bilbo speaks up, and I again notice the small change. Nudging the hobbit gently, I place my finger to my lips to signal his silence "Sorry..."

"Moria had been taken by legions of orcs, led by the most vile of all their race, Azog the Defiler. The giant Gundabad orc had sworn to wipe out the line of Durin." I feel a twinge in my gut knowing that if I screw up, Azog will finish what he started. Unless he is, hopefully but unlikely, dead "He began by beheading the king."

Bilbo's hand flies to his mouth and I can't help but grimace. It's one thing to read it or watch it in a movie; it's a whole different game to listen to it in the presence of those involved. I can see from the corner of my eye that everyone is listening, especially Fili and Kili. They look frozen between shook, awe, and fear. Good. After a short pause, Balin continues.
"Thrain, Thorin's father, was driven mad by grief, he went missing, taken prisoner or killed, we did not know. We were leaderless. Defeat and death were upon us." I've never been leaderless; America would never allow it. They'd rather put on idiot in charge for a few years rather than let the seat stay vacant. Not that every act taken affected me anyway. Yet neither have I ever been completely lost on a battlefield. I imagine... that it was beyond frightening "That is when I saw him."

"Thorin."

I hadn't meant to say it aloud, honest, but the near breathless whisper of excitement still escaped me. Balin and Dwalin exchange a wily look before the eldest nods at me with a wink. Turning away in embarrassment, I watch the star filled yet empty night sky that the King stands blocking.

"Aye, Thorin. A young dwarf prince facing down the Pale Orc. He stood alone against this terrible foe. His armor rent, wielding nothing but an oaken branch as a shield." Unshakeable. That's how I'd describe the king in this moment. Knowing acritical moment of his life is being told, yet not even flinching "Azog the Defiler learned that day, that the line of Durin would not be so easily broken."

Balin is a wonderful story teller. Even without the actually pictures in front of my eyes, I can see the images in his words. Violent, colorful, and painful; they burst behind my eyes and drift down to my heart, giving it a painful squeeze.

"Our forces rallied, and drove the orcs back. Our enemy had been defeated, but there was no feast, nor song that night for our dead were beyond the count of grief." I gaze into the burning embers as the memory of that scene washes over me. A sea of death is what it was "We few, had survived. And I thought to myself then, there is one who I could follow, there is one I could call king."

I want to throw my fist in the air but I keep my cool and my let my gaze rest on Thorin. Then again, everyone's eyes are on Thorin, so I'm nothing special. Bilbo, ever curious Bilbo Bungus Baggins, inquires about Azog's fate. Thorin whirls around and gives a heated answer but low answer.

"He slunk back into the hole whence he came. That filth died of his wounds long ago."

I ignore the glance shared by Gandalf and Balin in exchange, as well as the one the wizard throws at me, keeping my eyes on Thorin. He stomps away, as he always does, back to his previous seat only to stop half way there. Ever so slowly he turns and sets his blazing eyes on me with clear realization in them and I agonizingly find that I can't look away. It only lasts for a few seconds before I break the connection and turn my focus fiercely into the fire, huddling beneath my blanket. Placing an hand over my chest, I can feel my heart racing but I don't know if it's from excitement or fear.
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CHAPTER 11

I have been avoiding Thorin for days now. Correction: Thorin has been ignoring me for days now. Granted, I haven't gone out of my way to initiate a heart felt chit chat either but that's beside the point. The two of us need to talk, it's true, but it seems that neither of us can grow the golf balls to make the first move. Gandalf is no help; all he does is snicker behind his pipe. 'Okay, maybe not snicker, but he is hardly broken up about our inability to communicate.' Massaging my thighs, I thank the Lord above for finally allowing my body to finally start to get used to pony riding. It hurts my back my than anything but that's only because it's coupled with sleeping on the floor. 'Sigh' Thus I spend my days waiting for a rancorous or dilapidated house 'la...' to appear. I'm sure it'll be soon enough. '... ssie' I make a futile attempt to find Thorin and end up face to face with Kili's '...ass...' Well yes, but I don't curse. Not even in my head.

"Lassie!"

I'm finally brought out of my musing by a very loud, very insistent, very close voice in my ear and a fingerless gloved hand waving in my face. Bofur sits next to me with a grin the size of a car but with more teeth, trying to get my attention. I gently push his hand out of my face before scooting over a couple of inches and giving him my attention.

"What is it you want Bofur? Is the sky falling?"

"The sky?" He looks up in a worried search before answering in relief "No, I can't say that it is."

"... What do you need my attention for?" I say shaking my head.

"Nothin much. We'll be leavin soon, so ye'd best be packin yer gear. And less lookin at dwarven rear."

He chuckles at his own joke before laughing full out at my horrified face. He slaps me good naturedly on the back as I glance around quickly to see what damage has occured. What I find is the Durin brothers blowing me kisses, fanning their faces, and batting their eyes in a mock attempt of being coy. 'Great. I had just gotten them to stop doing that.' With a groan, I pick up my things and shove them into my bag before hurriedly making my way to Balin and his pony.

"Good morning to you, lassie." He greets, clearly in higher spirits than I

Before I can respond a throat is cleared behind us. I turn to find Thorin a top of his pony looking very much like Napoleon in that painting. Oh... what was it called? Something... about... the Incredibles... Violet... Dash... Jac- Jack! It was Jacques-Louis David's painting 'Napoleon crossing
the alps.' I remember learning it in art. 'Thanks brain!' Another throat clearing has me raising my brow at the king. I sure hope he's not expecting me to speak first...

"You will be riding with me today." he finally says, or more like orders, in a smooth voice "There are many things we need to discuss."

I knew this day was coming. I knew it, I knew it, I knew but I'm STILL not ready. For one, I didn't think he'd make me ride with him. Balin is one thing but how embarrassing would it be for my butt to go numb while riding behind a king? Not to mention that internal fight I'll have NOT to smell him. I smell people, ok? But only those who smell good. Problem being, I'm sure Thorin smells like bottled sex with a generous splash of danger. While a few of the others can be described along the same lines, I can honestly say it's Thorin who I'm most wary of. 'Not a road I want to go on.' So, I do the only stalling technique I know: Act totally clueless. I face Balin with a resigned look and say my wonderfully thought out response.

"You heard him, Mister B." patting the snowy dwarf on the shoulder, I shrug "You're riding with Thorin today. Fear not, I'm sure I can handle the pony on my own."

Which is a bold faced lie. I still can't ride a pony to save my life and believe you me, I've tried. Every lesson Balin compelled me into taking always led to my steed blatantly ignoring my commands and veering off course. Even so, I hope upon hope that he will just let me climb on the beast and be done with it. 'It could happen, right?' A hand on my shoulder, keeping me grounded, has other ideas. I hang my head and look up through my lashes, giving my partner my best puppy dog eyes.

"I believe" he starts, putting heavy emphasis on the word "he meant you, lassie."

"I guess." Flicking my gaze to Thorin, his annoyed glare in return says more than words ever could "You... you might be right."

With a defeated sigh I turn back to the glaring Thorpolian and slowly make my way over. I look up and he looks down; neither of us saying anything as I begin to clumsily mount. Tentatively, I rest my hands on his back to grip the fabric of his coat as an anchor. Seeing fit to ignore each other, as much as you can without an inch in between, we wait for the rest of the company to saddle up before we ride. 'Wish I had a pair of sunglasses.' I settle for adjusting my regular spectacles."

"Move out!"

His bellowed command startles me as much as the pony's motion, nearly knocking me off the animal. I'm quick, though still hesitant, to wrap my arms around the dwarf. I grumble self consciously at the stone pecs beneath my hands, imagining what he must think of the soft, all but useless, possible witch attached to his back. Clip by agonizing clop, we ride in silence. There is only one thing we actually have to talk about but avoidance is key. 'I hate to say I told you so but I did tell him so.' Still, I don't think he'd appreciate hearing it from me... or anyone for that matter. Finally an hour into our tearfully silent trip, Bifur surprisingly saves the day... with singing. And despite the fact that I know he isn't speaking westron, I understand the words. I did not see that one coming. 'Note to self, talk to Gandalf ASAP.' It starts as a hum, much like 'misty mountains' at Bilbo's house. 'I'm so angry I missed that one.' However, it was a happier tune and before long he was singing full voice.

'Oh, the summer time is ending,

But the trees are blooming
And the wild mountain thyme

grows around the blooming Heather

Will you go, lassie, will you go?

and we'll all go together

To pull wild mountain thyme

All around the blooming Heather

Will you go, lassie, will you go?'

Being the only lassie around, I pay extra attention to the words. Little by little the company joins in and I sway in excitement. The beating of hours is a natural yet perfect base line that I highly appreciate. The song continues to the next verse and a few dwarves pull out their instruments from... well... I don't know where... and I'm not inclined to guess... but they pull them out to play. Despite my earlier resignation, I'm stoked to be present.

'I build my love a bower

By yon clear and crystal fountain

and all around the bower

I'll call flowers Mountain

If my true love, she won't have me

I will surely find another

To pull wild mountain thyme

around the blooming Heather'

I don't know what half the words mean in an actual sense but by this time I'm really into it, so it doesn't really matter to me all that much. I love a good folk song. If I were alone, I'd jump up and dance like nobody was watching but I settle for beating Thorin's abdominals like a bongo. He hums along as the final verse rolls around, so I don't think he minds too much.

'Oh the summertime is ending

But the trees are blooming

and the wild mountain thyme

grows around the blooming Heather.'

The song comes to an end and I'm tingling as I clap my hands with joy. Feeling bold, I decide 'to heck with all this lollygagging.' Before I can back out, I place my hands on his thighs and lift myself up so I'm all but hanging over his shoulder. It's the only way I can get close enough. Locating his ear, I whisper as firmly as I can without sounding commanding or like I'm yelling.

"Tonight we should talk."
"Indeed." Is his stiff reply before repeating his earlier statement "We have a lot to discuss."

Oh, it's on.
Chapter 12

The rest of the day is filled with riding, talks of wizards, pony balancing, oh! And rain. Or "deluge" as Dori so pleasantly puts it. We may be soaked but at least we're learning. I don't mind too much. I sit behind an equally soaked Thorin, who has not said anything since accepting our need to talk, quietly and I'm okay with that. Not the him being equally wet part, not that I have ownership of being rained on, but the quiet part. Its my first fully (mostly) silent ride and I'm enjoying the silence. The company consists of my movie favorite characters, save Batman, but to be honest... they sure can talk a lot. To much, sometimes. Still, if my coat wasn't so heavy I'd be a little happier. Its way too warm for it but its my only protection from the rain. It was made for warmth, so it's not really water resistant. I'm soaked to the bone but thankfully nothing has tried to eat me and that's all a girl can ask for. We arrived at the clearing and in it sits a burnt down house. 'I spoke too soon about eating.' With a sigh, I slide off the pony the moment Thorin calls for camp and I make my way to the wrecked building.

"I came in like a" skipping over the burnt doorway, I bop my head randomly at the morbid sight "wreeeekingball."

While waiting for the argument to start I take a gander at the place. It's dark despite the fact that the sun hasn't even set yet. 'Fire has the magic of doing that sometimes.' I touch a piece of wood and it comically breaks off in my hand. The smell of fire and ash is still so pungent in the air that I cover my nose with my soaked sleeve. 'Delightful.' I hear Gandalf walk into the house and Thorin is not far behind. Despite having been in the rain with us, Gandalf is dry as bone. Thorin, on the other hand, has shed his outer layers to walk around in a plain undershirt. Shaking my head to clear it, I watch the wizard as he looks around in thoughtful confusion.

"A farmer and his family used to live here."

"Not anymore." I say under my breath before adding a bit louder "I think it would be wiser to move on."

Both wizard and dwarf look at me in surprise. Gandalf looks like I stole the words right out of his mouth, which I kind of did. Thorin on the other hand, wears the face you get when someone takes your food without asking. Rather than burn where I stand, I quickly look back at Gandalf.

"Very good, my dear girl." he praises like a dutiful Professor. Gold star for me "I have to agree with Miss Malcolmson. We could make for the Hidden Valley."

"I've already told you, I will not go near that place."
I am regretting my choice to enter the building first. It has left me stuck in it with no way around an annoyed wizard and a stubborn dwarf. Thorin breathes deeply, as if the more oxygen he takes in the less likely he is to pummel our guide. As if talking to a child, Gandalf answers with the patience of a Saint. Do they have Saints here? Nah, probably just battle heroes.

"Why not? The elves could help us. We could get food, rest, advice."

"All good points." Especially since they're going to need all those things my morning I'm not looking forward to the trolls but Thorin is firm to the point of stupidity. "Really good points, you have to admit Thorin."

"I admit nothing of the sort." he snaps moodily at me, pacing the dusty floor "Nor do I need their advice."

"And the map? You can't read it. It will do you no good to get all the way to the mountain and not be able to get in." shrugging my shoulders, I secretly commend his gall for not having thought about this but still making the trip "Depressing if you think about it."

"Are you not claiming to be a seer?" He responds in exasperation. Blue eyes pin me with determination "Why don't you just tell me what it says?"

Blinking away the stare, I gaze at the floor. 'Well he's got me there.' I COULD tell him what the map says and we could leave Rivendale after a night of supply packing. OR, and this is just a thought, I could keep my mouth shut and enjoy 2 weeks in the lap of luxury. I mean, that's how the story is supposed to play out anyway. So it'll be fine, I'm sure of it.

"I do not read moon runes."

"Moon runes?" He asks, mildly interested.

"They hide a message in the paper of the map and you wont be able to get into the mountain without deciphering it." avoiding his searching gaze, I stare at the open sky. It's easy when there is no roof "You need the moon and a stone and a couple of other stuff that I don't have. Sorry."

"Hn." Even without looking, I can feel him staring at me. I offered no lie, I would not lie to him. But a half truth is OK. At least when baths are on the line. 'Bed, bath, and beyond.' Gandalf takes my reasoning and runs with it.

"Moon runes, of course. Lord Elrond could help us."

That does not seem to be the right thing to say. Thorin's cool eyes blaze anew and the volume of his voice causes the building shutter. 'What I wouldn't do to be outside. ' And just like that, I'm outside. Neither of the warring males even notice. They are still too caught up in their argument.

"A dragon attacks Erebor. What help came from the elves? Orcs plunder Moria, desecrate our sacred halls, the elves looked on and did nothing! You ask me to seek out the very people who betrayed my grandfather, who betrayed my father."

I had always thought the phrase was sacred holes. Like... butts... This sounds a whole lot cleaner, and fancy. Speaking of fancy, I just teleported and no one could be bothered enough to notice! The two just keep arguing as if I hadn't just defied the laws of physics. At least, I think it's physics. I never took that class; not even sure if it's math or science. Huffing in irritation, I notice that not even the guys around camp caught my stunt, all being too busy avoiding looking in our direction.

"You are neither of them. I did not give you that map and key for you to hold on to the past."
"I did not know they were yours to keep."

He may be right but still, a wizard will be really handy tonight. As he turns to storm off, I panic and step in front of him to block his path. Risky, since Gandalf is a bean pole and could just run me over if he felt the need. He instead looks at me in surprised annoyance, not expecting to see my out here. Not wanting to keep him I speak quickly.

"Maybe while you're out, you could scout ahead. Just... don't forget to come back."

With that I go off to stand by Bombur asking if I can help with dinner. I imagine that Gandalf stares after me for a moment before continuing to leave camp; I assume to walk off some frustration. Bilbo, little spy that he is, spots Gandalf leaving and calls out to him.

"Everything alright? Gandalf? Where you going?"

"To seek the company of the only one around here who's got any sense."

"And who's that?" Bilbo and I ask at the same time.

I may be a little high strung but I have sense. The three of us exchange wary looks momentarily before the wizard answers, with a surprisingly revised response.

"I wish to be alone." he huffs tiredly "I've had enough for one day."

I smile and the corner of his mouth twitches before he turns and continues away. Thorin, trying to act all cool, stands in the doorway with his arms crossed.

"Come on Bombur, we're hungry."

The larger dwarf is surprised to see me offering my assistance but he gladly accepts. Usually, I'm more of a wallflower but being that te walls are all burnt down... Turning my head slightly, I see Bilbo from the corner of my eye with Balin. 'Good to see him making friends.'

"Is um... he coming back?" His voice is funny as he asks. They both watch Gandalf disappear. The old dwarf just shrugs.

"You should really listen to the wizard. He'll end up keeping you from being eaten alive." Thorin of course ignores me, so I add in an annoyed tone "Fine, but when you guys are half naked in a sack don't come crying to me."

"You can join me half naked in the sack any day, lass."

The group laughs at his joke like bunch of nimrods. Of course Bofur had to be the one to add a dirty meaning to my warning. I glare at them all before turning back to my work.
Chapter 13

"So..."

"For Mahal's sake Balin, must you?"

"Must I what?"

"Start this again."

"Yes, I do believe I must."

"... So."

"How much longer do you plan to ignore her?"

"I am NOT ignoring her... I simply can not speak to her just yet..." knowing his adviser has a rebuttal prepared, Thorin quickly adds "Though she has expressed her desires to do so, tonight in fact, to which I agreed."

"Has she now?" The king nods slowly, wearily watching his cousin stroke his snowy beard in thought "Then... What reason do you have for delaying?"

"The night is still young, Balin. There shall be time enough later."

"Perhaps..." Looking out at the calm scene, Balin cannot help but wonder how much longer it will last. On a quest such as this, calm would not care to tarry with them thus, a seer would be most helpful "There is time enough now."

"Later, Balin." Turning toward the mundane scene, Thorin watches Thia's slim fingers handle the food preparations. Though not excessively crucial, the dwarf finds no need to interrupt the girl's menial task just yet. He needs more time to decide what to make of her, despite his growing questions "Later."

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

After I help cut the veggies for the soup, I decide upon the great mission to take a nap. Requesting Bilbo to wake me up when dinner is ready, I find a spot to doze. I'm going to need my rest now as I doubt I'll be getting any tonight what with trolls and... Thorin. Peaking through my lashes, I seek him out against my better judgement. Studying his pacing form, I wonder if I should tell him of the trolls but think better of it.
Bilbo needs to start proving his worth and he cant do that if I protect them all from everything.
Ridding myself of all kingly thoughts, I shut my eyes and quickly slip into a light sleep. The feel of
the company moving around camp in their heavy dwarfish manner is almost relaxing, which is
new for me. I usually can't sleep with people walking around; it makes me nervous. 'A lot of things
make me nervous.' But I don't seem to mind it right this second.

I don't dream while I doze; Instead I just let myself fall into a comfortable sense of relaxation as
I'm lulled by their voices. It feels like mere seconds of rest before I'm suddenly broken from my
reverie by a flustered Fili storming into the camp. Of course he is screaming about, you guessed it,
trolls. 'Bilbo didn't listen to me it would seem.' I get up forcibly, crack my stiff back, and start to
follow the dwarves only to be blocked by Dwalin. Standing toe to toe, I have a few inches on him
but he could still toss me like a Frisbee.

"Stay here." he commands gruffly before rushing off.

Of course I follow once more but I am once again halted. This time by Thorin.

"Stay. Here." he growls out the repeated command through his teeth, before rudely adding with a
glare "You'd only be in the way."

"Fine." I grind out, trying not to sound offended "But as the leader of this company, you'd better
make sure no one gets their arms ripped off."

"A threat?"

"A warning."

He looks at me with a strangely strange kind of strange look, as if he wants to ask more but he
doesn't have the time. My arms prickle at the attention, and I rub them absently just as the last
dwarf leaves the clearing. Thorin and I never did have that talk. 'And the things I need to discuss
keep piling up.' He continues to stare at me for a few moments before wordlessly turning and
running after the company. I sure hope he listens. Knowing there is a chance he won't, simply
because I asked him to, I wait a few minutes before I follow. There is business I have to take care
of and I'm not delaying it because he wants to play troll round up. After I locate the troll camp,
with the mini war occurring, I search for the ponies that escaped. I want to make myself useful.
Not to mention, there is no way in hell that I'm running from orc loving wargs on foot. I gather the
ponies as they attempt to flee and lead them back to our original camp before checking on the
trolls.

"Lay down yer arms! Or we'll rip 'is off!"

I see Thorin hesitate before he seems to remember my words. That, or he is contemplating how
successful he can be without a burglar. 'Probably the latter. Jerk.' He stabs his sword, a beauty
named Deathless, into the earth with such gusto, you'd think it stole his wallet..er... coin purse.
Regardless of that, the other dwarves follow suit seamlessly.

Knowing that Bilbo is safe for now, I go about completing my second goal: find the troll hoard. To
be honest, I just follow my nose and it leads me directly to the trash Kingdom. Flies buzz around
the entrance and I gag before dry heaving at the stench. Wiping my tearing eyes, I cringe away
from the foul place. I'm not going in there alone... or without some fabreez... or a gas mask.'
Mission complete, I go stand by Gandalf's rock, wait, and listen.

"The secret is... To... Skin them first!" Oh Bilbo, you poor guy.
No one seems too happy about this little tidbit of knowledge Bilbo has given their enemies/dinner hosts. I giggle silently at the threats they throw at him, especially Dwalin. He spins around the spit, throwing out threats and dodging embers. Movement at my side helps me spot Gandalf and I do not hesitate to wave him over while making 'shush' motions.

"Glad you could join us."

"How is it that they are in such an unfortunate predicament, and yet you have alluded capture?"

"I knew it would happen but no one gets hurt and Bilbo needs to start making progress in this whole burglar business. Yeah?" he frowns knowingly but nods in agreement to my screwed up logic. I'm not sure how I feel about Gandalf and I being on the page being that he had a terrible track record "Great. Now climb on this rock, split it in half, and say something impressive."

He stares at me as if my brain is sliding out my nose and does none of the aforementioned tasks, much to my displeasure. I can hear the dwarves in the background arguing about who has the biggest parasites. Thorin, no doubt. They are all in his fat head. Shaking my own head, I frown at myself. We are running out of time.

"I know it sounds strange, I always do, but you need to do this. Or something like it. Their lives well and truly depend on it."

Gandalf keeps his eyes on me for a moment longer than I am comfortable with. I'm two seconds from snatching the staff and doing the job myself but as I'm play-thinking of how to get it done, Gandalf bobs his head and climbs onto the rock. I have to fight not to laugh at Grandpa in skirt climbing a boulder. 'Gandalf got run over but a boulder.' Too funny. I bite my fist, it's so funny.

"Say something impressive!" I remind around my laughter.

Huffing, he does as he's told. "The dawn will take you all!"

He strikes the boulder mightily with his staff, causing the very ground to shake. A little shuck and jive keeps him from falling as the large rock cracks in half straight down the middle. The Rising Sun beams down on the trolls and they go from towering to cowering in pain before turning into stone. The dwarves, of course, all laugh in victory. 'As if they had done something.' I step out from behind the stone and go poke the trolls with a cautious finger. I'm not a fighter; I know I would have been in the way. But by golly, I'm going to touch me a troll!

"A little help would be nice, lassie." Bofur calls impatiently, face turning a painful red from the smoke

I hear grumbles of agreement as I make my way over to the group. Swiftly kicking out the fire, I find Bofur hanging off the side of the pit.

"My dear dear DEAR Bofur. I clearly remember warning you that you would end up half naked or in a sack." Pinching his cheeks simultaneously, I give him a pointed look "Next time, don't laugh. Yes?"

He has the decency to look ashamed before nodding. As much as he can with his cheeks in my hands

"Aye lass. I hear ye. Now," he wiggles, kicking Dwalin accidentally "a little help. Please?"

"Oi, get yer foot out of me back."
I laugh at the hanging group while finding a small dagger and making quick work of cutting them off the spit. They tumble onto each other, much like they did at Bag End, before jumping up and running off in search of their clothes. I understand the cultural differences but they needn't worry. All I'm going to say is 'Onesies. Dwalin. Fili. Bofur. In Onesies.' I stop to watch Gandalf free the remaining sacked members, erase said image from my mind, and then go to play on the trolls like they are a jungle gym. Eventually everyone is, thankfully, dressed and Thorin approaches Gandalf for a heart to heart.

"Where did you go to, if I may ask?"

"To look ahead."

"What brought you back?"

"Looking behind. Nasty business." gazing out at the company, he nods approvingly "Still they are all in one piece."

He smiles at me and I give him a wave from my perch: hanging upside down from a trolls finger. As the wizard comes over to examine them, Thorin trails behind him at a slower pace.

"No thanks to your burglar." rolling his eyes in exhaustion, as if even the thoat brings him to tears, he adds "Or your seer."

"Hey!" I exclaim quietly, not trying to bring any attention to myself. Grumbling, I run my hand over my perch angrily "I did so warn him. Kind of. Twice! He just... wouldn't listen. No one to blame but himself."

"I have no doubt that the young Miss Malcolmson gave you some sort of forewarning." Thorin admits nothing even as Gandalf nods before adding "Bilbo had the nous to play for time. None of the rest of you thought of that." He gives Thorin a pointed look before continuing. "They must have come down from the Ettenmoors."

Thorin doesn't seem too ecstatic about either of us being right but he nods as well, taking a keen interest in the new subject of trolls.

"Since when do mountain trolls venture this far south?"

"Not for an age. Not since a darker power rule these lands." I provide in an ominous voice as Gandalf pauses to think. Thorin glances in my direction only to do a double take at my precarious position "Hiya."

"And just WHAT are you doing, woman?"

"Just hanging out." I swing right side up and scramble to sit on the troll's head. "And the name is Thia, not wooooman."

"Be careful not to fall, little one." I hear Bifur call up from below me. Looking down I see him poking at the troll while his cousins are distracted "T'is quite a distance."

"Don't worry, Bif." I answer, not thinking "I'll be fine."

Thorin's eyes narrow and Gandalf's widen, while Bifur just continues to poke the the troll's knee caps. Silence reigns as I nervously scratch at the spot on the trolls head. I realize that announcing to the trio that I understand Khuzdul in this moment was not the best of moves, yet I'm happy its out. Though... with Thorin looking like he wants to strangle me, I divert the conversation back to the
trolls.

"Well um, they could not have traveled in daylight." I say nervously "They turn all... stoney..."

Thorin doesn't stop glaring but answers coldly "There must be a cave nearby." He walks off to search for it until I yell for him to wait "WHAT is it now?"

"I found it already. It's that way." I point in the direction of the cave. "Oh, and while you guys were... Tied up, I gathered up most of the ponies."

His general disdain face for everything Thia-ish does not change, however he thankfully starts in the direction of the cave. Gandalf inclines his head at me in appreciation before he and a few others follow. It isn't until most of the dwarves are gone that I realize one important thing: 'I'm stuck.' Searching, I find Bifur, Oin, and Balin still in the clearing.

"Balin!" I whisper desperately. He turns and searches for my voice before locating me on my perch.

"What's the matter lassie? What are you doing up there?"

"Long story short, I'm stuck. Help me." I beg pitifully.

With a fatherly laugh, he guides my steps so that I can descend safely. I slip on about 2 feet from the ground, but Bifur is there to insure I don't crack my head open. When I finally make contact with the ground the remaining dwarves are watching me with amused expressions.

"I told you to be careful." The ax headed dwarf mumbles, ruffling my hair.

"I know. I know" I answer noncommittally, swatting him away and ignoring Balin and Oin exchanging looks "Let's go smell the troll hoard."
Chapter 14

Making our way to the troll hoard, we find most of our group in or around the cave. Stepping over torn up trees and uprooted rocks, I clamor into the clearing while pinching the bridge of my nose. Peering into the gaping hole, I find the dwarves burying treasure. 'Typical.' Taking a last breath of fresh air, I creep into the dark space.

"You guys are dwarves not pirates." I say, sneaking up behind them "At least, I'm pretty sure you're not pirates."

"We are making a long term deposit." Gloin grumbles, not turning away from his task while Nori pretends that I don't exist "Hand me that bag, dearie."

Inhaling small sips of breath, I do as I am told. A tingling at my spine has me turning around to see that Thorin has his new sword in tow just before he calls the company out of the cave. We STILL haven't had a chance to discuss my position in the company yet I quickly avert my eyes in case he sees me watching him. Hopefully we will have time when we reach Rivendell and I'll be brave enough not to flee. Sighing, I exit the cave mouth, picking up a few relatively clean trinkets along the way.

"Oi, lassie." Bofur calls from the hole causing me to check the floor to make sure I didn't drop anything "Ye pickin' up a few fer yerself ta wear?"

"Hmmm? Oh these?" Holding up the small gems, I dust them off before shoving them into my pocket "No, I only wear jewelry that is given to me as a gift."

"Good ta know!" He replies with a wink

It's true though; all the jewellery I am wearing were gifts. My gold rings, my cross necklace, my brass bracelet: All gifts. These trinkets will probably be given away too. I'll take them as proof that this little adventure ever happened. I make my way over to Bilbo and Gandalf with just the right timing, as he gives the hobbit his new sword.

"I have never used a sword in my life." The burglar protests with a twisted frown "Quite frankly, I don't want to."

"I do!" I say excitedly, jumping into the conversation like an overindulgent child "Do I get one too?"

My dad would flip his lid if I came home with a sword. He'd be just as excited as I am. He collects them, though we never learned to use them in any way, shape, or form. I don't think my mother
would be as accepting with the whole sharp objects thing. I currently have to hide my samurai sword under my bed, 'cause... monsters. 'What a waste.' Not that I have to worry about any of that because the group loudly shouts a resounding denial.

"NO!"

I turn around and find the whole company vehemently agreeing to deny me a sharp, shiny, deadly weapon. If I wasn't sure I'd cut off my own arm, I'd probably be offended. Gandalf, being the all knowing wizard that he is, ignores the interruption and continues with his words of wisdom.

"And I hope you never have to. But if you do, remember this: true courage is about knowing not when to take a life, but when to spare one." I watch the scene with such ferocity that Bilbo has to nudge me back into reality.

"Something's coming!" I hear Thorin call. Great, moment ruined.

Gandalf turns to hurry away from us but pauses as I make another premonition.

"It's only Radagast."

And just like that, the brown wizard plows through the bushes on his rabbit drawn sleigh. I can't say I ever really liked his character. Sure... he's quirky, original, and has a serious love for nature. All good qualities in a person, right? But you can't really love yourself if you let birds poop on your face. 'I would have had roasted Blue jay for dinner but that's just me.' Still, he's a wizard and wizards are strange. Perhaps he's using it like an anti-aging cream or something. Wizard's get wrinkles too. As he and Gandalf go off to have their applications battle I go off to make friends.

"Come."

Grasping Bilbo by his sleeve, I drag him and his new sword over to the Ri brothers. Greeting them politely, I focus on Ori and totally ignore the death stare I receive from Nori. 'The bastard can go suck a monkey for all I care.' I smile at the youngest brother before asking him to assist me in making sure the ponies don't run away.

"Why would they do that?" Dori asks oblivious to fire beams escaping his middle brother's eyes

"Simple, Mister Dori." I say as if it is the only possible answer "Something is going to spook them."

"What's going to scare them?" Ori asked in a teeny voice. A-freaking-dorable.

"You'll see, but we are going to need to run really soon." Once more, I'm struck by the fact that now would be a good time to warn Thorin but I'm... I don't know. He makes me feel weird when I look at him and even weirder when he looks at me "So can you help me? Or are we going to play 20Q?"

I don't know if he understands what I just said but he still nods and attempts to get up. That is, until he's dragged back down by his eldest brother.

"Don't worry, he's actually safer with me."

The dwarrow immediately releases his brother and I lead my hobbit and stolen dwarf away before anyone else can intervene. I know that Nori is following but I'm still maturely ignoring him. 'He gives me the creeps.' There's not much I can do about it in any case, as killing him is below my morals and above my skill set. We arrive at the field where the ponies have been set out to graze
and after securing the 10 remaining beasts, we sit down for a little chit chat.

"What's it like where you're from, Miss Thia?"

I'm surprised by his willingness to start a conversation and mentally pat him on the back. The young dwarf pulls out his handy dandy notebook, meaning it just got real. Folding my hands behind my head, I flop back to lie in the tall grass. Since we have a little time to spare, and I'm a little proud of my home, I decide to answer truthfully. Well, as truthfully as one can be without violating a direct order from, you know, a king not to discuss one's origins.

"Ori, I was specifically instructed not to speak too much of my home." At his dejected face I try to make up for it. "Will you settle for a true lie instead?"

He's intrigued and begins to earnestly think about the offer for a moment before glancing at Bilbo. The Hobbit shrugs, but the eagerness of his head bobs betray his curiosity as well. I don't believe either have ever heard of a true lie, my favorite kind. Ori offers a small nod of his own before answering.

"That sounds confusing, but acceptable."

"Alright then. Know that every lie I tell is true, and every truth is also a lie." Smirking at the situation, I watch the wispy tailed clouds drift through the sky. It's almost like home and as my heart twinges, my grin fades "Make of it what you will."

Both hobbit and dwarf lean in to hear my story better. The quietness of the forest behind and to my right signals to me that Nori is listening close by as well. With a sigh, I begin my tale.

"I'm from a land of concrete jungles, metal beamed trees, and steel winged birds. Where the streets are paved with gold and the sky is close enough to scrape. In my home, the land is filled with milk and honey but only few can taste it because the ground is swollen from the rivers of blood. Here, basic rights are discovered and lost and war is never done. A peacefully chaotic place is the home that I know."

By the time I finish I'm whispering and my audience is close enough that I can feel their breath on my arms. They have not joined in my exact positioning but they are still more relaxed than when we started.

"Peaceful chaos." One of them whispers and its so quiet, that I can't tell which one said it

Bilbo gazes at me with a look of sadness, while Ori's quill flies across his parchment. I wanted to give them the truth, to the best of my ability without exposing the fact that I'm kind of an alien. It unfortunately ended up depressing me more than I expected it to. I blame the sky. How dare it just hang above me like nothing has changed.

"You miss it, don't you?" I nod minutely, silently trying to murder my sudden homesickness "I miss the Shire terribly... peaceful chaos indeed."

"Thank you for sharing that with us." The dwarf slows his writing and finally looks up with the small sad smile. "It was beautiful."

"It really was." Bilbo says softly.

"Think nothing of it." Sitting up so I won't have to look at the familiar sky anymore, I offer a wobbly grin "It's what friends do right? Share stuff?"
I lower my head and rub the side of my face as my cheeks burn in anxiety over my blatant wish and their compliments. I was never good with accepting compliments, as I tried not to do things that garnered much attention let alone complimenting. Ori's eyes widen in surprise before he blushes wildly. He really is adorable.

"Are we friends then?" He asks through his blush "Really truly friends?"

"Well yeah, I-I-I mean... I'd like to be. Me and Bilbo right?"

I look in Bilbo's direction and he joins the blush club and answers.

"Um... yes. I'd very much like to be counted as your friend as well, Mister Ori."

With an excited sound Ori nods his head so violently I think he'll knock it off. We all share a few seconds of contentment before the moment is ruined by growls and shouts. I can hear the dwarves just over the hill as they run around preparing for battle.

"We need to get out of here!" Someone snarls

"Well then come over here and get on a pony before they bolt!" I shout in return.

After a few moments, the company comes storming towards us and leaping on to the ponies like it's nobody's business. Who do I end up with? Nori of course. 'Ugh.' I almost would have preferred Thorin.
Wargs and Rivendell

Chapter Notes

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

Chapter 15

I have to admit, I've always been really good at ignoring people. It started with my oldest younger brother, Leo. He's only a year younger than I, so he was always copying whatever I did. I found out early on that he would not listen to my protests and threats to his well being. 'Fool.' Thus, I began ignoring him. It worked for a while, until my dad got remarried and I was blessed with a step sister, Alexa, who was two years younger than me. She followed Leo, and Leo followed me. I felt like a mother duck, and acted like one too, I suppose. I ignored them for the most part but I always looked out for them. Why? Because I love the little rats, no doubt.

That is not the case with this star head being that I do not like him in the least. Still, I'm not even concerned with the fact that I'm riding with him. Nope. Not even a little. I even have my arms wrapped tightly around his waist, easily ignoring him all the same. 'Being hunted by orcs and wargs helps distract me.' If he wasn't afraid that he'd bite his tongue off, Nori would probably tell me to ease up... or fudge off... in less child friendly terms. Instead he just vibrates with low growls each time we hit a bump. 'Not that I would listen to this no good, dirty rotten, good for-'

"Come on!" Gandalf calls as we ride, trying to avoid the beasts "Stay close."

"Where are you leading us?"

Gandalf shifts his eyes to Thorin's direction but only offers him a wizardly huff from on his horse as an answer. Despite the distance, I can still hear Radagast laughing maniacally as he plays a high stakes epic game of tag with the wargs. A sound from above causes us all to look up and I puff out a breath before sucking it in violently. An orc, astride a warg of course, paces the rock over our heads in search for our little group. A few of the dwarves slide from their ponies and I quickly become worried.

"Psst!" I whisper tersely towards the leader of the group, trying to get his attention without alerting the orc "Don't!"

The dwarf glares at me, as per usual, and with a silent order from the leader Kili shoots the warg, causing the pair to fall. Its clumsy and noisy and I groan aloud at the botched attempt. They are killed quickly but not before the other enemies are alerted by the death screeches. I hear an orc howl a command, and the sound of his voice makes my skin crawl. It's like someone stuck me in a coffin filled with cockroaches while nails on a chalkboard grind in the background. 'Its a terrible sound.' I cover my ears but his voice breaks through.

"-The dwarf scum are over there! After them!-"
Grasping Nori's torso even tighter, I ignore his grunt and lean over the side of the pony. I locate Thorin by his dark furs and toss a wordless shout in his direction to get his attention. When he turns around, clearly not amused by this or the previous ignored warning, I tell him to get on move on.

"In case you didn't notice, they know where we are and are heading this way!" staring at him wide eyed and imploring, I jerk my head towards the vicious beasts "I'd prefer not become warg chow, if that's ok with you!"

Gandalf, who I know also has the misfortune of understanding black speech, agrees with my eloquent speech. The dwarves aren't far behind in this trend of acceptance when they hear the wargs howling and the orcs coming in our direction. The king, working his jaw in attempt to calm himself enough not to bite my head off, gives a very obvious order.

"Move! Run!"

"Nooooo." I drawl sarcastically "I think I'll stop and smell the daisies!"

Everyone complies and collectively ignores me. That is, everyone except the bastard Nori. He really wants to tick me off. If there was a 'who can tick Thia off fastest' contest, this dope would win hands down.

"You understand both Khudzdul and Black speech." inclining his head at an angle to give me a suspicious look, the thief scowls in my face "Just who are you really, woman?"

"You are about to be a dead nobody." I hiss in return, jerking at his coat "Get your nose out of my business and away from those who want to kill us!"

"What makes you think I would be the one to die?" He says with a sneer.

"The fact that I have no problem tripping you to save myself!" I reply without hesitation.

He looks to say say more but I jab him harshly in the nose with a finger. 'Childish, I know, but effective.' His face scrunches up in anger but I raise my finger again in a threatening manner, daring him to continue. He squints his eyes at me but finally decided to put the pony into high gear. And not a moment too soon; those wargs can run something crazy.

"There they are!" I hear Gloin shout as we round the bend "Took 'em long enough!"

"Sorry guys, Nori wanted to have a little heart to heart about hair tips." I say and am ignored again, save for another growl from Nori.

"This way! Quickly!"

"Kili, shoot them!"

There is so much going on that I stop trying to identify who is speaking. The tension is so thick in the air that I can smell it. 'Tension apparently smells like dwarf.' I feel my adrenaline kick in as my disorientation increases, making everything seem all the clearer and more confusing at the same time. Shouts come from all around but they are so dull compared to the thud of my heart. My head is on a continuous swivel, greedily trying to take in every dwarf swing and orc fall like they are ballerinas on a stage. 'It's almost like I'm on a real battlefield.' My grip loosens up on Nori and when the pony rears up in fright, I fall off.

"Ouch." I blink up at the pony in annoyance "That really hurt, Charlie."
I gaze down at my arm and see a small slightly bloody scrape placed at my wrist. Nothing serious, but a scrape nonetheless. Watching the bit of blood slip down my forearm I frown at my own stupidity. I've gotten so caught up in the story, that I forgot that I am part of it. I can be hurt, killed, maimed, and the like. This realization brings me up short and I don't even know which dwarf yanks me up and away from the advancing creatures. I'm only brought back to now by a worried yell from the eldest Prince.

"We're surrounded!" Fili protects his brother's back as Kili continues shooting the creatures rapid fire "Where's Gandalf?"

"He's abandoned us!" Dwalin bellows. I want to disagree but, you know, my scrape.

"Hold your ground!" Thorin howls from beside me "Don't break formation!"

The orcs advance on us from across the plain and I'm really beginning to feel the pressure. I've seen the discovery channel and I do believe the right word for warg is 'apex predator.' I shake with fear but hold my ground, still mostly due to being frozen in fear. I don't want to think of all the bacteria in those chompers. Thankfully Gandalf pops up from his hidey hole behind a rock and insults us before I can pass out.

"This way you fools!"

I don't need to be told twice, not that Thorin gives me the chance. He grips my shoulder, swings me around, and shoves me towards the wizard. I take it in stride and bolt forward without stumbling. I slither down the makeshift slide and land face first into the prettiest yellow flower I've ever seen. That's not saying a lot, being that I hate the color yellow. 'Pink all day every day.' Not all that bad tasting from what I can tell based on the mouthful of berries and leaves I orally inhale when Nori 'accidentally' lands on my back. Thankfully, the pony misses crushing my spine.

"Get off!" I shout from beneath his bulk, not taking his closeness well. The situation all but demands my anxiety to raise and it comes with a vengeance "Off!"

As soon as he rolls away, I spit out most of the plant and remove myself from the base of the slope to avoid more dwarves, stumbling further into the cavern. When all the males and ponies are accounted for we wait in tense silence, staring at the mouth of the opening like chickens at a cloudy sky. Instead of rain, we are greeted with a horn blaring followed by an orc with a lovely arrow in its chest.

"Elves." Thorin spits venomously after retrieving the arrow. Tossing it on the ground, he points pins Gandalf with a suspicious expression "Elves?"

"Hn."

"I can not see where the pathway leads." Dwalin announces, already searching for a way out "Do we follow it?"

"We follow it of course!" Bofur decides without thought and rushes forward.

With the decision made, the dwarves begin walking single file along the path; guiding the ponies that haven't dart ahead already along. Dusting myself off, I aim to follow but my eye catches the flower from earlier. 'Hideous color, but such interesting petals.'

"Come along, Seer." Thorin calls from you ahead and I roll my eyes at the title "We haven't the time to dally."
"I'm coming. I'm coming."

"No time for bedroom talk, lass." Bofur chortles and I want to strangle him for it "Save it for later."

Curbing any retort, I quickly pluck one of the buds and gently place it in my pocket before following the group. I'll ask someone to identify it for when I get the chance. A short walk later, and we exit the hidden passage to be received by the prettiest hotel/resort I have ever been too.

"Rivendell." Bilbo murmurs and I smirk

I hear Gandalf get into his little 'let me do all the talking' speech but I'm distracted by how the crisp and clear scene begins to wobble at the edges. I take off my glasses to clean them, but the fog remains. 'Must be the adrenaline wearing off.' Rubbing my eyes absently, I follow the dwarves down the path and across a horribly railingless bridge.
Chapter 16

We mosey on down the path toward the death trap turned bridge in a preschool like fashioned buddy system. If I wasn't partnered with Thorin, I'd almost be inclined to hold Bilbo's hand. Still, I am not in a playful mood. In fact, I'm feeling nothing but annoyance and irritation concerning my dwarven companions. Each dwarrow's face holds an expression of either disdain or anger. Even the normally even tempered Ori looks uncomfortable by his surroundings. Yet and still the very worst, of course, is Mister Thorin Oakenshield. His constipated scowl is making me want to push him off the side of the bridge. 'But that would defeat my purpose for being here.' I refrain from murdering him but I do not hold my tongue as well.

"I feel like you could use some motherly advice." I say say in low voice, so no one else can hear us "If you don't fix your face, it'll get stuck like that."

"My mother, you are not." He steadily barks out, without turning to me "You would have me laugh, skip, and jump in the presence of my enemies?"

"You don't do that with your friends, so no." I ignore the not being his mom part, as it is true. Can't say I want to be his mother any way "Still, you don't need to impersonate a bear. We haven't even met anyone yet!"

"Hn."

"Unless... Do you have a thing against bridges?" Looking around in mock suspicion, I assure the king that his mood is uncalled for "How many times has a bridge betrayed you? Be honest."

"Surely Seer, you know what the elves have done to my people." He says, thankfully, without malice towards me. No, no malice. Just pure and utter thin patience "If I must explain it, then I have no use of you as a foreteller in my company."

"Firstly, my name is Thia. My parents blessed me with it as a gift to give to everyone I meet. Call me by my name or don't call me at all, because I wont answer."

I refuse to called by a title. My parents thought long and hard about my name; a whole hour. Ok, ok, alriiiight. So maybe thats not a long time. They thought I would be a boy until out I popped, so some quick thinking had to be done on their parts. 'Thia is the result.' I give the king a pointed look and refuse to continue without his affirmation. With a slow dip of his head in agreement, I return to my second point in the conversation. Turning back to the path, I begin again.
"Secondly, if you mean that I must surely know what Thranduil did because just know things, then yes, I know the actions of that specific elf. However last time I checked, his kingdom was a FEW mile that-a-way." I point gesturing over the Misty mountains in the distance. Not that Thorin looks "And this here lovely abode, belongs to someone who has never harmed you or yours."

"An elf is an elf. It matters not who he is." He answers stubbornly, not even attempting to hear me "They are all the same."

"And that statement makes you, your majesty, a racist." His head snaps in my direction with a frown etched so deep in his brow that you'd think it was a tattoo but I pay it no mind "Excuse me."

I immediately increase my speed in my haste to abandon his side. I refuse to walk beside a bigot; my parents would be ashamed if I did. 'Shoot. They'd be furious.' The increased pace forces me to the head of the company with Gandalf. His only acknowledgement of my arrival is to peer at me from the corner of his eye but I ignore him in favor of taking in the sights. The glimpse from the movie didn't do this place justice.

The first sight I take notice to is the water. It is so clear that I can see the rocks lining the bottom. 'I wouldn't mind drinking this water.' Most of the water we have been drinking on this trip tastes very… earthy. I think it would be much better from these springs. The waterfalls are impossibly silent; even as we get closer, they only offer a low hiss to announce their presence. They tumble into the river in perfection, froth a pristine white, and then settle calmly down stream.

The air of middle earth is clearer than that of my world, I knew it the moment I inhaled my first breathe. Even so, it is even more so here. I deeply inhale the sweet scent and try not to fall too far in love. 'What can I say? If its pleasant to my nose, it's all good.' Gazing at the building itself, I accept it for what it is. The structure isn't too extravagant, simple really, yet in it's simplicity I find something oddly comforting.

"I don't mind spending two weeks here at all." I murmur.

"Then you will be spending themalone, for we leave at first light."

"That's what you think." I sing, annoying even myself Thorin StupidShield seems to have caught up to us and is determined to ruin my peace of mind. I turn to continue with a biting retort but Gandalf places a gnarled hand on my shoulder. 'Why is everyone trying to get on my nerves today?' I swing in his direction to give him a little what-for as well, but realize that we have arrived in a foyer like area. I glance around quickly and notice the girliest guy I have ever seen. I don't mean Justin Bieber girly, either. I mean give him boobs and he could put Angelina Jolie to shame. Gandalf, oblivious to my inner montage of mental sex changes for the elf, walks up to mister pretty boy and starts talking to him.

"~Mithrandir~." Girly greets calmly.

"Ah, Lindir." Gandalf responds in kind

THAT'S his name. I couldn't remember for the life of me. I hear the group behind me whispering and I wish they could have some fricking manners. Sadly, the order of 'stay sharp' is passed around by the dunderheaded leader followed by pleading requests to at least use the 'water closet' first. Since the dwarves are being such jerks, Lindsay starts conversing with Gandalf in elvish. I know it annoys the dwarves, but I keep up without missing a beat.

"~We heard you had crossed into the valley." Lindsay says sweetly
"~I must speak with Lord Elrond.~" Gandalf replies, quite rudely I might add. At least give the poor guy a little bit of small talk. Why is everyone so annoyingly rude today? Lindsay doesn't seem to mind however "~ It is urgent.~"

"My Lord Elrond is not here."

"Not here?" He squawks "Where is he?"

"Geeze Gandalf! Is the poor guy not allowed to go out for a walk without informing you? He's obviously out saving our butts." I say loudly.

Elf, hobbit, wizard, and dwarves look at me like I'm crazy. The attention would usually make me nervous, but right now it only makes me angrier. I am saved from having to explain my sudden irritation by the same horn from earlier. Pivoting towards the death bridge, I see a party of elves parading across it like some circus act.

"Close ranks!" Thorin rudely shouts right in my ear "Quickly!"

I am yanked by my hoodie and dragged into the center of the group to stand next to Bilbo. I have no idea who pulled me into the core but I am both thankful and vexed with them. Its nice to know someone thought to protect me. However, that feeling is overshadowed by a feeling of immense resistance to being thought weak and touched without being warned to mentally prepare myself.

The elves surround us with two large circles spinning in opposite directions, assumed to confuse those within. Not at all complicated, but effectively intimidating nonetheless. Eventually the spinning stops but I still feel a little disoriented but refuse to lean on anyone for support. Elrond finally pops his matrix looking face into existence after a silent standard off and spots the wizard.

"Gandalf!" He exclaims, way too happy for my liking "It has been too long!"

"Lord Elrond" he greets before once again, to the annoyance of the dwarves, switching to elvish "~My friend! Where have you been?~"

"~We've been hunting a pack of orcs that came up from the south. We slew a number near the hidden path.~"

Gandalf looks in my direction and I just shrug and roll my eyes. 'I'm not feeling up to playing nice little seer right now.' He frowns at my response but turns back to his friend as the elf finally gets off his horse and makes his way over. Embracing the wizard, but being mindful of his sword, he continues the conversation in english… or common… westron? 'I don't care, whatever!' The dwarves shift around me, keeping their gazes on Elly.

"Strange for orcs to come so close to our borders. Something or someone has drawn them near."

My mind begins to drift again from the conversation I've heard quite possibly hundreds of times, in favor of watching the elves disperse. A low whispering draws my attention to a pair of elves standing by a staircase. 'Twins.' I can always tell twins apart after the first day I meet them. These two are eerily similar though, and familiar. They catch me staring and offer flawless bows before approaching. I fight to not roll my eyes again. I'm usually notice rude… confrontational… aggressive? I'm getting a terrible headache from all this.

"Does he offer us insult?" Gloin bellows.

"No, just food." I hiss, holding my head.
The dwarves turn to discuss the possibilities of food amongst themselves, while the twins inch closer. Reaching the edge of the group, they stand quietly and wait for the dwarves to finish.

"Ah, well." Gloin starts "In that case, lead on!"

The dwarves begin to follow Elrond with nothing on their minds but filling their guts. Nori brushes past me with a sneer and I know he wants to get on me about understanding another language of this blasted place. I start to follow until I feel a tug on my backpack. I stop moving and take a deep breath so I don't flip out on whoever felt the need to touch me. Turning, I am faced with the twin elves.

"And who is this lovely lady who travels with such strange company, brother?" elf number 1 questions.

"I do not know brother, but her eyes are most intriguing. Are they not?" elf number two counters.

"Allow us to introduce ourselves, my lady. I am Elladan."

"And I am Elrohir."

"A pleasure to make your acquaintance, sons of Elrond." I reply

Thats who they are of course. They look just like him, but less… tired. They aren't suppose to here, or are they? They remind me a lot of Fili and Kili, just less forward. Maybe they just don't get introduced to the company? 'I'm so confused.' They stare at me in surprise, as surprised as an elf can look. Trying to recall my manners, I begin to introduce myself as well.

"My name is Thia Mal-"

I am cut off by Dwalin who seems to have noticed my absence. He bounds over thunderously and stands in between me and the elves while looking quite intimidating for one who is the shortest of us four. He grips my upper arm to hold me in place as I attempt to step around his bulk.

"She's a member of our company, meaning she's no concern of yours. That's all ye need to know, now shove off."

He then proceeds to drag me away to rejoin the group. I struggle to have him release my arm but to no avail. He has taken a liking to my arm and refuses to free it until he is good and ready. Upon reaching the group he guides me to the middle before, thankfully, letting go. He glares at me, to show his annoyance and I glare right back, before he moves to the front of the company with Thorin. The two whisper before Thorin is tossing snarls at the twins for some arbitrary offense. Regardless, I hear the twins whispering again as we turn the corner towards lunch.

"Her eyes were very alluring, weren't the Elladan?"

"Indeed. Strange, more like."

Chapter End Notes

Heya! The flower was important. Can you guess what it was? Symptoms are aggression, disorientation, and dilated pupils so far.
AN: So, since Thia can speak all languages, I am separating them by fonts and such. Elves and orcs may seem similar but I doubt you will be confused, since I don't really plan to have them talking to each other. Any additions to this chapter will be noted later.

Elves: "~Speak like this~"

Dwarves: "Speak like this" (bold if I can get it)

Orcs: "-Speak like this-"
Chapter 17

We are led precariously through endless halls to a dining area and seated at a beautiful mahogany table for our meal. The room, while spacious and delicately filled with elf eye candy, only holds two tables: One for important people and one for... the others. Thus, at the smaller but highly raised table sit Gandalf, Elly, and Thorin while the rest of us poor souls sit in the kiddy corner.

"Please," The head elf politely inclines his towards the table "take your seats for the meal."

The table is long and solid wood, which is a good thing when dealing with dwarves, though the dainty mesh tablecloth might be done for. Sturdier material, if one wants to use material at all, is required around such a rowdy bunch. At each place setting stands delicate glass flutes that I assume are for wine, though the dwarves would probably prefer ale or something of the like. 'I don't drink either way.' Next to each seating place are artfully folded napkins made of some form of cloth that I'm too irritated to identify.

"Well come on then, ye louts." Stomping up to the table, Gloin waves us all over impatiently "The chairs won't bite ye."

"The elves might." Nori snickers as we sit down in a semi orderly fashion and examine the food on our plates. I somehow end up between Bifur and Dwalin, but I'm pretty sure the bald dwarf did it on purpose "Or stab us with their pointy ears."

"Would they really?" Ori whispers, glancing around in renewed suspicion

"Of course not!" Glancing over at Bilbo for the exclamation, I see that he has already started chowing down "Elves would never do that."

"He's right." Fili grins playfully "They'd get their dresses dirty if they did that."

"You expect elf maidens to bite you?" The hobbit shrieks

"Who said anything about the maidens?" Grin spreading across his cheeks and to the other members, the dwarf examines our hosts "I was talking about the males. Hard to tell the difference though."

The group bellows in laughter before finally truly examining the table contents. They are all eager to eat and search the dishes in front of us for a hot steaming meal. What they find is a dieticians wet dream. Green vegetables littered with tomatoes and cheese sit beside bowls of fresh fruit, breads, sauces, and pitchers of questionable liquid. I am not a lover of salad either but hunger
compels me to fill my plate nonetheless and dig in. Balin, Bifur, and Dori begin to eat as well without much fuss but poor little Ori needs a bit of coaxing from his eldest brother.

"Try it. Just a mouthful."

"I don't like green food." he complains, shaking his head like an irritable tot

"Do they have any chips?"

"You can't survive on chips, Ori."

"I can try..."

Shaking my own head, I reach towards the middle of the table and grasp the water jug to pour some into my cup. Sipping the refreshing liquid, I continue glancing around the table. Poor Dwalin is in such a state of refusal, that he literally shoves his hand into the bowl in search of the tasty bits.

"Where's the meat?" he asks in disbelief.

I ignore him in favor of stuffing my face and throwing the lettuce that Bifur places on my plate, back onto his own. It's a nice gesture but he's giving me dark purple lettuce and I only like the whitish ones. The darkish ones are too bitter.

"**You are thin, little one.**" He explains softly in the rough language, poking at my ribs with a thick finger "**Eat more.**"

"I am just the right size to be me, thank you very much. Besides, I doubt anything on this table will make me gain weight."

"**This is true. Elves do not know how to feed their guests.**"

"I don't mind too much. I just wish we had more meat."

We both laugh under our breaths while the rest of the company gives up on digging for meaty gold and settle for gnawing on the food provided. I pay mild attention to the conversation on the high table but giggle as Balin calls Bilbo's sword a 'letter opener.' I give the leaders a few more minutes to finish up their discussion of swords before I make my way over. When Dwalin isn't looking and Bifur is chomping away on his acquired nut, I slip away from my seat. Making my way up to the high table I wait to be noticed. Thorin, who is avoiding conversing with Elly as much as possible, catches sight of me first. He inclines his head regally and I dip into a half bow/half curtsy in return. Gandalf observes the exchange and decides that now is a fine time to introduce me.

"Ah, this is the young Thia Malcolmson. She has been offering her assistance on our adventure."

"Good evening." I say politely.

Always polite, even when I don't feel like being so. You only have the enemies you make. I can't bring myself to call him 'Lord' however. I know it's just a title, but my only Lord is God and I'm pretty sure he isn't an elf. 'Pretty sure...' He examines me for a moment before replying to my greeting.

"Good evening." Looking my person over curiously, he nearly frowns in speculation "What assistance could a human woman offer to a company of dwarves, if you don't mind me asking."

"I do mind you asking, so excuse me if I don't answer."
My temper flares again. What kind of question is that?! I could a minstrel, amazing fighter, or someone's wife for all he knows but 'pleasure provider' is the profession I'm sure he thinks I hold. I don't even notice my anger until I see Thorin smirk and Gandalf frown. If Thorin is amused, I'm being way too rude. The elf asked a valid question and here I am going crazy over nothing.

"Was that... rude?"

"Quite."

"Not at all."

"Ah..." the statements made by dwarf and wizard are so contradictory that I almost want to laugh. Almost. Quickly lowering my gaze I apologize to the host "Pardon me, sir. I haven't been feeling myself lately."

"Yes, you have been quite aggressive today." Gandalf says, eyes calculating. "Perhaps it is a response to today's earlier misgivings."

"Maybe." I reply uncommittedly.

Elly stares me down for a moment longer before giving me a small smile. Always the elegant host, he is most gracious. If I wasn't in such a terrible mood I'd... probably in a much happier one.

"You must be tired. Why don't I have someone show you to your room? There you can rest, relax... and bathe."

"That would be lovely." I say, ignoring the fact that he underhandedly told me I was dirty. What can I say? I am.

"She will be staying with the company." Thorin interrupts.

"No, I won't." He opens his mouth to argue but I'm having none of it "I have spent so much time with you guys that I'm actually starting to smell like a man. It might not bother you, but I'd rather not question my gender."

"... Your gender is quite obvious." He states, turning away and clearing his throat "That is beside the point; to leave the group is unsafe."

Although they do not fully understand what a 'guy' is, they can guess from the context clues. Thorin does not wish to concede to my reasoning swiftly, and I'm not happy about it. I'm not feeling generous or particularly patient either however I want this to run smoothly so I offer a little compromise.

"After you all have your talk, you and Gandalf can come find me. We'll have that discuss that keeps getting put off, alright?"

Both wizard and dwarf agree to this arrangement without a shred of defiance. 'It's about time.' Twisting to face Elly again, I smile slightly and dip before going back to the lower table. I tell Bilbo what's going on, as I'm sure he would worry otherwise, and wish him a good night.

"I'll see you later alright? Be good and don't let Thorin bully you." He blushes at my care but bobs his head as I turn to Balin "Alright Papa Balin, you make sure Thorin doesn't do anything too crazy."

The elder dwarf looks at me in surprise before smiling gently, patting my arm, and nodding. I
nudge them both on the head with my knuckles before following the beautifully plain elf that quietly appeared to take me to my room. We exit the dining hall just as Bofur leaps onto the table and starts a song about some inn. We stroll slowly around the curves and bends of the hallway and soon enough I can't keep up with how many turns we make. It's not new to me, as I have a horrible sense of direction on a good day. My grandmother says I inherited it from her. 'Having said that, it's usually not this disorienting.' Eventually, the auburn haired elf maiden finds my room and drops me off at the door.

"Here is your room, my lady. Someone will arrive soon with clothing and hot water for your bath. My name is Merilin, should you need me again. Is there anything else you require?"

"Oh, um no but... Merilin means... Nightingale, right?"

It is the strangest sensation understanding the word not only as a name but also for it's meaning. She looks genuinely surprised, if her eyebrows are any indication. She is quiet and for a split second I think she is not going to answer. I frown and open my mouth to express my displeasure when she answers all of a sudden.

"That is correct, my lady. I was not made aware that you speak Sindarin." she says melodiously.

"Oh I don't. At least, I don't think I do. I've only tried to speak whatever language I'm speaking now. But I understand all of the languages spoken around here." I ramble.

"That's an interesting gift. I'd be very interested in helping you determine the extension of it if you would allow it."

"That's really nice of you, Merilin. We'll probably be staying for a week or two, so there's plenty of time. I'll see you around."

With that, I enter the room and wait to remove miles of dirt, grime, and confusion.

~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

I'm dozing on my bed after a nice soak when a booming knock on the door startles me into attention. The sun has been down for a while and I have been dressed for hours though I had to ask Merilin for a little help getting into the dress provided. Not being a dress person anyway, it was extremely difficult to get into. I have uncomfortably been waiting for my guests to arrive and I'm surprised that I almost fell asleep. Suppressing a groan, I feel really twitchy and feverish as I pull myself up into a sitting position. 'I don't want to spend my vacation sick. I'll ask Oin if he has something for it later.' I move to the door wobbly and open it for my late night guests. I find the dwarf king and wizened wizard standing in the doorway; one looking amused and the other slightly aggrivated.

"Two weeks." I say without preamble.

"Unfortunately." he huffs "I won't say that I told you so but..."

"Indubitably." Gandalf replies with a smirk "You look very lovely, my dear."
"Thank you kindly. Now, are you coming in or am I coming out?"

"Out." Thorin says looking me up and down before walking away.

With a shrug in Gandalf's direction, I follow the dwarf. We come along a small garden, probably by accident, and find a collection of benches at our disposal. Situating ourselves as comfortably as possible, I find myself the focus of two stares. My temper, and temperature, unjustly rise again but I keep my cool.

"What do you want to know." I whisper under my breath

"How much of the future do you know?" Thorin asks immediately

"I know the next two years in detail and the next fifty vaguely. Next question."

"Tell me." He demands

"That's not a question."

"Seer." He bites out, working his jaw until it audibly creaks under the pressure "Tell me what you know about this quest."

"I've told you about calling me that." His eyes turn into icy slits but I only shrug "Not that that's a question either, Thorin."

"Miss Malcolmson, CAN you tell me what you know about this quest?"

"Can I? Yes, I can. WILL I?" I reply without remorse "No, I won't."

He growls and leaps up from his seat, taking an intimidating step in my direction. 'I guess he's feeling froggy?' I sit up straighter and glare at him, unafraid. Gandalf makes calming gestures but neither of us are calmed.

"What need have I of a seer who will not speak of her prophecy!?"

"I'll tell you what you need to know, when you need to know it. It's not like I plan to let you all die. Have a little faith."

"Faith is for the foolish, woman."

"Then call me a fool." Gandalf announces in annoyance. Waving towards the pacing king, he beckons him back to his seat "Should she guide you away from a broken arm and instead you break your neck, many would be saddened."

"I would prefer to make my own choices than to rely on someone else's good intentions." Still, he returns to his seat and thinks of another question with eyes filled with fire "How do you know Khuzdul?"

"I'm unsure of the specifics, but I think I know all the languages of this world."

"What do you mean, 'unsure'?" Gandalf cuts in with a frown.

"I mean that I have been able to understand every word spoken by every person since I got to this world. Hobbit, dwarf, elf, and even orc. They all seem to be speaking the same language to me, just with different... feelings I guess. I can't think of the word. Not any animals though. Birds still tweet, I think. Black speech hurts my ears though."
"I'll bet it does." Thorin huffs, coming back to my sharing problems "If you will not tell me the future, then what use are you?"

"I can't tell you that either. I am as useful or useless a you make me. However, I have a problem that might actually be helpful to you." I say lazily.

"What is this problem you have, Miss Thia?" Gandalf questions curiously.

"Teleportation."

"Teleportation?" they repeat comically. "Your ears heard right, no need to repeat. I seem to be able to teleport. I've done it twice already; once on the first night I got here and a second time in the house before the trolls." I explain as patiently as I can manage.

"You have got to be kidding me" Thorin says humorlessly, walking away.

I concentrate hard, hoping I can make it work and strain doesn't make me poop my pants-er... dress. Thorin stops short of his stride, in an attempt to not walk into me, as I suddenly appear in front of him. His eyes widen and as do good old Gandalf's. It's the first time I have teleported purposefully and I'm quite proud of myself. 'Mental fist pump.' Thorin looks at me with guarded suspicion before whirling around to face Gandalf.

"What sort of sorcery is this? Have you brought a witch into my company?!!"

"I assure you that I have not, now lower your voice Master Oakenshield." The wizard then says curiously "My dear, where did you learn to do this?"

"I'm not a witch, thank you very much. And I didn't learn it from anywhere. I couldn't do this in my world. I haven't had much time to think of how it could help on this quest but I'm sure it'll keep me from getting in your way. Which, may I remind you Thorin, is what you said I had to do in order to stay with the company."

He growls and kicks over a bench in anger. It thuds dully in the grass compared to his foot steps as he paces a few times before walking over to a tree and punching it. The wooden structure shakes violently and leaves fall off their branches like lead in water. 'The tree didn't do anything to him.' I furiously storm over to the dwarf and attempt to shove him away from the tree. Its like shoving a wall though, and he merely rocks in place.

"Hey jerk face, first bridges now trees!? Maybe you should stop taking your anger out on inanimate objects!" I shout.

"Now why don't you two just-" Gandalf starts.

"Do not think to put your hands on me little girl. I can make you easily regret it if I take my anger out on you!" He growls out, sending a healthy dose of fear down my spine.

I doubt he'd ever hurt me but I don't like taking too many chances. He takes a threatening step forward and reaches his arm out swiftly to grab me. I don't even have to think about it. Teleporting a few feet backwards I grab his arm and use his surprise and weight to my advantage. I utilize his momentum to pull him off balance, follow his body, and throw him over my shoulder without letting go of his arm. I finish with a foot in his throat. 'All those years of karate are finally paying off.' With the threat removed, I realize not only what I have done, but also the fact that I can't see Thorin's face. Its hidden from my view by my dress, which he is under. I just flashed a King. Screw that; I just flashed THORIN. Granted I'm not going commando, but I don't make a show of exposing my panties to random guys.
"Oh!"

Dropping his arm, I leap away with a gasp and end up tripping over nothing, ending up falling on my butt in a tangle of skirts. From my position I see a red faced Thorin, an annoyed but amused Gandalf, and stupid Nori silently laughing across the garden. 'Can't a girl catch a break?' The fire in my veins turns into a severely watered down version of courage. I only have enough to stand as straight as I can, mutter a good night and high tail it out of there. My vision is blurry from tears or anger or something else and I can't find my way back to my room fast enough for my liking. My fever is making it all the harder to walk and I end up slumping down in the middle of the hallway to weep.

"Why are you crying, lassie?" I hear a familiar voice ask.

I look up and immediately feel relief; my dad is leaning over me with a worried expression. I sputter unintelligibly and wrap my arms around his waist, burying my face in his beard which seems to grown exponentially in the short time I've been gone. He hesitates for a moment before wrapping his arms around my shoulders and legs, and carries me off to wherever. I couldn't care less, he's somehow here and I'm safe. The rest doesn't matter. 'Still... since when does he use the word lassie.'
Lost my penis

Chapter Summary

No genitalia was touched in this chapter. Please keep your dirty minds on the sidewalk but out of the gutter. ;D Thank you.

Chapter Notes

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CHAPTER 18

My dad carries me through the long winding halls of Rivendell, much like he did when I was a child. Well... the biggest difference being the location. I remember how he used to also carry me on his shoulders and it made me feel like I was on top of the world. He was the strongest man alive, no one could tell me any different, and as his daughter I was invincible. Although I haven't grown since the 6th grade, he has gotten older; rarely does he pick me up like he used to. Thus, I am as happy as a clam with the current situation. Snuggling into his beard, I complain about basically everything.

"Daddy, it's been so hard lately. All this traveling, bad attitudes, and avoiding certain death. It is not my idea of a good time."

"Do not forget, lassie, that it is you who insisted on coming."

"Only because I want to help, honestly I do. That stupid monarch just won't let me." Folding my arms tightly around his neck, I grumble stoically "I don't know what to do, he's so stubborn."

"That might be true-"

"Not might be." I interrupt with huff breath "IS. I've been nothing but helpful, as much as I can be mind you, but all Thorin ever does is look at me like he has a severe case of gas."

"That... ahem..." silent laughter shakes his chest but he stifles it. Like a MAN "Do not take it to heart. He has led a life that has made him very wary of what he does not know."

"Not that he even wants to get to know me." If I could slouch right now, I would "He's lucky that I know deep down under that scaly exterior, he's a great person."

"Your knowledge can be... disturbing. It is unnerving to be so well known by someone you do not know very well. Dwarves are secretive beings, and he even more so."
"Oh don't I know it. But they aren't all so bad. There is this dwarf named Balin, he's like Thorin's go-to guy for advice, and he's super nice."

"Ah. He sounds like an upstanding person."

"Very much so. Reminds me of you on a good day." We share a laugh, coming closer to a rather active area of the compound "And there's Bofur, a mining toy maker, he can make me laugh even in the worst situations. Oh! And Bilbo. Sweet Bilbo, he's in over his head but the quest names him to succeed."

"Is that so?" He asks mysteriously.

"You bet, but you saw the movies with me. You know the story and how important he is, or are you getting forgetful in your old age?" I question with a playful tug on his beard.

He chuckles warmly and the vibrations soothe me even as we enter the noisy open area. Sitting around a particularly awkward fire is a puppy, my mother, a kitten, and... poop? Well then... Its a strange scene to say the least. I ignore them all for smiling broadly at my mother. 'I've missed her fiercely.' Wiggling until my father sets me on my feet, I wobbly run to her and throw my hands around her neck. 'Social anxiety is no match for being transported through dimensions.' Her neck is incredibly thick and she seems confused as to why I'm hugging her. I don't do it often.

"Hello, to you too lass." she says, delicately patting my back.

"Mommy, how did you get here?"

"MOMMY?!" she shrieks before turning to my father "Balin, what is going on here?"

"Balin?" I search the room for the snowy dwarf but cannot find him "Mom. You're odd."

"Me? ODD?!"

"Calm down Dori. The lass seems to be hallucinating, I was looking for Oin to have a look at her." Daddy says calmly "She thinks I'm her father."

"You're not? Mommy! Am I adopted?!"

"No... darling." She replies awkwardly returning to patting my back "Just sick in the head, I'm afraid."

"Well that doesn't sound good." the sweater clad kitten meows regrettably "Are you alright Miss Thia?"

"Don't worry about me kitty, I'm fine. Just having a bad day is all."

The kitten seems a little put out judging by his pout, so I let one arm slip from my mother's neck to pet his wooly head lightly. It only lasts a moment before the puppy lets out a growl in the poop's direction and the poor kitten flinches. I fully release my mother in favor of facing the puppy, and what a big puppy it is. 'Must be a great dane german shepherd hybrid judging by the size and coat.' He is large and solidly build, however he is missing chunks of hair from the top of his head. Who would do this to the poor thing? Rushing over I make shushing noises when he rears back in defense, before I begin scratching him behind his ears.

"Daddy! Look at this poor puppy. Someone has shaved his little head." I stroke the spot and the puppy shakes in fear. "He's so afraid that he's shaking! Poor thing..."
"... I'm not a dog." it growls.

"Come on!" The poop hollers chillingly "Give us a bark!"

"Watch it, thief." The pup growls defensively

"Leave... the puppy... alone, lassie."

I turn towards my father and find him red in the face from anger. He's clutching his stomach in an attempt to hold in how furious he is but it isn't working. I never knew what an animal lover he is but now it's painfully obvious. The puppy is still twitching under my palm and so I let him go, choosing instead to wander over to my father's side in an attempt to calm him. I carefully sidestep the poop on the floor that is... laughing? This is getting weird.

"I know it's making you angry, dad. But its ok. We'll catch the person who did this and make him pay. Especially for taking that huge dump on the floor. Who even does that?" I say pointing to the poop with a sneer. "Disgusting."

"Wait..." The poop suddenly stops laughing but the animals and my parents burst into a cackling mass "You mean to tell me you think I'm a piece-"

"Perfect choice, lass!" The puppy howls in amusement "Perfect!"

Its quite the sight to see. My parents, sharing a chuckle with mutual... friends. That hasn't happened in years. Not wanting to interrupt their prolonged laughter, I exit the room quietly to search for the poop culprit. I mean seriously, who is that rude? Walking through the corridors, I accidentally happen to enter the candy aisle. I love candy. I set my eyes on the most delicious looking round lollipops that are worriedly examining a broken vase. I haven't had candy in months, even before I started this little adventure. I walk up to them and prepare to take a bite when they bounce in surprise and start talking. 'Woah. First poop, now candy. Welcome to wonderland, Alice.'

"Ah, Miss Thia. How fare you this evening?" the yellow one says.

"Well." I say deciding which to devour first.

"Does Thorin know you are out here?" They exchange weary glances that only serve to confuse me "You should not walk alone at night."

"Alone or in the company of others" folding my arms and trying to read their labels, I impatiently respond to their comments "what I do with my free time is none of his concern."

"Oooooo, is that so?" the deep purple one notices my staring and sways intriguingly, ignoring his companions hiss of objection "Are you here to have another look at our dwarven rears?"

"No. I'm here for something sweet." I say before pouncing.

"Ah! She's got Fili!"

I jump onto Yellow and ignore purple's odd cry as I begin lapping at the sunny surface. It sputters as we fall but doesn't struggle. Then again, why would candy struggle? I continue licking past the hard outside of the lollipop until I reach the soft center. It pulses strangely in my mouth but I press on until I startlingly taste spinach. SPINACH?! I launch myself from my spot and grip the wall like a demon from any horror film. My candy lays on the floors for a moment before sitting up in a daze.
"Wha hap'n?" It whines childishly "Why'd you stop?"

"Because you are a lie! Yellow means banana, not spinach!" I yell.

Storming off, I leave the disappointing candy behind. Spinach flavored candy. No one wants spinach flavored candy. Its an abomination! I only get about a couple of yards before the purple candy starts shouting. I turn to find yellow still on the floor but purple waving it's arms at me.

"I don't taste like spinach. Try me!" it cries desperately.

"I don't need to. I hate grape flavored candy."

I turn and walk away from its dejected wail and it's companion's laugh. I don't know how far or how long I've been moving but walking aimlessly makes me hungry. Especially after those lies of candy. It's the middle of the night and I can't tell if I should go to sleep or find some food first. The decision is made for me when I catch sight of a heavenly spot; a bed AND pancakes. 'I'll just have a midnight snack in bed.' I approach slowly and offer a silent prayer that these things don't talk too.

"Oi, lass" the pancakes says "what are ya doin' up so late?"

Is it too much to ask that my food doesn't talk? I stop approaching the pancake and turn my attention to the large round bed. Walking over I plop down on it and pout. It offers a small moan like creak but is thankfully otherwise silent. Tilting my head in the direction of the pancake I answer its question. Must... Be... Nice. It IS my favorite food after all.

"I had a run in with some nasty candy." I complain.

"Oh? Thats too bad." it says, steaming invitingly.

"Uh huh. But I'm feeling much better now that I ran into you."

"Oh... well" the pancake pauses as if unsure of how to proceed "Glad I could... help?"

I quickly grow tired of playing with my food; standing up abruptly I thump over. The pancake remains in place until I grab it around the edges. It tilts a little away's from me but seems perfectly content with the situation. 'Pancake knows it's place.' Syrup oozes from its center like a curly mustache, with a floppy bacon ears match. God really does love me.

"You know what?" I say.

"Uh, no. What?"

"I'm tired of playing this game. You know how much I want you. You're the only reason I'm here any way." I say inhaling deeply.

"What? Lass, I don't know what ya-"

"Don't play dumb with me!"

"I thought ya were here for Thorin-"

"This and that and 2 very different topics! You think I don't notice you, sitting over here looking all scrumptious?!"

"Oh lassie. I'm sorry! I really can't help looking this great." it replies sickeningly sweet "Its a gift."
"I've had it! I will have you! Right here, right now! On this bed!"

"A-Are ya sure? Thorin won't skin me alive, now will he?"

"If I hear his name one more time, I'm going to scream!"

"Alright. Alright. Just ya and me then." It pacifies gently "I mean I don't mind at all but are ya SURE?"

I don't bother answering; I push it towards the bed and hop on top. Similarly like the candy, it does not offer any resistance, merely engulfs me in its heat. I'm only in middle earth because of my eagerness for pancakes, I wonder if I eat this one, will I get to go home. 'Lets get this party started.' I bury my face in its heated folds and bite down. HARD.

"Woah there lassie. I've got no problem being rough, but can we not do this on my brother?"

"Your brother is a bed? What a strange pancake." I raise my head confused.

"Bed? Pancake? No, lass. It's me, Bofur. Please... PLEASE, don't tell me ya think I'm a pancake." it begs.

"If you're not a pancake, then I need nothing from you." I frown and get up.

The pancake groans from his spot before also getting up. He grumbles something about 'teasing women' and 'how could this happen again.' It seems to have led a very odd life.

"If ya care at all for my life, don't tell Tho-HIM about this."

"For goodness sakes!" I shout, throwing my hands into the air "Why would he care what I eat?!"

"Oh, believe ya me, lass, he'll care." Shaking its bacon strips, the pancake paces while mumbling worriedly "Whether he admits it or not, that dwarf cares deeply about who you put your mouth."

"Huh-

Grabbing my hand, the pancake leads me through the halls, back the way I came. 'Maybe it is taking me to better pancakes?' I follow without much struggle and wave to the candies when we pass. They run to catch up and my rag tag group of food continues on. Soon however, we come across a group of beautifully identical aliens that make us stop short. My food gets all frazzled and the aliens in return, look a little more aggressive. Feeling that things could get ugly, I step in and use my possibly professional negotiating skills.

"People. People. We are all friends here. There is no need to fight."

"They are no friends of ours." Yellow states aggressively

"And yet you reside in our halls. Eat our food." States Alien 1 before holding up the shards of broken pottery "Break our furniture."

"If not friends, are you then vagabonds?" Questions Alien 2 quips

"A wise man named Peter Griffin once said: There's only one thing to do- learn their language, earn their trust, and breed with their women. In time our differences will be forgotten. Perhaps you all could try that."

Apparently, that is not the answer either group was expecting to come out of my mouth. They all
stare in silence before erupting into boisterous laughter. 'Well, at least they aren't glaring anymore.' I decide that I should be the first to take the leap.

"Fear not. I will begin the blending process. Bring me your finest maiden, and I will make her my mate."

"Miss Thia" Purple says between gasps "you don't have the equipment to breed a maiden of any race."

I gasp before slowly looking down my body. I back away from the group and turn to face a wall for privacy. Gently, I pull my pants away from my waist and peer inside only to be greeted with... nothing. * The candy is right! Spinning around, I give such a desperate wail that the group as a whole stutters into silence.

"I've lost my penis!" I bawl before crumpling to the floor, fainting.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

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CHAPTER 19

"... primrose, thyme and dandelions. Oh! And some prickly-burr as well, for the late nights."

"Dandelions?"

"Good for digestion."

"Hm."

Conversing with Oin about his dwindling medical supplies, I hear boisterous laughter coming from the company in the provided alcove a few doors away. It is late, but they have been through a lot lately and deserve a few hours of merry making. *The noise is probably disturbing the pointy eared bastards. Good.* I continue the conversation only to halt once more when the girl steps out of the landing and creeps down the hall in an extremely obvious way. Her usual light and sure footsteps are uneven thumps on the smooth stone floor.

"Now what is that lass doing out of her quarters at this time a night?"

"I know not, Oin, nor do I care."

"No need to lie, lad." I say nothing, being that the healer would simply pretend not to hear. We watch the girl fumble down the corridor in silence, though she is anything but "It would be a shame to lose a seer to elves, you know."

"... Perhaps."

Not willing to allow myself to peer down an empty corridor like a swaddling, I once more focus on the company healer. Thia- ahem... Miss Malcolmson is not officially part of the company thus she is not officially my concern. I put her and her earlier show in the garden out of my mind. I am successful in not thinking about her again, that is until a worried Balin asks for the wayward girl.

"Ah! You are out here. Have either of you seen the lass by chance?" He asks, voice touched with an edge of out of place panic "I was going to have her come see Oin."

"I doubt he can do anything about her uselessness. What is the matter with her now? Has she gotten another scratch? " I say, fighting not to roll my eyes at both myself and the thought. One scratch is enough for one day.

"If only. I thought she must have gotten into someone's pipe weed and got a little more than she bargained for but then I found this."
He pulls out a cloth to reveal a familiar bell shaped dim yellow flower with an almost black center. The petals flare angrily, almost but not quite pointed, but curl delicately at the ends. At least, it appears that they would have had the plant not been plucked. It has been horribly flattened out of shape, as if someone had been crushing it in their pocket or hand. I feel as though I have seen it somewhere before but I can not remember. I examine it a bit longer before raising an eyebrow at my adviser.

"Well?" I ask impatiently "What is it?"

"I did not know at first glance either but when Master Baggins saw it he demanded that I put it down and wash my hands."

"So the halfling was flustered by a bit of dirt. Nothing new." I say dismissively, starting to turn away.

"It is highly poisonous." with that I swiftly turn back "He said that it is a Belladonna bud from the hidden passage. The plant as a whole is highly toxic, especially if ingested."

"Has anyone been foolish enough to have eaten it?" Oin questions loudly, carefully examining the flower

"We think so."

"And I've an idea as to who that someone might be." giving him my full attention, I dismiss the tight ball of emotion curling in my gut "What are the symptoms?"

The seer has been acting out of character lately. I never thought she would be blatantlry rude, especially to an elf. 'Not that I minded the fire.' She also seemed a bit more aggressive; both verbally and physically abrasive. Not that the altercation in the garden is even worth mentioning. I of course would never hurt a woman. I only meant to... shake some sense into her, yet her response was most unexpected. Even now I am unsure of what occurred but from her reaction to her own actions, neither is she.

"Aggression, fever, hallucinations, convulsions, and..." he pauses longer than I am comfortable with.

"And what?" I demand impatiently

"Death."

It is Oin who utters the word but I barely notice as it has me reeling from the implications. 'Death?" I knew it was a mistake to bring her. The journey will be undoubtedly filled with too many dangers, most of which she is not prepared for. Someone as delicate and as easily breakable as she should not be put into danger such as posed on this quest. I was sure she would lose a finger simply chopping vegetables; the only dangerous thing about her being her tongue. 'Is she to insult my enemies to death?' So small she is, especially for the race of men, that a strong gust of wind could blow her over. But a flower? Surely she is smart enough not to put just anything in her mouth. Did she accidentally ingest the plant when she slid down into the cave or was she merely curious? Overly adventurous? Suicidal? My thoughts of the situation are cut off when my nephews burst into the clearing out of breath.

"Lady Thia has been taken to the infirmary!" Fili huffs out, face blotchy from clearly running through the building "Bilbo and Bofur are with her now."

I immediately gather and command the company to stay in the clearing, only taking Balin and Oin
with me to find the girl. 'I knew I should not have let her leave my sight.' Just as we turn to exit, an elf deliberately appears by the door. I would continue to ignore him if he had not chosen this moment to speak.

"I am here to escort you to the healing wards where your companion is being tended to." he, I assume he is male, informs haughtily.

He then turns smoothly and begins down the corridor on long legs without another word. With an exasperated look at Balin, we follow begrudgingly. We arrive at the infirmary within five minutes, where I find 2 company members and the wizard already by the seer's bedside. A seer who obviously can not protect herself or see her own fate enough not to ingest poisonous plants. Despite my anger I approach cautiously, fearful of what I may find. The group parts to allow me closer and I hold back a sigh at her state. Golden brown skin is flushed from her fever and she is muttering incoherently while gripping the sheets with white knuckles. Without touching her, I can feel the heat of her body radiating from the bed

"What have you done you yourself..." I barely catch myself before I sweep a curl from her sweaty forehead, clenching the hand at my side.

Oin converses with the Elven healer about remedies and before long one is decided upon. It has been hours since she ingested the plant, meaning it is possible that it may be too late to help her. The halfling flees the room at the prospect with Bofur and the wizard quickly following, though most surely not from a weak stomach.

"Let us begin."

With the aid of smelling scents, the girl painfully gags and repeatedly releases the contents of her stomach. The elves hold her upright, tying her hair out of the way of her mouth. My fist clenches once more as one healer whispers encouragingly in her ear while petting her hair. 'It means nothing.' Knowing I have no business being here as she is in this state but not caring, I stand stoically at the entrance until nothing remains in the seer's belly. The smell of sick is thick and acidic in the air, even as the elves quickly clean the mess but still I refuse to go.

"Let her rest." Oin commands simply before leaving with the other healers "It is all we can do now."

The answer tells me nothing of her current state, only that she not dead. Her shivering body could have told me as much but I accept the news regardless. Company member or not, I am partially responsible for her current delirious state. The orcs were chasing my group, though they would not have passed up the fun of a lost woman had they found her alone. To bring her was faulty but to leave her would have meant death... and not a quick one. 'I had no choice.' The girl in question lays on the bed fitfully before her eyes suddenly peel back with a radiant heat and she warily gazes around the room.

"Why do you wear the skin of a king, dragon?" She asks upon seeing me. Her voice is rough from her ordeal but it is not filled with pain "Or perhaps the king wears the skin of a drake."

"Girl." I scoff, ignoring the eerie glow of her now oddly colored eyes. Not a witch indeed "There is no dragon here. He is miles away. Do not be so eager to meet him."

If she is well enough to insult me, then she is perfectly fine; thus I turn to leave. 'I was worried over nothing.' However, before I can reach the door, she appears before me again, just as she did in the garden. Flicking my head toward the bed, it remains undisturbed, as if she slipped out without touching the linens. Looking at her limbs as if they were not her own, the girl smiles childishly.
Her body sways and for an instant I think she is going to fall, yet her next words stop me from offering any assistance.

"You would have all believe that you are as cold hearted as the mountain of gold that which you seek. That your hide is as tough as scales and your words carry the heat of a thousand furnaces. So why do you wear his mortal skin?"

"I grow tired of your games!" I know not what to say to these accusations presented to me in such a dangerously playful manner. Hoping to avoid her sight, I give my attention to the silent dwarf "Balin, let us leave this place immediately."

I go to grip Balin's shoulder in an attempt to leave with my kin, but a hand on my arm whirls me away from him, with surprising strength. I glare at the girl as she places herself before me again in anger.

"Touch not those whom this one has deemed to be under her protection!" Her manner of speak, as if she wasn't herself, befuddles me into inactivity "You will not be allowed to bespell them to their deaths. Even now you burn this form with your eyes. It is asked once more, why do you wear his skin!?"

"Lass, it is Thorin. He hides nothing-" Balin starts.

"The skin of a king, when he is not and can not claim to be so." She cuts off, looking my form over judgmentally "Not as you are."

"I am Thorin, son of Thrain, son of Thror. I AM a King! Do not speak as though you know me, child!" I grind out.

"Child indeed. Yet you know nothing."

She does not even flinch at my tone, returning it with mocking words. The seer closes the gap between us and swiftly brings a hand to my face. Refusing to back down, I stand stone still and wait for her to attempt to strike me. Thus, I nearly jolt in surprise when her hand gently caresses my face.

"We see you for what you were, what you are, and what you will be. You may play many parts but your blood remains as molten as that of your ancestors." she moves my hair from my face, never breaking contact. The orbs, one the usual brown but the other an icy blue, pin me down with their familiarity "This one can save you and your kin, if only you allow it." tears leak from her glowing eyes and this time I do reach out to wipe them away.

"What do you mean?" I ask, almost afraid of the answer; All anger seeping out of my voice as glistening tears immediately evaporate off my fingertips "You speak in riddles and doubled words. Simply tell me what you need me to know."

"Their deaths are on your hands, should you not heed this warning." she traces my palms lightly with her fingertips before digging into my lifeline as if it were my grave "No other can be blamed. A dragon you shall become, and a dragon you shall remain."

We stand face to face for a short eternity. The meaning of her words sinking in and leaving a sickening feeling in their place. Balin intakes his breath sharply and I am faintly aware that he has understood her meaning too. 'I will fall to gold sickness. And my kin shall perish. Unless I... unless I... what must I do?' The shock and helplessness are enough to bring me to my knees but I refuse to bend to them before I have all the answers.
"Who?" I demand, grabbing thin shoulders and shaking her violently "Who shall die? How can I... How can I prevent this!? Tell me!"

The woman's head snaps back and forth wildly, as if she was a child with little balance but still she stands, merely gazing at me with teary eyes. Suddenly the door bursts open and the wizard steps into the room. Peering at the woman cautiously, he slams his staff down onto the floor loudly.

"Miss Malcolmson has been through much." gazing harshly in our direction, he points stiffly toward the bed "Rest."

The girl, as if having an internal battle, opens her mouth once, twice, and a third time but nothing comes out. Clearly not wishing to defy the wizard, but obviously having not finished saying her part, the girl breathes out a broken sigh. Finally, her lips part a fourth and final time and she utters a small answer so low I am surprised I hear it.

"If a dragon is slain, another might be born. An oath will be broken, and your line will be torn. Your destiny awaits, but this one will do all one can. So we beg of you, please, trust this daughter of man."

With her part said, her watery eyes dim of their previous glow and odd coloring before closing all together. Her body becomes limp in my arms and I hold her delicately to my chest before returning her to the bed. Turning away, I ignore Balin's seeking gaze and Gandalf's piercing one; leaving the room without another word.
Chapter 20

I wake slowly. It's really awful, like being in a coma but still slightly aware. 'Not that I have ever been in a coma to know that.' I can hear low voices but I can't open my eyes to see who is talking; almost like someone is holding my eyes shut. My body is warm, probably from my fever, but my eyes are burning something fierce. The voices grow louder until it sounds like they, it... it's only one voice, is screaming. No... not screaming... crying... begging... heart wrenching pleas that I can not understand.

I want to cover my ears but my arms are so heavy that I can't move them from my sides. Thankfully I do not have to endure the loud volume for long, because the voice dies down to nothing and I'm left in silence. I am unsure of what to do; being awake but unable to move is frustrating, frightening, and boring all at the same time. I'm suddenly snatched from the darkness by are horribly blinding light whose source is, surprisingly, behind my eyes. When I can see, and move, again I find myself in an enormous hall standing before a house sized oval table. Seated at said table are eight goliath impersonators. Some beam with beauty and others reek of strength but they all exude a sense of raw power that has me between cowering and looking on in fascination.

"Either my name is David, or you guys are the Valar." I say smoothly.

Of course thats who they are, because any other option is probably too sane to be plausible. The tallest woman at the table, and world, lets out a high tittering laugh that floats around the room lightly. Her bearded companion gives a gruff chuckle of his own that compliments hers beautifully.

"You are correct, child." she hums, laughter at the edge of her voice "We are the high ones of Arda."

As crazy as it seems, I'm not even surprised. I'd say not much can surprise me anymore but then something will probably surprise me. Like when they say 'how can this get any worse?' and then it starts raining. In a universe with dragons... no thanks, I'm not taking any chances. I gape at the group without blinking, hoping they didn't bring me here to complain. The straight haired Vala waves his hand and a gust of wind picks me up and places me on the table, before I can reject the invitation.

"Did I say David? I meant Jack. Where's my beanstalk?"

"Are you content with the situation, young one?" he asks, 100% ignoring my sarcasm

"As long as I don't have to call you all 'God' I'm good. I have but one true father and he does not
I can clearly see I have shocked them, but I stand firm. You can ship me off to a different universe, give me awesome powers, and send me on an adventure of a lifetime, but you can not take my religion. The group peers at me in silence before accepting my answer as fact and not insult. Which is really good because I don't want to be squashed by any affronted hands.

"This is acceptable" giant elf says "since we are not gods, though we are often worshipped as such. We ... borrowed you from your world and once your task is completed, you will be returned to the home which your father created for you so long ago."

"Thank you." I say genuinely, to which he inclines his head. Knowing I won't be left high and dry at the end of this quest is a load off my chest. Saves Elrond a bunch of brain work too. That solved, I feel tons lighter "Can you please introduce yourselves? I feel rude not knowing your names."

The elf giant stands up and once more inclines his head. He then reaches beside himself and pulls a gorgeous woman with the hair of the night sky to his side. She lowers her head as well before they introduce themselves.

"I am called Manwë, King of the Valar." his blue eyes shift to the woman at his side with love "This is my wife."

"Greetings, child." her voice is so deep and silky that could drown in it and not mind a bit "I am known as Varda, Queen of the stars."

And I totally believe her. Her eyes shine as bright as any star, or satellite, that I've ever seen. Her voice seems like it could take me on a trip into oblivion and I doubt that I would care to come back. She compliments her spouse well as where she is curved, he is straight. I bob into an awkward bow in return and they smile softly before retaking their seats. The second pair that rises are the tall olive woman and her hairy companion. She is dressed in a green robe with flowers braided into her hair while he is... shirtless. 'Greaaat.'

"Many call me Yavanna. I am Queen of the earth. And this" She gestures to figure beside her "is my husband."

"You can call me Mahal or Aulë. Which ever you prefer. It matters nay to me, for all our given names have long since been forgotten by mortals." he says gruffly but without anger.

The pair seats themselves and I almost stumble over a gigantic spoon in my haste to make it across the table to the next group. I have to stop myself from blurting out how much this Vala reminds me of Poseidon, lest he murder me and curse my children to live as reverse mermaids. His body is like formed water: It has the stationary shape given by ice but keeps the visual fluidity of a liquid.

"Ulmo, King of the sea." he says kindly but without bow or pretense, before taking his seat.

"Oromë." The next vala states so randomly that I hadn't even known he stood up "Lord of the forests." with a small bow, he also takes his seat.

I scramble to the last pair at the table and try not to puff from exertion. I always had enough trouble meeting new people without having to run too. Looking up at the set, I almost bolt. They are dark and dreary; both appearing to be the embodiment of pure sadness. Still, I attempt to give them the respect I showed their companions. The man, if I can even call him that, stares at me from darkened holes that at one time may have been eyes. The woman at his side is thin and sickly; her clothes hang off her delicate shoulders which shake as silent sobs wrack her bony body.
"Mandos" he whispers and I shiver at his icy tone that chills me from the toes up "ruler of the dead. If you perish in this world, it is I who will see you to the next."

I avoid his gaze like the plague but nod my head nonetheless. 'So this guy is Hades.' I feel like I just stepped into a mythological history textbook rather than a fantasy. A small hiccup brings my attention back to the Addams family.

"I am Nienna, sister of Mandos." she pauses to wipe away a tear. "Lady of grief, pity, and courage."

She offers me a small watery smile and despite my initial aversion, I smile back. It feels right that those three emotions should go together. They fit well, and I'm happy she isn't all gloom and doom. With everyone introduced, I feel as if I should return the favor.

"Pleased to make your acquaintance. I am Thia Malcolmson, Queen of myself." I place a hand on my chest and bow with an arm outstretched "It would seem that I am at your service. So, what can I do you for?"

"Save the line of Durin." They all say at once.

"I'm actually already on that mission." I say, trying not to point of the obvious "So...

"Indeed you have taken to your position as if you were born to it, which you were. Still, we do have a question for you." Yavanna says, leaning on her elbows.

"Please, allow me to answer it." I reply.

"Will you save the line of Durin?" They ask again.

I almost immediately go to question why they would ask the same inquiry twice but pause at the last moment. I doubt they would make a mistake, meaning they asked two different things. They made their desires known, and then inquired as to my willingness. 'They are giving me a... choice.' Can. No not can. WILL I save them? I don't even have a plan and running around all willy nilly will only get me but so far. It's fun now but soon it will be some serious traveling. Battles will take place and I can't even wield a fork, let alone an actual weapon. Sure I can teleport, but how often? How far? Am I willing to face hypothermia, starvation, and death for a bunch of characters in a bedtime story?

"Yes."

My answer is given loudly and with so much determination that I startle myself with the force of the proclamation. The Valar grin like creepy old men and I can't help but to join in. Mahal breaks out in boisterous laughter before reaching across the table and plucking me from my spot. It's still a little frightening to be this high up.

"I knew you would agree and a good thing too, being that destiny has already started to move." he says snuggling me in his beard "You will need all the help you can get. Take this as a gift."

When I escape the hairy but strangely fluorescent smelling prison, a braid adorns my right temple with as chocolate brown diamond crusted bead at the end. I finger it and find both bead and braid securely in place.

"Neither can be removed unless you will it to be so. They show that you have strength above all."

With a final snuggle, he passes me off to his wife. I tumble into her soft hands and she gently
strokes my hair before leaning down and placing a kiss on my lower stomach. I nearly blush at the heat of her lips before composing myself and gazing at her for an explanation.

"May each life you protect, grow to their ultimate potential."

I am then passed to the King and Queen who collectively claim to have given me the gift of all the languages under the stars. 'That explains it.' Standing to their feet and walking to the opposite end of the table, they place me before the silent Ulmo and Oromë.

"Never shall you have to fear water, for neither it nor anything residing in its depths may harm you." Ulmo states.

"Neither tree nor forest dweller shall offer you any wound or harm." Oromë gifts similarly.

They each lightly touch my forehead, just behind my hairline and I sway in my spot. I thank them before being passed back down to Mandos and Nienna. I honestly have no idea what they could gift me. I do not wish for immortality or the lack of suffering as both would take away my humanity. Thus, I look at the two in trepidation and wait. Mandos speaks first.

"I will ignore the first time you knock at my kingdom's door." He says simply.

Alright. So I have a get out of death free card. He places his thumb over my entire head and I feel a cold shiver run through me before it is gone. Shaking it off, I turn to his weeping sister. She faces me with teary eyes and I fear her gift more than the others.

"I gift you heart ache." she says through her tears "But I also give you the courage to see through it."

I can do nothing but nod. I close my eyes when she touch's me but refuse to cry at the seering pain in my chest. I am slowly passed once again into the hands of Yavanna, who holds me to her own chest in a warm hug. Her heart beats rhythmically and I am almost lulled into sleep by it but I still have questions, such as my little teleporting thing.

"What about-"

"Your father chose well. You are more than what we make of you." I look up at her in confusion but she only stories my head lightly "May the hidden gifts you were born with, and the ones we have given, serve you well. Fear not, for we shall be watching and you are never alone."

I blink my eyes and gaze around the room to find that I am once again in Rivendell. The bed is covered in luminescent flowers that slowly disintegrate. I reach up and feel the tight braid in my hair just to be sure. 'Guess it wasn't a dream.' I feel completely rested and don't feel any residing effects from my cold. I remember hallucinating about animals, food, and... aliens. I haven't the foggiest on how I got here though.

"Kidnapped?"

My stomach growls, so I push back the sheets to find myself in a light mid-thigh length night dress. 'I've slept in less... but... ah whatever.' Hopping out the bed, I go out in search of food. I sneak through the halls trying not to wake anyone, assuming that it's super early. Being as the sky is a deep blue, signifying that it's still early morning, I'm probably right. Not wanting to get caught in such a small outfit, I quicken my pace to the kitchen. When I get there, I find a few pieces of meat, bread, and cheese and shove them onto a plate. Pouring cup of water, I start to rush back to my room, taking bites as I go.
"THIA MALCOLMSON!"

I’m caught off guard by the voice and nearly drop my reward. I swallow my food and slowly turn towards the voice to see Bilbo standing with his arms crossed, looking scandalized. I smile at him sheepishly and tug at the hem of the gown.

"Oh. Hey, Bilbo. How you doing buddy? Nice night out, huh?" He continues to glare, so I ramble on. "Actually its early. Really early. What are you doing awake?"

He places his hands on his hips and taps his large foot, while glaring at me disapprovingly. Thus, I duck my head like a child. His bunny ears twitch in agitation and- ’Wait, bunny ears?’ I glance up at his head and sure as day, a pair of blurry bunny ears have made a home on his head. I guess I’m still a little... sick. He grabs my arm and drags me back to my room squawking about how inappropriate I'm dressed.

"Well I never! Such a young woman running around in her bed cloths in the middle of the night. You gave me enough of a fright with you sleeping for nearly a week."

"I was asleep for a week?!!" I screech loudly

"Yes. Now that you're awake, we need to talk. And you will answer every question I ask."

Both Bilbo and I slowly turn to face the new voice. A figure steps from behind the pillar and Thorin comes into view. He looks tired, determined, and in no mood for games. I gaze into his eyes but quickly avert my own in both fear and nervousness. Quickly taking a swig from my cup before I hand it to Bilbo, who looks to be rooted to the floor, I do the one thing I know I shouldn't: Run.
Run like the wind

Chapter Notes

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 21

To say I take off like a rocket and speed down the expanse of the corridor would be a surprisingly accurate description of what is occurring. A loud squawk from Bilbo accompanied with a low guttural sound from Thorin is my only warning that the dwarf is actually giving chase. In my head, he just stared after me in disbelief but nooooooo. 'Bit light on his feet for a dwarf, though.' I glance over my shoulder to see how far he is before shrieking like a young banshee and picking up my pace to flee from his much too close predatory face. It's a nice face and all but I'm trying to escape here! Swiftly turning the corner to make a sharp right, I hear the sounds of the earliest rising company members starting their day. I skid into the room and dive head first behind a snoring Bombur, ignoring the obvious pain of such a feat. Placing my plate beside me, I peak from around his mass and hiss at the awake and surprised dwarves.

"We are... playing hide-and-go-seek." I say before ducking again "Say nothing!"

Thorin thunders into the room mere seconds later and stands in the entrance with his head on a swivel. He's not breathing nearly as hard as I would have liked, but I'll take what I can get. The three dwarves, whom I have identified as Balin, Bifur, and Dori, sit silently on their bedrolls; accessing the situation without a lick of interest. I awkwardly wonder how often Thorin chases girls in the predawn hours that this is just... normal. The, possibly raunchy, king in question hums in thought before walking slowly into the room with deliberate steps.

"I know you are in here. You should simply give up now." he says in such a mesmerizing sing song voice that I almost want to do as he says, and that in itself raises the hairs on my arms to caution me away "Come out, come out wherever you are."

"Doesn't that defeat the purpose of the game?" Dori mutters, totally unsympathetic to my plight. Some hallucinogenic mother he is.

I peer around Bombur once more and wait for Thorin to get just a little further from the door so I can make a break for it. He's singing to me, which is enough to freak me the heck out. My heart is racing, my stomach is in knots, and my muscles ache to move immediately but I hold steady. I inch my way around the rotund dwarrow each time Thorin looks away, getting myself ready to run. I would have gotten way with it too, if it wasn't for those meddling princes.

"She's right here, Uncle!"

I nearly curse in surprise. Looking up, I see the youngest Durins have awoken and are beginning the day with a big cup of jerk. Fili stands closest to me, pointing down at my spot so there is absolutely no confusion as to exactly where 'here' means. I glare up at him with my best version of
pure loathing but he returns it with a well practiced smirk.

"That, my dear friend" he snorts out the word like it's some bad cocaine. Not that I know what bad cocaine... snorts... like... I'm just sayin- " is for saying I taste like spinach."

"That was low Fili. Really low." Thorin doesn't hesitate in beginning to make his way across the room and over to me "But so is this." Thinking quick, I punch Fili below the belt with a warrior cry that could wake the entire company. Thorin stops short and looks at me askew while a collective hiss of sympathy for the male runs through the room before I dash for the door "Tag!" I scream over my shoulder "Fili, you're it! No tag backs!"

"I thought this was hide-and-go-seek!" he moans after me from his crouched position; Kili poking at him with the tip of his boot "My family jewels..."

I don't stick around for more; quickly exiting the room with Thorin hot on my tail. I can practically feel him breathing down my neck, sending a questionable shiver of excitement down my spine. Checking on his neutered nephew doesn't seem to be all that important as he catches up to me a lot quicker this time than last. His hand barely touches my arm before it is ripped away by Kili tackling him. I stumble as the momentum practically spins me around, but catch myself and jog a few more steps away.

"Tag!" he beams triumphantly from his perch. If he grins any wider, he'll be able to lick his own ear "You're it, Uncle!"

The two wrestle on the floor good naturedly, providing me with a new view of the king. It's funny and doting and makes it hard to laugh while running, so I quit halfway up the hall. My yell did in fact wake the whole company and most seem to have joined in the impromptu game. 'Point for me.' Thorin finally shoves his nephew off and begins to rise. Our eyes lock and I feel that itch again as he begins to stalk after me only to be disappointingly taken down once more. This time by Dwalin.

"Found you." he snickers gruffly. I would not have expected the burly dwarf to join in but then again, I don't know if this is even a game. Sure didn't start off that way "You're out."

Bending over at the waist, I laugh painfully and watch the monarch struggle under his growing dwarf pile. Each time he gets up, someone tackles him. 'I enjoy watching this... from a safe distance, of course.' Its so cute and I wish it would happen more often. I know it won't last forever but it's nice to watch a group and big burly dwarves tussle on the floor like children. Once he is free, Thorin lifts his eyes to my own and I am taken aback by the sight. His blue gaze is filled with something I have never seen on him before. Mischief. Mirth. Life.

"I believe it is time for a new game." he calls, breaking the moment

"Oh?" Bofur questions, full of curious wonder "What kind?"

"Reverse tag. Target: Miss Thia."

My laughter dies in my throat as thirteen pairs of eyes turn their undivided attention to me. We all just stand there while I try to decide if this is really going to happen. I've never known Thorin to joke but I feel like anything is possible now. On that note, I take a step back and then another and then a lot more as the group chases me down. It wouldn't be so scary if they weren't roaring and brandishing weapons. Calls of 'you can't escape us' and 'get her' just fuel my legs.

"Run for your lives!" I cry out, throwing my hands into the air over my head "Rabid dwarves are on
There is not enough oxygen to laugh and pant but Lord knows I try. I settle for letting out a long, drawn out, and shrill scream as I run through the halls. 'You know, just in case people thought they could sleep or something mundane like that.' Elves look on in amazement and confusion as I zip through the halls with a battalion of battle hardened dwarves in my wake. 'Gandalf is going to kill me.' As if by magic, the wizard pops up from around the corner... with Elrond. It's too sudden of an appearance and I can't stop myself before I am crashing into the elf's body like a curly headed bowling ball. He wraps his arms around my shoulders as he staggers backward, nearly toppling over, before thankfully steadying us both. The dwarves pull to a stop sooner than I did and glare at the elf before Ori speaks up.

"Does this mean we lost?"

---------Shishi---------

Gandalf decides that the game is over, instructing the group to disperse. No one admits it aloud but the series of grumbles tells me that they were having... fun. I have no clue what would have happened if they caught me. I doubt even they know but the knowing blue eyes of the king display that he had a plan completely fleshed out. The wizard leads Thorin and myself to an office-like room where we sit at a small stone table but say nothing. Growing annoyed, Gandalf breaks the silence.

"It is good to see you up and about, my dear." he says clearing his throat "You had us all quite worried."

"Thanks, and I'm sorry to have caused you such distress." No one likes being a burden and I'm no exception. I'll going to have to work extra hard not to get killed to make up for this "Its good to be up. My legs enjoyed the stretch."

"I am most glad that you are feeling better Miss Malcolmson. I do ask however, that you keep your pace slower from now on." the elf scolds gently from his place by the window "You have only just gotten over your sickness after all."

"A sickness she would not have encountered had we never come here." Thorin spits.

"A sickness she would not have encountered had we simply used the main entrance." Gandalf returns

"A sickness I'm well and truly over." I assure before saying under my breath. "Besides, I wouldn't have been running if you weren't chasing me."

"I would not have chased you, if you had not been running." he retorts, clearly having heard my mumble "Why were you eating Belladonna?"

"Ew Thorin!" I exclaim making a disgusted face "Bilbo's mom is dead, don't joke around like that."

He pulls a face of his own before coughing into his fist. Beneath the scruff of his beard his cheeks heat slightly in an unbearably cute way. He turns away slightly, giving me a clear view of the blood making it's way up his neck to heat his face. 'Who would have thought. Thorin. Cute.' I gape at him openly as Gandalf chuckles from across the room and Elrond even cracks a smile, albeit a small one.
"The flower you carried, it was a Belladonna bud." he explains as patiently as he is able "The plant is extremely poisonous. Why did you... consume it?"

"Ohhhhhhh. I thought you meant..." It's my turn to feel embarrassed. Placing my face in my hand, I groan at my stupidity. I just accused a guy of... you knowing... the dead mother of a company member he isn't even all that fond of yet. I'm glad Bilbo isn't here to witness this "Uh... N-nevermind. Nori made me eat it."

"Nori?!" he repeats, voice raised.

"Well yes." understanding my mistake, I explain before heads roll. Why I think so highly of myself to believe that Thorin would even think twice about anyone poisoning me doesn't cross my mind "In the cave I landed face first in the plant. When Nori fell on top of me, some of it got in my mouth. I thought I spit it all out but... hallucinations prove otherwise."

"I see. " Gandalf mutters distantly, glancing me over with a peculiar stare. The three males exchange a look that has me worried. I've never done drugs because I like being in control "What do you remember?"

"Hmmm. Animals. Food. Aliens." I list "I've been able to put faces to things since I woke up but it was really strange while I was... not right."

"Nothing else?" Thorin asks, ignoring the unfamiliar word "After you fainted in the hall, do you remember nothing of that time?"

"Well, I did take a trip to go see the Valar. They gave me a couple of gifts. Oh! Aulë, or do you prefer Mahal?" the dwarf nods slowly "ok, so Mahal gave me this super awesome braid and bead."

I pull out my braid from behind my ear and bring it forth. The trio leans in closer for a better look; Thorin going as far as to touch the, dare I say silky, length. He fingers the braid before rolling the bead in his palm. 'Awkward.' He sighs dreamily while continuing to gaze at it.

"Beautiful." he muses before pulling away "Mahal has blessed you."

"I suppose he blessed you too since they all brought me here for your sake." I reply

"This is something you should have led with." Gandalf chides before the dwarf can respond "What are the other gifts you were given?"

I start to give the group a rundown but am distracted by Thorin's intent stare at me. Or rather, my bead. Tucking it behind my ear seems to break the spell and I continue my rendition of Thia and the beanstalk until all has been said.

"There is much to think on." Gandalf hums quietly "And these gifts, you were given physical marks for each?"

"Uh yes. Most of them." shrugging, I run my hands through my hair selfconsciously "One is this bead, one I assume is on my soul, two are here" I part my hair to show them what I can guess to be water and forest symbols "And the last ones... well... I'm not showing you those."

"It is all the same." Thorin says, seemingly focused on getting my attention "In the infirmary, you spoke to me about what is to come."

"I did?"
"You did." he insists almost painfully. Gripping my hands suddenly, he pulls our chairs closer "I need you to tell me more about that."

"Thorin I-"

"Please."

"..." stripping my brain for what he could be talking about, I come up with zilch. I wonder what I could have told him but I know I couldn't have said much being as I wasn't even in... my... body... Blinking in confusion, I shrink back from some realization "Thorin... I remember your voice while I was sick... at the beginning."

"Yes. Can you remember what you said?"

"Nothing." I hold up my hand to stop him from talking "Thorin, I didn't say anything to you."

"You did!" he shouts, dropping my hands in frustration before quickly retaking them "I was there. Balin was there. We both heard you. How can- Just tell me!"

"I can't because I wasn't there! I don't know who you spoke to, Thorin... but it wasn't me."

"While rare..." sucking in a breath of surprise, I flinch at the elf's voice. I'd honestly forgotten he was in the room "It is not impossible for ancestral spirits to speak from across the veil to give advice. While her soul was preoccupied with the Valar, it would seem that one of your ancestors paid you a visit."

"Why his and not mine?"

"Because it wasn't you they needed to speak with." Gandalf peers at Thorin in agitation "Their appearance worries me."

"... Should I be worried?" While Thorin, speechless for the moment, gapes glaringly at the elf and wizard, I make sure my body isn't in danger of being taken over "I've seen enough horror movies to know this isn't a path I want to walk down."

"Nor is it one you will have to." Gandalf leans in, lifts me to my feet and guids me towards the door "It was merely a one time occurrence. You have no risks of your body suddenly falling under possession of an evil entity. That being said, you must practice for more physical perils.

"Practice what?"

"Escape techniques, my dear girl!" he smiles softly before shoving me out the door none to gently "You have many gifts to master."
Chapter 22

"Find your happy place. Find your happy place. Empty your mind of all distractions. Huuuuum hummmm... Aaaaand this isn't working"

I unfold my legs from their double lotus yoga position, impressive I know, and open my eyes with an exhausted sigh. I've been sitting out here for the past hour and nothing has happened. I grab my empty plate, that I stole from Bombur long ago, and stroll around the compound in exasperation. A cool breeze on my thighs chastises me for not changing out of this skimpy night gown before I started practice. Having walked around n my pjs all my life, I'd forgotten that it's not normal. Besides, it's a small problem compared to my inability to make myself go ghost.

"It wasn't this hard any of the other times..."

"-What was not so hard?-

I lift my head and spot Bifur eating some kind of plant a couple of feet from me. Hidden in the bushes, it's no surprise that I didn't notice him earlier. Shaking my head, I walk over to the dwarf but decline joining in. 'I believe I have learned my lesson on that point.' He starts munching again, waiting for my response.

"You know about teleportation?" he nods agreeably so I carry on "Well I've done it before but I can't seem to make it work now. And no, I'm not a witch."

"-I would insult you with such a name. You are just... special.-"

I roll my eyes "That pause has me worried, Biffy."

"-Hmmm.-" he grins at the nick name thoughtfully, before falling into his thoughts. It is quiet for a tad bit too long and I begin to wonder if he's forgotten about me "-What were you thinking about each time?-"

"Usually?" I ask, blinking back into focus "Not being where I was, I suppose."

"-And this time?-"

I pause before answering "Being... somewhere... else?"

"-Well then, little one, there in lies your problem.-%
"Ugh!" I moan at the name and answer "Stop being all wizardy. Just tell me already if you know!"

"-Start trying to simply leave this location and-" he swallows the last bit of leaf "-stop thinking of where you would rather be.-"

"I see your point, but then where would I end up?"

"-Wherever you are not.-" he says smugly.

"Gee thanks."

He pats my head before tracing my new braid. He twists the bead between his fingertips gazing deeply into the pretty rock; both similar and completely different from the way Thorin did. Not that I'm concerned about how Thoein looks at me or my things. So long as it doesn't lead to gold sickness, he can look all he wants. At my things, I mean, not me-

"-I have never seen, nor heard, of a brown diamond.-"

"Wha- Oh! Um... I think they are called chocolate diamonds, according to Kay jewelers... or Jerad's... Tiffany's?" I smirk at his confused face, knowing that neither us know what I'm talking about "Mahal gave it me."

His eyebrows lift and his hand stops twirling the bead before he gives it a light tug. It stays firmly in place, but I'm thankful that he didn't yank it again. It may stay put but that doesn't mean it doesn't hurt. I pull a straight face before tugging my hair out of his hand and kindly shoving his arm away without any force.

"-A beautiful bead for a beautiful lass.-" he comments, shoving me back.

"Aw shucks Bifur" I flop over at his much stronger shove. The grass is soft and I lay in it for a moment before rising again "Take your charming self and go. I have to practice not being... here."

"-As Mahal's scantily clad blessed one commands.-" The ax headed dwarf grins like a Cheshire cat and dips into a deep bow.

I lift my hand as if to hit him but he just laughs and takes off. I start to cross my legs again, but think better of it. I stand and lift my arms straight above my head, take a deep breath, and then start cartwheeling. I am still in a night dress of course, so I keep my speed up so gravity doesn't have time to dishonor me. Cartwheels and handstands are as gymnasticy as I can get but I enjoy it nonetheless. The topsy turvy feeling I get in my stomach always reminds me of flying.

Before I can complete my fourth turn the setting changes and my head is whipped back by a sudden gust of air. I twist and turn painfully prior to realizing that I'm falling. 'OUT OF THE SKY.' Rivendell is below me, but approaching faster than I feel comfortable with.

"AHHHHHHHHHHH!" I cry out breathlessly as gravity pulls me toward the earth "I want to be somewhere else! Somewhere else!"

Ohhhhhhhhh dear. I can't remember Bifurs's words of wisdom. This is not how I pictured dying. 'I'd settle for facing off with Azog at the moment, rather than becoming a pancake.' Of freaking course this is when my blessing turned curse activates and I end up resting next to a clawed arm. I am thankful that the air knocked my breath away, or I'm sure my screams would have awoken the slumbering giant.
"Oh. Dear. God."

I am lying in a makeshift hut, on an itchy fur pelt, beside Azog the defiler. Not A defiler but THE defiler; he is the Hitler of sacred holes. Thror's killer, Thorin's arch nemesis, defiler of... people. 'This sucker is huge.' The large pale orc is easily over 7 feet tall and 270 lbs of raw muscle from foot to bald head. His ears are pointed and stand out from his scarred face, giving an evil pixie look to him. Milky white skin encases a body so pale that it contains a waxy sheen glossed over the surface. His breaths are deep and rhythmic in sleep and I want them to stay like that forever, or at least until I'm gone. I was hoping we could follow Tolkien on this part of him being dead but I guess we are adopting the movie version in this instance.

The behemoth rolls over suddenly and I leap backwards, barely escaping getting caught under his bulk. Unfortunately, I'm not so lucky in avoiding his mace that rests near by. I trip over the weapon and land hard and LOUDLY. All hope of getting out without alerting the slumbering giant are dashed as his eyes shoot open, causing ice to run through my veins as they focus on me. I have never been as self conscious of my clothes as I am in this instant. Azog slowly rises... and rises... and rises with a growl and toothy grin at discovering just what is trapped in the tent with him. 'Don't cry. You can't see if you cry.' I've never felt as small but I bend down without breaking eye contact and lift up his heavy mace; holding it in front of me like a shield.

"-What a delicious surprise you are. Do you think my weapon will defend you against me?" he cackles without joy "-You will fall beneath it's weight, and my own, soon enough.-"

"Can't we just... talk about this like civilized people?"

Booming laughter is my response. "-The last thing I desire from you is to talk.-"

His eyes shameless roam over my body and I silently curse whoever dressed me. Done with the pleasantries, if you would dare call them that, he saunters forward towards me with confidence. I refuse to close my eyes but I do scrunch my shoulders and try to make myself look as small as possible. I know egging him will probably not work in my favor at all, but it could still go either way... right?

"I will not fall beneath anyone." I squeak out a yell that hurts even my ears at the pitch "Especially one who has fallen to a dwarf."

He stops advancing with only about half a yard between us and I try not to show my relief as he lifts his head in superior confusion. He glares at me while once again taking in my person. His confusion, though, sadly turns into anger when he catches sight of my twinkling bead. 'Darn it.' With a roar, he charges at me and I duck beneath his arms but his claw catches the side of my dress and it tears, exposing my ribcage. A tingling in my side tells me that he indeed made contact but the lack of blood means it is only a graze.

"-A she-dwarf enters my tent to slay me while I sleep." He trails his tongue over his teeth without taking his eyes off me. "Oakenshield is indeed weak to send one so... breakable.-"

"He's stronger than you'll ever be! He took your arm and still lives. You died in the Battle of Azanulbizar, even if you took the head of a King!' I scream, bouncing around the room to stay out of his reach. I momentarily wonder how he knows that I'm in cahoots with Thorin but dismiss it "Not to mention that I'm not a dwarf or are you both blind and weak!"

Why I continue to speak is beyond me. Someone wants me to hush up, as I trip over the mace again and crash onto the floor. A good thing, because Azog's fist swings in the air where my head was just yelling moments before. He snarls down at me as I try to untangle my legs from the mace and
scoot away but end up a trembling mess. He bends down and crawls over my cowering form; his breath hot on my face as he drags his hand roughly up the side of my leg. I try to think of anywhere I would rather be but come up blank. I attempt to bat his hand away from my thigh and he chuckles darkly before removing it from under my dress. He allows his sharpened appendage to hover above my throat as he purrs above me.

"Where is your big strong dwarf now?"

His breath smells of rotting flesh but I am frozen in fear and am unable to look away from his twin glaciers to escape the stink. My tears finally burst from my eyes as he bends his face to mine and licks my salted cheek with a heated tongue before letting out a thundering laugh. I struggle futilely against the arms that hold me down.

"Thorin! Thorin!" I scream brokenly.

"I am right here! What is it?! What is the matter!?"

My eyes pop open and I find myself in the arms of the dwarf king. I stare at him for a moment with both my mouth and eyes agape as my tears begin to fall once more. 'Just like when I first met him.' He doesn't hesitate this time before engulfing me in his arms and stroking my hair. He offers nonsensical calming sounds as I weep into his already wet tresses.

"It was so... and I couldn't... scared..." I stumble over my words, sinking my nails unwittingly into his back

"Shhh. Do not fear, Thia. I am here, nothing will harm you."

His hands lower from my hair to my back to hold me better where he pauses at the rip in my dress and mutters darkly. I hiccup a few more times into his neck before I calm down enough to pull away, still slightly trembling. Taking in my surroundings, I am stuttering for a whole new reason. While I was unable to speak from tears before, I am now speechless from embarrassment.

"Ah..."

There before me sits the naked company of Thorin Oakenshield. This is hardly the time for me to be oogling dwarf-flesh. 'That does not mean I can't appreciate beauty when I see it.' Still, I lower my gaze only to raise it to the sky when I catch a blurry glimpse of 'little thorin' dancing beneath the water. 'Never have I ever been so close to a naked man... or dwarf before.' I push against his rock hard pecs with the heel of my palms, trying not to touch him too much. My attempt to escape his lap and the large bath-nope fountain, is thwarted when his arms tighten around me.

"Uh, Thorin. Thanks for the hug but um... your dangly bits are on display and... I don't think I should be um, uh... seeing them." I stammer and a hoot can be heard from one of the company members "Not that there's anything wrong with them! I'm sure they're great but-"

"Where did you get this?" he cuts me off, brushing his hand along my ribs.

I jump at the contact and hear a low whistle, Nori the bastard, from our audience. I quickly try to think of something to take his attention off of me and find my excuse by our feet.

"Same place I got... that." I sniff.

He looks to where my gaze is suspiciously and balks. I point past his muscular thigh and to the tangled mass around my ankles known as the mace of Azog the defiler. 'He is probably pretty angry about me accidentally stealing it.' I look back up at Thorin and his gaze holds a look of
despair despite his stoic face. His eyes almost seem to be begging me silently to say I picked it up from a gift shop. In a rare show of affection that surprises even me, I place my hands on his shoulders to ground him, or myself if he decides to toss me.

"You know how Azog the defiler is thought to be dead due to the wounds you gave him when you lost your grandfather?" His hands tighten around me as he nods "Well... he's not."
DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 23

Let me just say that sitting on a naked guy's lap while he fights the very obvious urge to break your hip because he's so upset, is not sexy. I sit on his knees as still as I can manage while his hands flex on my waist and wonder what my father would say if he could see me now. Speaking of father figures, I glance towards Balin for support but he just looks at the scene with curious pity. The group is silently staring at the pair of us and I can't help but try to slide deeper into the water to hide my dripping form. The movement brings Thorin's attention back to the situation at hand and he yanks me into a standing position.

"What were you thinking trying to face him?!" I don't know what to do with my hands or my eyes while he shakes me silly, so I just stand there and shrug my shoulders nervously "Do you have no concern for your wellbeing?"

"Wha- of course I do!" he grips my shoulders and I wince, kicking him with a soggy slipper "I didn't do it on purpose! It's not like I went out searching for the guy."

"And yet found him. He has seen you! Touched-" his arms tighten painfully as he glances down at my torn dress. He spins me in a complete circle so quickly that I'm actually dizzy "Did he touch you?"

"... not really." I murmur while avoiding his eyes and trying to pull away from the contact "I'm fine. Really."

"Lady Thia," Fili whispers gently from across the way; his hair and mustache dripping from whatever water battle I clearly interrupted "If something has happened, you should not be ashamed to tell us. We ask because we care."

I look up from my feet and am met with looks of concern and semi-controlled rage. It takes me a moment to understand that they are angry for me and not at me. My mouth curls softly at the corners as tears begin to well in my eyes again, but for a different reason. My arms are trapped by Thorin so I can't reach up and wipe them away, and consequently they fall into the water creating small ripples. The dwarves take it as a confession and Dwalin curses colorfully. I briskly lift my head to tell them I am alright.

"No... nothing really happened." I say with more strength than before "Nothing too traumatic."

"That is not a real answer, darlin'." Bombur smiles sweetly, but I see hidden anger behind even his eyes.
I am now aware that I am going to have to explain plain and simple to a group of naked men... dwarves, that I was not in fact raped by a deviant bottomfeeder. 'Detach and say it matter of factly... That's never worked but I'll try.' I take a deep breath and meet Thorin's nose because I don't think I can keep it together looking into his worried eyes.

"He ripped my dress when I ducked and thats how I got the scratch here. He also... took hold of my thigh" I am unable to say 'touched' and lower my head because I feel my tears rising again. "a... and he l-l-licked my face. But that's ALL."

I want to bring my hand to my cheek and rub the spot vigorously but can't. 'So much for detaching.' A collective rumble from the group shakes the pool causing the water to tremble. Each face of my traveling companions holds a look of barely concealed outrage; even Nori looks as though he wants to shatter some femurs. Thorin reaches up and ruffles my hair tenderly before releasing my arms.

"He will not touch you again." He states running his thumb along the place I could not

I'm struck once more by that strange tingling, this time in the pit of my stomach, and it disturbs me that I can't figure out. The king leaves the fountain with Dwalin and Balin close on his... tight...muscular...thankfully (I think) towel clad behind and I am left with ten naked dudes and a mace. 'Sounds like the beginning a bad joke or worse... a porno.' I want to get up and just walk out but my dress is all wet and I know if I get out it'll stick to me in the worst ways. I don't think my nerves could handle the outcome of it. So I sit in the deep fountain quietly while the group of dwarves stare me down, waiting for an explanation as to what the heck is going on.

"Are you guys almost done?" I quietly inquire not lifting my head and ignoring their silent questions "I'd rather not go blind if its ok with you guys."

"You can always get out yer'self, lassie." Gloin rumbles from his place across the pool "We won't lay eyes on us."

"I will." Bifur announces cheekily

"I don't want to die from embarrassment." I reply, before rolling my eyes at the disabled dwarrow

"Thanks... I guess."

"Oh, nothin' to be embarrassed about. I'm sure yer a right nice sight," Bofur cracks understanding my need for normalcy. Piggybacking onto his cousins playful flirtation, he winks at me coyly "If what I felt durin' my pancake days is anythin' to go by, yer worth layin' eyes on."

"Now lads-" Dori warningly starts only to be cut off by Kili

"You got to be a pancake?! We were sweets, but then she said Fili tasted like spinach."

The younger Durin swims towards me, just as bare as the day he was born, without a worry that all the water might rust his buns of steel. 'Does steel, or was it iron, that rust? Do I care?' The rage is completely wiped from his face, leaving behind the sweet features I'm used to, ridding me of any recidual angst. When he's close enough, he does his best impression of a fish and puckers up his lips sweetly. The kissing noises get louder and I back away in mock disgust.

"Oh come on!" he whines at my evasion "Fili got a kiss, I want one too!"

"Not while I'm in my right mind, fishbrain." I say splashing him.

"I don't know what I got" Bofur adds, lounging on the barrier lazily "But the mark is still here. Nonetheless, I do know that I liked it."
Against my better judgement I look over at the hatless dwarf. He has let his hair down and it waves around his broad shoulders alluringly. If half the men back home looked half as good as half these dwarves... remaining chaste would have been a whole lot harder. He wiggles his eyebrows suggestively and tilts his head while indicating to his neck. After looking past his rippling (Yes, rippling) muscles, I glimpse a ghastly black and blue bite mark on his throat. I would ask what rabid animal attacked him but from the direction of the conversation, I'd guess it was me. All mature appreciation for their rocking bods flies out the window.

"Sorry." I murmur shamefaced.

"Not a problem, lassie." He chuckles, tossing his head "I'm just glad nothin' too dangerous happened."

"Though, I do wish you'd have run into me." Bifur says with such charm, I almost think he means it "Would have been some fun."

"Aye, right until you'd lose your head." Kili stickers childishly "You know he wouldn't-"

"I've already taken an ax to the brain." He scoffs lightly, cutting off the younger male "If I'm destined lose my head, I like get some fir-"

"Annnnd on that note" I make my way to the edge of the fountain. This sausage party is getting too filled with testosterone for my taco to feel safe "I'm out of here."

Ignoring the whistles as I pull myself out the water, I begin to go back to my room. I stop when I hear a gasp and spin around to see my closest friend since I entered this little adventure; Bilbo. 'Uh oh.' He stares at me and without glancing down I know that I am a much worse sight then I was this morning.

"Have I... missed something?" He says glancing suspiciously around at the remaining dwarves.

"I accidentally teleported to Azog and got molested." his eyes widen and I think they may fall out "I got his mace, if it counts for anything." I say struggling to heft it out the water

"It doesn't." Oin shouts too loudly while horrifyingly getting out the fountain, causing things to... swing. When dealing with men head on, the top half is always prettier than the bottom half if you ask me "Lets have a look see at yer side lassie."

"Wha... are you... huh?" Bilbo stammers.

"Uh, noooo. I'm fine. I'll just... go change." I say, quickly dragging the weapon and leaving a trail sopping footprints behind me like a security blanket and breadcrumbs.

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

THORIN POV

"It can not be true." toweling off quickly, I reach for my tunic as my kin do the same "It is not possible that he still lives."

"Do you think she'd lie, lad?"

"No." the denial slips past my lips before I can even think to answer Balin's question. While many
things, the woman is not a liar. Mysterious. Naive. Beautiful. Annoyingly honest. Shaking my head firmly, I disregard the notion "No, of course not."

"Ye've no proof of that, Thorin."

Yanking my trousers over my hips, I glare at my cousin's back. The only bit of a political finesse within him is arguing against me. While I can usually appreciate his grounded views, I find myself unsettled at the truthfulness in this moment. With or without proof, I know the seer would never betray me. It is not overconfidence on my part, as I doubt she would, or even could, betray anyone. She does not have it within her to do something so deceptive. Thus, it is with confidence that I able to press on.

"Proof then: She did not cause those injuries to herself."

"Injuries?" the dwarf scowls, turning around with his outer layers still in hand "Ye mean to have me believe that Azog the defiler, he who has raped as many as he has killed, had a pretty little treat like that before him and only SCRATCHED the woman?"

"He thankfully did not possess the time to do more." My stomach clenches at the thought of anyone laying a wayward hand on any female, let alone the one in question. The wound did not look serious at all but I hope she allowed Oin to tend to it regardless "Where do you suppose she had gotten the mace if not from an orc?"

"... I do not know." At this point he relents, taking the time to finish dressing. I do not mistake his silence for submission and rightly so, as he quickly finishes his thought "I do not know what she hopes to gain from this obvious charade. I do not know if we can even trust her at all."

"I think we can."

"Balin?" the two of us turn to look at the white bearded dwarf. He sits on a small wooden bench, fully dressed as though he hadn't been swimming at all. He'd been oddly quiet the entire conversation; saying nothing even when his brother referred to the woman in such an infuriating and blatantly sensual fashion. Dwalin blinks at his brother in suspicion before cautiously creeping closer to his person "Why? What would make ye trust her when she has done nothing to earn it?"

"You have heard the news of it already; there is no need for this." shrugging his thick shoulders, the eldest in the room sighs contently "If not only our forefathers, but also Mahal himself, have given their blessings about her virtue, then it is safe to assume that she means us no ill will."

"... If not a matter of trust... Then a matter of confusion."

"Dwalin-"

"I was there with ye, Thorin. Ye were as well, Balin! Ye saw the wounds he received." Wounds that I and Dain delivered. I would have preferred to have seen the light fade from his eyes and then cut off his head but was forced to be content with knowing he would not survive even as his minions dragged him into Moria "Arm chopped off with an arrow stuck in his chest; their is no way he survived!"

"Then who is it my- our seer met to obtain his mace?"

"Call her what you will... Witch or woman, you're obviously under her spell. I do not mind, as I know you will not let a pretty face distract you." he snorts without interest and I begin to argue but he simply talks over me "The lass was scared and obviously not thinking straight. She saw someone else and simply assumed the worst. Woman are-"
"Gentle creatures, we know." puffing on his pipe, Balin blows the smoke towards the ceiling between voicing his thoughts. In such a small room, the familiar scent of spice and wood tickles even my nose "Perhaps you are correct, Dwalin. I hate to think it but perhaps what she saw was an offspring or of some relation the pale beast."

"Possible." his brother admits easily enough before adding "The girl was obviously out of her mind with fear."

"As would anyone after such an encounter."

"It is settled then: she was distraught and misunderstood what she saw. There is no other possibility."

"No." I confirm, feeling my mind settle and rebel all at once at solving the problem "None."

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

Dry, relatively safe, and dressed in pants that I asked Merilin to get for me, I roam the quiet halls deep in thought. Rubbing the sore scratch beneath my shirt, I think of today's events and what they mean for the future. I lose my way but hardly notice until I find myself in a high room with only a single window. I look down and see groups of people far enough away from me to be unable to discern even their race and its nice. It reminds me of Rapunzel or the Hunchback of Notre dame. Feeling caught up in the Disney feeling, I begin singing and spinning around the room. It has been a while since I danced like no one was watching.

"Safe behind these windows and these parapets of stone

Gazing at the people down below me

All my life I watch them as I hide up here alone

Hungry for the histories they show me"

I twirl away from the cool stone of window and spin into the middle of the room and bow to an invisible partner. Resuming my proper height, I place my hands in the correct position and perform a novice version of the waltz; simultaneously picking up my pace of both step and the song.

"All my life I memorize their faces

Knowing them as they will never know me

All my life I wonder how it feels to pass a day

Not above them but part of them."

The song is a perfect fit. Although I only introduced myself to the company on the debut of the first movie, I spent the next three living, loving, and learning them. That being said, I hardly expected to actually ever meet them. I do a small backwards dip and kick spin. A bad twirl from my imaginary partner sends me tumbling to the floor but I make up for it by scrambling to the window for the next lines.

"And out there

Living in the sun
Give me one day out there
All I ask is one
To hold forever"

Leaning too far out the window, I grasp the edge of the sill and kick up my legs in an attempt to regain my footing. 'Don't kill yourself.' My howl of surprise works well with the 'out' part so I roll with it and let the wind lift my hair from my neck.

"Out there
Where they all live unaware
What I'd give
What I'd dare
Just to live one day out there"

I leap back into the room and run around the space with my arms outstretched like a plane. I duck under shelves and jump over baskets while running from an make-believe lover in a playful manner. In my excitement, I add the stairs to my play area.

"Out there among the millers and the weavers and their wives
Through the roofs and gables I can see them
Ev'ry day they shout and scold and go about their lives
Heedless of the gift it is to be them
If I was in their skin
I'd treasure ev'ry instant
Out there
Strolling by the Seine
Taste a morning out there
Like ordinary men
Who freely walk about there
Just one day and then
I swear I'll be content"

I hold the note, knowing it isn't true. I could never be content with just one day amongst my dwarves. They make life fun and interesting, new and exciting, worth the fear and happiness. They get angry when I'm hurt and laugh when I tell jokes. I could never forget my family; I miss them everyday. But I could never forget these guys either. Still, the song needs to be finished and I'm running out of staircase; each line getting a step and volume as I draw to a close.

"With my share
Won't resent
Won't despair
Old and bent
I won't care
I'll have spent
One day
Out there."

I reach the end of my song and leap off the last step... right into Dwalin's arms. He catches me easily and glares before setting me on my feet. I straighten up my back and square my shoulders trying to make myself look taller. He takes in my efforts and laughs... and not a small laugh either. 'Well alrighty then.' I'm a little offended that he thinks I'm a joke.

"Whats so funny?" I ask trying to not sound affronted

"Oh nothin' lassie." he says after catching his breath. "Yer angry face isn't very good either."

"Oh" I pout and my shoulders slump "I'm not used to having to look aggressive."

"Ye don't have to. That's we are here for. " he roughly pats my shoulder and begins walking away before stopping suddenly. Rubbing the back of his neck in a rare show of nervousness, he pins me with an intense stare "Is yer side alright?"

"My side...? Oh yes. It's fin-"

"You've got a good singin' voice on you."

"Oh! Um... Thank you." I babble, trying to keep up with the confusing dwarf. He inclines his head down the hall and starts off that way, and with nothing better to do I follow "You heard that?"

"Who didn't?!" he yells back at me before I'm able to catch up. I nearly flinch at his boisterous laugh but not out of fear. Despite knowing he could rip my arms off with a finger, I don't find him frightening... just loud "This center hallway echoes fiercely and leads to all the wings."

If someone could die from embarrassment, I'd be dead. I can almost swear that I see him smirking at me but when I rub my eyes his back is to me again as he heavily walks away. Not wishing to be alone, I run to catch up with him and engage in my favorite kind of conversation: comfortable silence.
Contracts and pancakes

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 24

My original plan for the two weeks in Rivendell was to sit back and relax. Instead, I got poisoned and wasted nearly a week recovering. Then, when I tried to use my time wisely and practice making myself useful, I nearly end up on an episode of Law and Order: SVU. 'With barely a week left, I really need to start cracking down.' I start by cracking eggs, melting butter, and pouring milk. Next, I mix it all in a giant bowl with flour, baking powder, sugar, and a pinch of salt.

"Pancakes." I hum myself pleasantly "Finally."

Halfway through, I am joined by Bilbo, Bombur, and Ori who insist on being my aids on my breakfast warpath; leaving me with the sole task of flipping flapjacks like there is no tomorrow. I am using the day to not only do what I want but also prepare for the next leg of the journey. I spent the last two days between hiding out in my room and having Merilin fit me for some traveling gear. I love my jeans but they are fashion forward and not very weather resistant. I flip another pancake and grin at the golden perfection.

"It's really kind of you to cook breakfast for the company, Miss Thia." Bombur calls over the sizzle of the bacon. I love love LOVE bacon "It's been a while since I've had pancakes."

"They are my favorite. I couldn't just cook breakfast for myself." I add the pancakes to the pile and add a new batch to the pan "Besides, I'm a part of this company... With or without a contract."

"You should ask Thorin for one." Ori offers from the counter, dicing fruit calmly. He removed his gloves for the task, allowing his pale hands to do the work alone "I'm sure he'd give you one now... Even if its only to bind you to secrecy."

"Thats truuuue." I briefly contemplate the idea. Watching the pancakes bubble to completion, I gently flip them, careful not to splash myself with hot butter "You really don't think he'd mind?"

"He'd be a fool if he did." I glance toward the flour covered hobbit as he points a roller at me for emphasis "After all, he gave me one and I'm not nearly as useful as you."

"Oh, Bilbo." I smile, nudging him with my hip. The size difference has me knocking into his chest and he gives me a playful glare "Don't worry, you'll be plenty useful. How are those Shire famous biscuits coming along?"

"Wonderful." He huffs, sounding close to offended that I even had to ask "Do inquire with Thorin about the contract. Today if you can manage."
"I'm going through my bag to choose what to take and what not to after breakfast. I'll see him later, but it'll be most definitely before we leave."

We all get back to our tasks and soon enough breakfast is ready. With some help from the elves, the table is set and the company fetched from their respective places. They file into the dining area without enthusiasm until they gaze at the table; their eyes quickly widen with open wonder.

"I was hungry." I reply with a shrug at their questioning faces

"Get hungry more often." Kili demands

A quick count tells me that Thorin is missing. Even Gandalf, Merlin, and Elrond showed up. I briefly wonder what he could be up to but find I've no idea. 'His loss.' Bacon, sausage, and ham sit beside biscuits, pancakes, and French toast. I take a moment to thank the number of chickens it took to make all the boiled, sunny side up, and scrambled eggs. Their sacrifice is appreciated. Warm syrup, soft butter, honey, and jams are provided for those who need it. Breakfast wouldn't be complete without drinks; water, apple juice, orange juice, and milk rest between the food. Lastly, fruits and chips; in respect of the elves and to thank Ori.

"I see you have made good use of the kitchens, Lady Thia." the elf states, inclining his head in thanks "It looks wonderful."

"Indeed, my girl." Gandalf's eyes travel around the table "You have outdone yourself."

"Everything looks simply delicious. Thanks for inviting me." Merlin bows.

"No problem. Thank you for your kind words." Despite having to share the table with elves, the dwarves appear to be excited for the meal. It took us hours to prepare it all and I am just as ready to dig in as my companions. Remembering my home training, I stop the group from beginning.

"I have spent hours preparing this, with the help of my three wonderful friends. Where I come from" I pause to throw a spoon at Nori who is trying to sneak a bite. It bounces off his forehead and lands in the marmalade "we say grace, a prayer, to give thanks for the meal before we stuff our faces."

"Aye lass, that may be true" Dwalin agrees while reaching for a piece of bacon "but we are not where you are from."

"May be not" I snatch the meat from him and replace it on the plate "but I made the majority of the food, making this my table. So my rules. You can eat a breakfast prepared by our host's staff if you don't like them."

His eyes widen as if the prospect of eating another elvish meal is the worst possible outcome. The company grumbles but no one tries to reach for the steaming plates again.

"Glad you'll be joining us. Now everyone hold hands." I haven't lost my mind but the look my dwarves throw at me, one would think I had. "It's how you say grace. Hurry up, I'm hungry."

The reminder of food is enough for the dwarves to roughly snatch up each others hands without further prompting. Elrond, Gandalf, and Merlin bow their heads without being told. 'At least someone is on the right track."

"Usually the head of the family blesses the food but since Thorin isn't here and this is my idea, I'll
do it. Any objections?" None are offered, so I move on. "Bow your heads and close your eyes. I know how much food is on each plate, so don't think you can sneak."

A few grumbles later and 12 dwarves, a hobbit, a wizard, 2 elves, and a woman stand around a table holding hands with their heads bowed and eyes closed. When the room is silent, I begin my version of grace.

"God is great, God is good. Lord we thank you for this food we are about to receive for the nourishment of our bodies. Please bless the food, the hands that prepared it, and the mouths who will consume it. Amen." There is silence "Say amen!" I whisper harshly.

"A man!" They fumble

"Good enough!" I say dropping my partner's hands "Now. Dig in!"

The rat race begins but I hardly notice, as I am part of it. I pile my plate with an assortment of the goodness provided. 'We haven't really been having fully course meals lately.' The meal progresses smoothly; I only have to tell the dwarves not to throw the food twice. Both Elrond and Gandalf compliment my culinary skills before going off to do whatever it is they do. 'Jokes on them, I can only cook breakfast food, pork chops, and spaghetti.' Soon after that Merilin excuses herself to go finish gathering the items for my travel pack, leaving just the company.

"I'm relieved to know you can cook." Dori calls across the table. He hold his cutlery delicately in one hand; fanning at the corner of his mouth with a cloth "You're such an eccentric woman that I couldn't be sure."

"Uh, thanks."

"She can also sing and is considerate to boot." Gloin chuckles, while elbowing his brother in the side "She'll make a fine bride."

"Oh? Who is the lass marrying?" Oin squawks.

"If you cook like this every day," Bifur barks out from around a mouthful of toast "I'll have you."

I choke on my food and end up wheezing around my glass of orange juice. The group laughs at my peril while Ori gets up and pats my back soothingly. Wiping my mouth I glare daggers at the group but they ignore me in favor of stabbing up forks of food into their bearded mouths. We return to breakfast and it concludes without anymore food fights or marriage proposals. After thanking me, they start off to their various locations but I manage to snag Balin before he can disappear.

"Hey Papa Balin, hold up." He smiles at the nickname warmly, giving me his attention "Can you find Thorin and have him meet me in the library?"

"Of course, lassie." His smile goes wise as he leans in people we are sharing a secret "May I ask what the reason for the meeting is?"

"Oh, you know. A contract." He lifts an eyebrow before sighing in disappointment. Though confused, I dismiss it with a wave of my hand "In fact, you should come too. It'll make things easier."

"Hmmm." he strokes his beard in thought.

"Be there in an hour, please." I start off towards my room, walking backwards so not to give him
my back "I'll be waiting!"

When I make it to my quarters, all the items I requested from Merilin are lying on the chair in the corner of the room with a new rucksack beside it on the floor. Leaving it all for the moment, I grab my green bag and dump the content on my bed. My things tumble out and I immediately grab my iPod and turn it on; it's been off, along with all my electronics, since I the first night I got here. The hum as it turns on brings about a strong tug on my heart. It's always so maddeningly quiet here; no cars or ever present hum of civilization... 'It's normal to miss home... and frankly it's darn near painful.' Still, this will get me no where.

"Save the water works for monopoly." I chastise myself firmly "Its packing time."

I bring up a playlist and play myself some packing music; something upbeat with a catchy tune. With that done and out they way, I plug my headphones into ears and start. It doesn't take me long before I have split my things into two groups; Its more like an 'I-can't-charge-you' pile and an 'all-my-other-stuff' pile. I keep my 2 pens, one of which I want to give to Ori, as well as a couple of scrunchies, a comb, hand sanitizer, and my ID from my wallet.

"Never go anywhere without ID."

I leave my money, keys, the rest of my wallet, my kindle, and after much debate I choose to leave my iPod but take my phone. 'I might want to take a picture of something... or maybe I'll get service.' I make a mental note to be sure Merilin provided a few products for those of the... feminine persuasion. I replace all my 'I-can't-charge-you' items in my bag and shove the rest of my stuff under my pillow to pack later.

"Now... What do with this..." tapping my chin thoughtfully, I debate over what to do with my bag before shrugging "I'll just ask Elly to watch it for me."

I easily find Elrond and Gandalf, who are in some kind of 'meeting.' They wear equally amused expressions that I find suspicious enough to mention but they wave off my concern. Thus, I keep my request brief, so they can get back to... business. A quick conversation later and I have been given permission to leave my things in the homely home until I return. I hand him the bag and with my task complete, I make my way to the library. I only wait a few minutes before I am greeted by the king and his adviser.

"You missed breakfast." I start off, surprising myself with the audible disapproval in my voice. Clearing my throat try not to press the issue "It was really good."

"Balin informed me of your service" he pauses, catching my gaze "as well as your request to become a formal member of my company."

"Did he now?" I gently chide the older dwarf with a tilt of my head, to which he returns with a smile and shrug. I turn my attention back to the king who looks stiffer than usual "And what do you make of it?"

"I do not think it wise." He raises a hand at my frown "You are a young woman and it is inappropriate for you to be in the company 15 males."

"Are they all planning to jump my bones?" I ask blatantly

"What?!" Thorin leans back as if I struck him "No, nothing of the sort."

"Oh good, then that means your argument is invalid." I feign relief and settle back into my chair "Is there another reason?"
"You can not protect yourself-"

"I protected myself against you."

"You did?" Balin asks curiously, frowning at Thorin "When? Why?"

"Before you found me in the hall that first night. As to why? Because Thorin tried to-"

"I had no intention of harming you." The dwarf explains, Which I already knew. From the hint of color creeping up his neck, it's probably the whole peaking under my dress that he wants to avoid mentioning "That was not-"

"Yes, yes, yes." I save him himself "You guys are more than capable of protecting me."

"We will not always be able to come to your-"

"I can teleport to safety."

"You have no personal attachment-"

"Neither does Bilbo." It's my turn to raise my hand at his frown "What did you ask for from the members of the company at BagEnd?"

Thorin's frown deepens at he begins to open his mouth to ask how I know what happened in BagEnd, but thinks better of it. 'He's learning!' He takes a moment to remember the occurrence before he answers. Taking a deep breath and letting it out in a sigh, he responds.

"I asked for Loyalty. I asked for Honor. I asked for-

"A willing heart" I finish just as softly as he began "I have been a constant support of your endeavor, only trying to help make things easier when I can. Therefore, I am loyal."

"It is not a question about your loyalty."

"No? Then know that I have respect for myself and others. Meaning, I have honor."

"I do not-"

"I truly wish to assist you in furthering your goals and I am here to assist you in achieving them... I have a willing heart." I get up from my chair, walk over to stand toe to toe with the dwarf, and shove his words, gently, back in his face "I am everything... everything you wanted. You can ask no more than that."

He holds my gaze and for once in my life, I have no trouble doing the same. He doesn't want me to continue on but I have given him little reason to deny me a place. After a good measure of time simply sizing each other up, Thorin blinks and smiles, before turning to Balin.

"Balin, give her the contract."

"Here you go." Balin hands me a piece a brown parchment paper with a grin "The reward gold-"

"-Is not on here. I would have refused it anyway." Looking down at the words. They squirms on the page before becoming legible and I read over the terms and conditions slowly. There is an added portion that has me blinking in confusion "What-"

"While you may not claim a portion of the gold itself, neither shall you ever want for more than
can be provided." On the corner of the page is the equivalent of an IOU, with Thorin's signature below it "A debt is incurred for your services, payable in the form of--"

"But I don't need-"

"Yet will have." Balin insists, rapping the page lightly "Worry not."

Ignoring the over generous reward, I continue looking over the document. This isn't a download, it's life or death. After finding it agreeable, we each sign the contract and I feel my heart pounding in excitement. Balin offers me a wink, which I barely catch with my eyes nearly shut from the width of my smile.

"Everything seems to be in order." I say, winking back

"Indeed Berch Kannag, welcome to the company of Thorin Oakenshield."

"Mmm." I smile dumbly for a moment before realizing that I have no idea what he called me "What in the world is a Berch Kannag?" I ask, the phrase feeling rough on my tongue "I can't understand what it means."

"Ah, I was wondering about the limits of your gift." Balin starts. Thorin gives an amused toss of his head while looking at me smugly. "It seems that it only applies to words that can be translated."

"What does that mean?" I huff, squinting at the grinning pair

"It means you can not translate or understand the feelings of the language." Thorin offers, much too smug for my liking "There is no direct translation for some words, you are to simply know them."

"How am I suppose to just know things!?!" I howl, clutching at my head

"You are a seer, aren't you?" He answers with a haughty smirk "Is that not what you do?"

The two leave my side laughing it up and I have to fight not to throw my new contract at their heads.

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

A.N:
daughter - berch

see - kannag

Berch Kannag roughly means 'daughter see' which makes no sense, which is why Thia can't understand the phrase. The idea behind it is "The child of sights" or "The daughter of fate." Pretty fitting if I do say so myself. She gave Balin a nickname so he gave her one back.
The rest of the week is filled with practice, relaxing, and avoiding Elrond's sons. They had developed a mild interest in me since I first showed up that had only became an intense interest when I started disappearing around corners. 'Escaping them was the best practice of all.' Its actually more fun then I've time to admit; its like an intense game of tag. 'Middle Earth is filled with experts in the game.' On more than one occasion I've seen some of the company members scowling at us whenever I'm not quick enough to make my escape from the duo. Regardless, I find the twins to be great fun and I haven't heard them complain so I guess they like me well enough. Except for the one time I told them about Nori accidentally causing me to poison myself; they complained for hours. That ended up in them 'accidentally' pouring honey and feathers over the dwarf one fine afternoon.

"It's still funny." I chuckle to myself

In addition to the boys, I spent some quality time with the friendly neighborhood burglar, Bilbo. He'd been feeling a little out of place, so I made sure to have him glued to my side whenever I conversed with the dwarves or elves. Making him feel included is a big goal for me. He greatly enjoyed when I explained Christianity; at the request of sweet little Ori. 'Funny... He could bench press ME if he tried.' I spent many nights around the fire telling the two as many Biblical stories as I could remember. The company went down earlier than usual this night and so now I have nothing to do.

"A job well done if you ask me."

I am resting on my bed, enjoying a moment of solitude when three heavy knocks resound on my door. It's really late, around 3:00AM if my inner clock is any indication, and I've watched enough horror movies not to open the door blindly. 'I would kill for a peep hole.' Getting up from my sprawled position and grasping the long coat rack like a bat, I slowly glide over to the door. I stop a few feet from the structure and call out.

"Who is it?"

"...Nori."

"Nori who?"

"Is this really necessary?" When I don't answer he sighs and grumbles out "Nori son of Korin"

"That's adorable." I call back, quite pleased with the answer. Then I remember the time and his dislike for me "Why are you outside my door in the middle of the night?"

"I've come to steal all you hold dear." his annoyed voice sounds from the opposite side of door "Really, what do you think I'm here for? We are leavin', and I have been tasked with collectin' our amazin' seer."

"Oh how nice." I can hear the sneer in his voice and return it full force "They must really like me if they sent a thief to fetch my amazing self. Give me a minute."

His grunt is the only response I am graced with. I'm slightly annoyed that no one said anything about leaving earlier, but decide it isn't worth being annoyed about. Scribbling a thank you note for
Merilin (I hope she can read it) I quickly change my clothes, tidy the room, and grab my gear before pulling open the door and gawking at the scene. Nori, the moron, is half way down the hallway, shoving gold candle stands into his bag. The archways, on the opposite of the hall, meant to be occupied by said candleholders are all empty. Candles litter the floor as the thief carelessly tosses them away. I groan and he turns toward me with a mischievous grin and walks over, prizes in tow.

"Do you have any room in your bag?" he asks seriously as I gape at him "I don't think I could handle leaving without taking a... souvenir."

"Stealing... Now of all times?" I raise an eyebrow at his blank stare. Shaking my head, I sarcastically snark "What would Korin say?"

"You know nothin' of my father, woman." He points the candlestick at me in a threatening manner "Nor of what he would say of me."

"True but you're going to get us in trouble, you know." I reply, pushing the gold out of my face. His dad appears to be a soft spot for the dwarf and I'm in no mood to be beaten to death with a candle "Especially while crossing the Misty mountains."

"Is that one of your famous predictions?" his sneer returns, trying to shove the candle into the bag "I'm not so easy to fool as the blinded king."

"Blinded?" I ask cautiously, worried that Nori has seen something in Thorin. It should be much too early for gold sickness to set in but maybe I missed something "Blinded by what?"

"Do not act daft." He snorts, causing me to bite my cheek in worry "Our mighty king can fall for temptation the same as any one. Its obvious that he-"

"Ye'd best watch your tongue when speaking of our king, thief. I might just be inclined to cut it out of yer head."

We both pivot and spot Dwalin marching up the walkway, effectively ending the conversation. His face holds a black look that I selfishly hope is geared towards the thief and not myself. As he gets within striking range, I can see his attention is indeed on Nori. He places himself between us and growls out a sentence so low and rough I can't understand it. Whatever he says has Nori glaring in return but stepping away. The tattooed dwarf turns to me with his usual grimace, that I have learned is his normal face, and steps in my direction.

"What have ye seen?"

"Um, well... I can't really say." I stutter out trying to avoid answering. Depending on how long he's been listening to us, he could mean anything from the misty mountains to the lonely one. Taking a risk that he doesn't suspect gold sickness just yet, I chose misty "It's necessary and no one will be too hurt."

"What do you mean by necessary?" Nori rejoins the conversation, shouldering his stuffed pack effortlessly "What kind of trouble do folk NEED to run into?"

"The kind that will save your lives on more than one occasion." I answer heatedly

"Have ye told Thorin about this, yet?" No... No I haven't but that's not the answer I think he wants to hear so I just lower my gaze from the bald dwarf "Come on lass, lets go tell him now."

Though his words are not harsh, I am not given much of choice in the matter. Dwalin takes my arm
and leads me in the direction I know the company to be in, with Nori following close behind. I have half a mind to teleport away but since Dwalin has a hold on my arm, he would come along for the ride. *We don't want that, now do we?* I allow myself to be ushered into the company's assigned area and momentarily watch them bustle about before Dwalin stomps us over to Thorin. He notices, or more like hears, our approach and turns to await our arrival.

"Thorin." Dwalin pushes me forward none to gently. I nearly crash into the king but steady myself at the last moment. I've landed in his lap enough times to be his wife and I doubt he appreciates it "The lass has something to say."

"Well its not really something I HAVE to say." I mutter, stepping back from my stumble "But I guess it's what I'm here for."

"Miss Malcolmson" he begins by crossing his arms and I can all but hear the lecture coming "What is it that you need to tell me?"

"Like I said, it's not a need but..." I give up trying to make my way around it "You're going to run into some trouble in the mountains."

"Wha-"

"Now before you get mad and start yelling at me, let me just say that I didn't say anything because you all make it out alive."

Thorin makes a low noise that sounds to be the bastard child of a hum and a growl. He looks at me with an expression that can only be described as a gentle glare. I feel like a naughty child but at the same time there is something very unparent like beneath the stare that makes me unsure of what I should do. Hence, I wait for him to stop making it before continuing.

"I would suggest you keep some food and such hidden on your person. We will probably lose some of our supplies." I don't tell him to remove *probably* and change *some* to *all* "Also, taking the ponies isn't a good idea."

"Hn. Why?"

"The path will get extremely narrow." I know he is asking about the ponies since I explained the other "I'd hate to have to push them over the edge. I hope you would be against it as well. I don't really picture you as the pony pushing type."

The dwarf king inhales deeply before uncrossing his arms, raising a hand to his face, and pinching the bridge of his nose. He releases a deep sigh and I can only stand there with my head tilted in confusion. *This is new.* He drags his hand down his face but I catch the small grin playing on his lips before it disappears, flitting away like a butterfly. His face clears, for the most part, and he looks at me sternly.

"Thank you for your advice, I will think on it." he points a thick finger in my direction "However, next time be sure to tell me anything concerning the company right away. Do you understand?"

I nod my understanding of his desire, but not so much the whole telling him 'right away' part. It will do none of us any good in the long run. He dismisses me and with a thoroughly chastised look, I walk away. Ignoring Nori's snort about getting away murder, I make my way over to Ori to give him the gift I'd forgotten I set aside for him. He is ecstatic with the new contraption and I pat his arm trying to be affectionate. He immediately starts using the gift, so I find my walking partner and we all quietly set off.
Sluggishly traveling up the meandering path, I sigh as the sun finally makes an entrance. I'm not a morning person and I can not pretend to be. Our siesta in Rivendell has only cemented the fact by all the breakfasts I missed to my dreams. In addition to that, all the uncomfortable conditions of traveling have long been forgotten. I stretch my arms above my head and hear a delicious crack. 'Mmmm cartilage.'

"Be on your guard, we're about to step over the edge of the wild." Thorin turns to address us all before he gestures to the snowy elder "Balin, you know these paths, lead on."

"Aye." he responds and sets off at the head of the group "If memory serves, it should only take 2 weeks to round the whole thing."

I take a step forward but pause when Bilbo doesn't fall into step with me as he usually does. I chance a glance in his direction and find him looking forlornly at the retreating face of Rivendell. A lovely place to be sure, but it's time to leave. I give him a moment on his own before I call to him softly. He begins to rotate back to the group but is startled into immobility by Thorin's sudden command.

"Master Baggins, I suggest you keep up." he looks down at the small hobbit in a way that has me wanting to defend him "Miss Malcolmson, walk in the center of the group. It's unsafe for you travel at the back."

Before I can respond, he spins on his heel and walks away. I puff up my cheeks, stick out my tongue, and blow a childish raspberry. Bilbo, along with the eavesdropping Durin brothers, choke back a laugh and we all look up innocently at the sky when Thorin glares back at us. Even with my childish antics, I guide Bilbo to the center of the group as we make our way up the mountain side. 'I may be stubborn but I'm not crazy.' We march for hours on end; the air getting thinner and colder the higher we go, making me thankful for my advanced coat.

I gaze around as we trek and discover the name to be true; the mountains are really misty. The higher we go, the worse it gets and I give up after my lens fog up enough for me to stumble. I snatch my glasses off my face and shove them into my bag with a delicate vengence. 'Please don't break.' Bilbo watches me silently, before finally expressing his interest.

"Your spectacles are extremely... large." He points out reluctantly, clearly worried about offending me "Will you be alright without them?"

"Hmm, yea I'll be fine." I act nonchalant but I can't identify the dwarves at the beginning or end of the group, my eyesight being a whopping 20/200 "They're large for fashion rather than necessity."

"Its fashionable to look like you're blind?" Nori asks, to which I ignore

"While its true, I see better in the distance with them on" I wave my hand to signify 'distance' "this mist is making it nearly impossible to walk without them fogging up."

"You can hold onto me if you need to, Lady Thia." Fili offers with a smirk

"But I know you would prefer to hold someone more good looking." Kili intervenes, nearly sending Nori careening off the side of the cliff

"Stop talking about me back there!" Gloin rumbles good naturedly.
We all share a good laugh prior to lapsing into a comfortable silence; the air making it difficult to breathe. Regardless, with the help of my bright red faux fur, I can almost say that it's not an overall bad experience. 'Save for the freezing bum moments when my bladder betrays me.' It is calm, boring really, for a few days but earlier than expected, nature's ceiling darkens and black clouds roll in. 'Oh boy, ready or not here it comes.' The third day of our travels starts with a light but continuous shower, annoying but nothing serious. It continues into the fourth and fifth day, gradually turning into simple rain but we press on. It isn't long into the sixth day before the sky opens up and painfully shoots liquefied bullets at our heads. We trudge through rocky terrain until we are finally halted by Thorin's distant call.

"Alright, hold on!"

"To what?!" I ask tightly

Like a bad case of foreshadowing, Bilbo nearly slips off the slick path but a few of the dwarves steady him against the narrow ridge. I grip his hand to keep him from stumbling again, frightened more of any canon deviations than anything else. The group takes a much needed breather that does not seem to calm anyone's nerves as we attempt to steady ourselves. Inching across a foot wide ledge is not the most relaxing vacation destination.

"We must find shelter!" Thorin calls out again. Beautiful. He is beautiful. But he also loves to shout out the most obvious of things

"How about a CAVE!" I suggest sarcastically, to which no one responds, probably because they are thinking the same things about me that I was thinking about their leader

"Look out!"

Dwalin places a firm hand across my chest and in turn, I do the same for him and Bilbo. Surprisingly, Bilbo shakily reaches across my middle to secure me as well. 'If I wasn't about to fall off a cliff I'd feel touched.' We rock with the force of the thunder and I fight releasing either of my anchors in order to wipe the heavy rain from my lashes. It wouldn't help being that it's pitch black out anyway. Huge rocks crumble and crash toward our location, seeming to appear from nowhere. If we weren't mashed into the mountain side, we would have been knocked into the ravine. Balin, who is suppose to know this path so much better than us, finally discovers the source of our trouble.

"This is no thunderstorms!" He steps to the edge of path and points "It's a thunder-battle! Look!"

I, along with set of the company, frantically gasp in the direction he points in. 'It's like watching transformers in high definition 4D.' The stone monstrosities duke it out but to be honest, none are very good fighters. The graphics look great but I've seen better punches on WWF-er... E. Dwalin pulls me back with the reminder that even fake looking punches can bring down real rocks.

"Well bless me. The legends are true!" Bofur steps further out than Balin, not having the luxury of having someone immediately knock some sense him "Giants! Stone giants!"

"We need to get off this rock before it starts moving too!" Shaking Dwalin's arm, I try to get him to move but there is no where to go "Dwalin-

"If this the trouble ye meant, we should be fine!"

"It NOT." I growl in frustration "I said trouble IN the misty mountains not ON it!"

"Lass this isn't the time for your word games!" With that, he firmly pins me to the wall again and
firmly orders "Don't move."

"Take cover, you fool!"

Bofur needs a harsh tug from Nori but melts back into the stone like butter. One of the giants is a total cheater and rips off a piece of rubble to throw at his opponent. A mighty crack is sounded and the other giant tumbles off the cliff to its doom. I think... I am not sure if they die or just become part of the mountain again. The fight is not over, and the very rock we are standing on starts to shiver, then shake, and then tremble violently. It starts to split and the company is slowly divided. The worst are Fili and Kili; the division between them gets wider by the second.

"Kili, grab my hand!" He frantically calls to his brother.

The terror in his voice is almost too much to bare. Dwalin keeps a firm arm around both the youngest durin and myself as we are lifted into the air.

"Is NOW a good time!" I shriek as we rise higher, feeling a touch of hysteria "If I die, know that sarcasm was with me to the end!"

"Shut up!" Dwalin howls

It all happens so fast that I don't even register crashing into the mountain. I lay on the rock in a daze as the rain pelts down on me and I'm suddenly struck with the thought of whether my phone broke in the crash. The thought is wiped from my mind when the sound of shouting penetrates my ears. Coming to my senses, I sit up in a kneeling position and search for my companions. I help Kili to his feet first, as he fell nearest to me, and get caught in the middle of an embrace when his brother smashes him to his chest. I psinfully slither away from the tender moment and search the edge for fingers.

"We're alright!" Balin heaves, checking his brother over "We're alive!"

"Yes." I agree absently "But-

"Where's Bilbo?" Bofur points out right after I begin crawling to the edge "Where's the hobbit?"

"Here!" I call as I reach out and grab the hobbit's hand.

I did not think he would be this heavy and immediately slip from the side of the wet cliff, successfully adding to the problem. Gasps are heard from the company as I dangle side by side with the hobbit, only a tad bit lower. The group rushes to the side and tries to reach us but we are too far down. I can feel my grip weakening and I curse my fingers for their softness. Thorin orders who us to be retrieved, as if it would be that easy.

"Grab my hand! Thia!" Bofur stretchs as far as he can "Bilbo! Come on! Take it!"

The hobbit is so frightened that he can only hang there and kick his large feet uselessly. Even more so than he did in the movie originally. Huffing, I make a split decision. Releasing one of my hands from the ledge, I grasp the back of Bilbo's jacket and nearly throw him towards Bofurs arms. The momentum causes me to lose my grip on the stone and I tumble a few few feet before Thorin catches my wrist, nearly wrenching my shoulder from the socket.

We are much further down than originally intended and as I look past the king, I can see that Dwalin is much too far away to be of assistance. I could try to teleport us both but the company will need him tonight and even with all that practice, I don't know where we will end up. Thorin's hand starts to lose its grip on the stone and he groans in frustration but there's not much I can do to
help except... I smile sadly at him and he looks at me in disbelief, somehow immediately knowing my thought.

"Thorin-"

"No." He growls out, tightening his grip on my wrist causing it to creak under the pressure "No."

"From this angle... You can't pull us both-"

"I'm not letting you go." He slides a little further, a warning to how little time we have "I refuse."

"I refuse to let you die here." I use my other hand to firmly peel back his fingers "I will be fine."

"You hardly have any control of your gift yet! You do not know this!"

"I... know all that I need to."

"You foresaw trouble... yet this was not it."

"... Who needs to see their own futures? I'm sure it'd be boring." I joke weakly, hyper aware of the looming darkness below me "Now.. let go."

I have no illusions of actually breaking his hold on my wrist, the difference in our strength is too broad, so I don't even try. I can however slip from it; the rain water acts as a slippery oil substitute and gravity is a powerful force. Thorin grips my fingers as I nearly slide out his grasp and I feel one of my rings slipping off into his hand. It's nothing compared to the feel of my fingers slowly pulling out of their joints. Even so, Thorin refuses to let go. His eyes meet mine and I can clearly see the his despair upon his realization that I'm really going to fall.

"Thia-"

"Trust me." I say in a whisper because I don't know if I trust myself "I'll see you again."

My ring finger pops out of place and I yelp softly from the pressure, causing the dwarrow to lossen his grip automatically. It isn't much but its enough. Thorin's eyes grow wide as he loses his grasp on my hand and I plunge into the darkness. Long after I lose sight of his wide blue eyes, I can still hear the sound of his defiant cry. I'm swallowed by the darkness and as I freefall with the air whipping around me, I can only hope I land softly.
Chapter Notes

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CHAPTER 26

I always wanted to go sky diving. Anyone can do it; you don't even need a parachute to be honest. If you want to skydive TWICE though... well then some insurance is needed. I wasn't planning to fall off a mountain side so the parachute is out. 'Statefarm?' Sadly, I'm on my own this time. As the wind whips my face, one would think that I would be more concerned with the gravitational pull of the earth, and not thinking of ways to save money. I am, trust me.

"Ah-"

The first time I hit a rock, it skins my arm pretty badly. The second time, I avoid slamming my skull into the stone but end up with gashes in my palms as my reward. I only fall for maybe 20 seconds but it feels like I've been falling for hours. I gather my wits and try to concentrate; it's hard because all my practice was done in a nice calm garden, not a raging storm. 'Somewhere quiet, dry, and safe.' I focus on exchanging my current location of a better one and hope for the best. The air whipping around me in my decent calms immediately and I know I have teleported.

"Thank goodness."

Laying on my back, I relish in the feel of the grass beneath me. Solid ground. It's a good feeling; the calm of the area around me helps me to relax. An owl hoots in the distance and a soft breeze lazily blows across my face. I shiver due to my soaked clothes and the night air, but still refuse to move. The company will be busy for the nearly the next day or so, thus I'm in no hurry to made a burden of myself.

"Please don't worry about me..." I whisper into the night, knowing it is futile "Just get out of there in one piece."

As much as I'd like to be there for them, I know I'd only be in the way if I somehow got to them. The goblins would make a glorious feast out of me, with my dwarves as unwilling participants.

"Some help I've been." I whine quietly, not caring that no one can hear "A real good seer you're turning out to be, Thia. You'll be lucky if Thorin doesn't shove his foot up your butt for this stunt."

Deciding that talking to myself in third person is not healthy, I choose to just wait here for them. 'Where is 'here' anyway?' I crack my eyes open to reveal a glimpse of my location. The sight that greets me is a thousand diamonds dancing on a pure black backdrop. The moon sits closer than I've ever seen it; as if someone pull it further into out atmosphere. I stare wide eyed at the scene, forgetting that I'm supposed to the searching for location markers, attempting to count the glowing gas balls.
"Beautiful."

---

"Shishi"

Apparently, stars are the new sheep because counting them led to me falling asleep in the middle of nowhere. If everything in this universe wasn't hellbent on trying to kill Thorin, I'd have been eaten by now. I don't know how long I slept but the sun hasn't risen yet, but the cloud seem to have long since rolled away. The sky is getting lighter, so I know it will be dawn in the next hour or so and lost isn't where I want to be. I quickly check my surroundings and am relieved to find that I'm not too far from the hole in which my dwarves will crawl out from. 'I should hurry with my plan then.' I undress with a speed that would make an Olympian jealous.

"Aaaaaouch!" My blood has stiffened my sleeves worse than starch; cracking and flaking with my movements "Gross..."

Placing my bag on the ground beside me, I pull some dry clothes and medical supplies. I'm not caring anything serious, just some disinfectant and cloth for wrapping wound. Just like my clothes, the wound on my arm is caked with dried blood and after I painfully remove it, I can see the white meat underneath. It's not the first time I've had cuts like this, though as a child, I thought it was bone. Less scary, just as painful. I gulp down the bile raising in my throat at the sight and get to work.

"I need to think of name for this teleportation gift. Something cool, but shorter than 'teleportation'." I'm prone to talk to myself when alone, especially when I'm possibly morally wounded "Portation? Port? Tele? No, those all suck."

"How about night crawling? Noooo, too X-men. I'm leaping from place to place, moving? Shifting? Jumping?" I pause in my cleaning and one sided conversation "Jumping? Yea...jumping sounds about right!"

I hastily finish wrapping my arm and begin on my palms. One of my rings is gone, the one my mother gave me. 'Thorin must still have it.' Clenching my fist, I feel a crippling loss at being parted from the item and chastise myself for my sentimentality.

"Now isn't the time to be worrying about jewelry."

I finish wrapping my wounds and get redressed before taking out a piece of my jerky stash and scarfing it down with a few sips of water. Just as I complete my tasks, I hear shouts coming from the cave. I stand from my spot and move a couple hundred feet away. Why so far? I once saw a cheerleader get crushed to death by a team of footballers running over her. I love pancakes, but I don't want to be one thus I make sure I stand clear of the trampling zone. The shouts get louder and the heat of the sun warms my neck as it rises over the horizon. So focused on fleeing, the group barely notices me standing amongst them.

"-five, six, seven, eight. Bifur, Bofur, that's ten. Fili, Kili, that's twelve. And Bombur, that makes thirteen." Gandalf finally spots me standing there with my hands on my hips "Ah, Miss Thia. Good to see you are well."

All heads swing in my direction and my heart warms at the relief written on their faces. I swear Balin is over there tearing up. Still, we are missing the most important member and we've no time for a reunion. Before anyone can start asking questions, I ask one of my own.
"Glad to see you guys again." I gaze at the wizard "But where is Bilbo?"

"Where's Bilbo?" he asks back and glances around "Where is our hobbit? Where is our hobbit?!"

Everyone searches for the lost hobbit, Bombur even going as far as to look under his feet. I glance around while tuning my ears for any sounds. I hear light breathing and turn to gaze into semi-empty space. I can make out a shifting in the air, much like when you are driving and the heat wafts up from the road making the image wavy. Staring into the space I wait for my confirmation. As suspected a scoffing noise, like those made by feet, sounds and I move forward and snatch at the air. After a few tries, my hand connects with a shoulder and I know I have caught my hobbit. I rub his back soothingly and whisper to him.

"Don't worry. He won't come out here." A soft gasp sounds and I continue "You did very well Bilbo."

"Curse the Halfling! Now he's lost!" Gloin shouts, running his fingers through his red hair "I thought he was with Dori!"

"Don't blame me!" he responds affronted "I won't be held accountable for this!"

"Um… Guys." I say trying to pull Bilbo forward with me "Yoohoo."

"And where did you last see him?" Gandalf asks genuinely concerned

"I think I saw him sneak away when they first collared us." Nori tattles

"What happened exactly?" he walks closer to the group "Tell me!"

"Hey, would you all just-"

"I'll tell you what happened" Thorin interrupts me, clearly unhappy with the night's events "Master Baggins saw his chance and he took it! He's thought of nothing but his soft bed and his warm hearth since."

"And what's wrong with that?!” I yell back in defense of my friend "I've thought of those same things, as have you! Are you so I hypocritical, so blind? Aren't you doing the exact thing; searching for a chance to go home?"

"...We will not be seeing our hobbit again," He says looking straight into my eyes "he is long gone."

I glare at him and feel Bilbo shift under my grasp. After a moment, a pressure on my hands signifies him squeezing it for reassurance and I make a small hum of comfort. After a moment, he removes the ring and pops fully into my view. Offering him a small smile, he returns it before he steps forward from behind the tree I'm standing beside. The faces of the company display open surprise and I glower at the dwarf kings scowl.

"No," Bilbo says strongly "He isn't."

"Bilbo Baggins!" Gandalf exclaims, walking over to us "I've never been so glad to see anyone in my life."

"It's true." I cut in blandly, folding my arms but immediately dropping them in pain "He wasn't even remotely excited to see me."
"Bilbo, we'd given you up!" Kili smiles

"Only because you guys are completely deficient in the brain." I roll my eyes as they all continue "Faithless, I'm telling you."

"How on earth did you get past the goblins?" Fili asks curiously.

Bilbo nervously accepts the attention and places the ring in his pocket. Gandalf notices and eyes him warily before lifting his eyes to my own. I gently shake my head once and he nods his understanding, though what he understands I do not know.

"Oh, what does it matter?" the wizard attempts to distract the group "He's back."

"It matters. I want to know." Thorin the spoiled brat rumbles softly "Why did you come back?"

I want so badly to start screaming at him for his awful personality. He's angry when he's there, he's angry when he's not. This dwarf has some serious abandonment issues. I only hold off on it because Bilbo still has a speech to make. Not to mention I have climbed very few trees in my life, so I'm not looking forward to tonight. Although the film makes it seem like they run for the whole time, it's missing chunks of time. If they exit the goblin town and the sun rises, then they can't have a 5 second conversation before the sun sets. 'Just doesn't work that way.' I'll have to work on my climbing skills while there is still time.

"Look, I know you doubt me. I know… I know you always have. And you're right, I often think of Bag End. I miss my arm chair, and my garden." He smiles sadly and it makes me think of all the things and people I miss… electricity… the price is right… ok ok, and family "See, that's where I belong. That's home. And that's why I came back, cause… you don't have one. A home. It was taken from you, but I will help you take it back if I can."

His speech is met with silence as the company takes in his words. It isn't a riveting, awe inspiring, soldier moving speech. It is simple and true. It speaks of loyalty, the strength of honor, and the willingness of a heart. I glance in Thorin's direction and his face holds understanding as well. 'I guess I won't have to chew him out then.' I pat Bilbo's shoulder before walking over to Oin and having him take a look at my hands.

I spend the rest of the day climbing trees and napping. A little while before the sunsets, I come to the decision to discuss the next incident with Thorin. I know if I don't, it's going to look really bad on my part. Gathering my courage, I walk over to the dwarf king and sit down in front of him. Balin and Dwalin are at his sides and all three exchange looks before focusing on me.

"How are you doing?" I ask, trying to start small.

"As well as can be expected." He replies, slowly taking me in "Is there something you wanted?"

"There's a lot of things I want." I express honestly and raise my eyebrows at the response. Dwalin barks out a laugh and Balin pats Thorin on the back while he chokes on... spit maybe? I can never tell with these guys "But I'm actually here to give you a warning."

"A warning? Another already?" Dwalin hums, quickly growing serious "What are ye warning him about?"
"You're not afraid of fire or heights, are you?" They each shake their heads and I nod along "Good, because tonight will be filled with both."

"Excuse me?" The king asks but I know he means something much less polite

"I can't tell you the details, you know I can't." he gruffly nods and I'm thankful that he isn't going to fight me on it "But I don't want to have you caught completely off guard. So I warn you; tonight will not be a very nice night for you. Worse than last night. Like, a continuation..."

The trio warily accept the news. I rise from my spot on the ground and begin to walk away before I remember something. I turn back and stand before the dwarfs again. The look up, annoyed at my reappearance.

"Another premonition, Miss Thia?" the king questions, saying my name like it was a part of his tongue... I stare as he frowns and shakes his head "This is unexpected."

"No, no. Nothing of the sort" I don't correct him about premonitions, for what good would it do "I'm here about my ring."

"Ring?" he asks in mock confusion, all smooth words exchanged for sandpaper anger "Oh yes, the ring that slipped off your finger when you THREW YOURSELF OFF A CLIFF?!"

To say I'm surprised is an understatement. I step back reflexively as he rises from his spot and paces before me. 'I knew he wouldn't be happy but jeez.' His yell seems to have gathered the attention of the company and I feel my anxiety start to flare. Balin and Dwalin exchange expressions of understanding, but stay seated. I look at my feet and mumble out an answer.

"I didn't throw myself. I fe-"

"You let go!" he cuts off and I feel a way of regret for my actions "Are you so desperate to die?!"

"No! Why do you keep saying that? I just..." I don't know what to say to calm him or diffuse the situation but I am desperate to do so. I can all but feel his emotions radiating from pores; so intense that I think they may overwhelm me. Though human, I've never felt empathy to this degree before "You have to lead the company. They needed you to get out of goblin town. What else was I supposed to do?"

"Anything but die! I could have held us both!" He replies, unable to see reason "You did not need to sacrifice yourself for me."

"That's exactly what-"

My horrendously stupid answer is cut off by howls and screeches. Coming around the mountain is not six white horses, but rather thirty black wargs. I feel my body chill and goose bumps scatter across my arms when I hear his call.

"-Run them down!-" Azog, of course it would be him, roars "-Tear them to pieces!-"

"Out of the frying pan." Thorin starts

"And into the fire" Gandalf finishes "Run. Run!"

I take off running without even waiting for the order to finish. There is no way I'm getting any closer to that albino version of the green giant without a really good reason. I closely follow the dwarves before I remember they actually end up basically running off a cliff. 'Dang it!' The warg
growls get louder as they start chasing after us and there is no time to change our course now. Bilbo somehow manages to skewer one, along with the rest of the dwarves slowing them down. I'm careful to stay away from their awfully sharp jaws. The group finally becomes aware of their horrible escape methods and fight to improvise.

"Up into the trees. All of you!" Gandalf notices the missing hobbit, and calls to him "Come on, Climb! Bilbo, Climb!"

"They're coming!" Thorin informs

I pull myself into a tree and grip the trunk like a monkey. Even from the distance I can hear the sickening 'shluck' when Bilbo removes the knife from the warg's head. I shake my own in an attempt to rid myself of the sound but it's persistent. The hobbit barely makes it into the tree before the remaining wargs start racing beneath us. I notice a moth fluttering past my head and quickly turn to Gandalf, who only offers me a sullen expression. My attention is brought to the dwarf king when he speaks in disbelief.

"Azog..."
**Pale psychopath**

**Chapter Notes**

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**CHAPTER 27**

"Ah, Miss Thia. Good to see you are well."

A plethora of emotions run through my body at the wizard's words: joy, relief, disbelief... anger. I am both joyed and relieved that the girl lives, even in my disbelief that she stands before us. And stand she does; sheepish in her posture as though she were embarrassed to be seen alive. Her left arm and hand are loosely bandaged providing a testament to a troubled fall but no wounds lie upon her head to have rendered her unconscious. In fact, her eyes flicker with life. It is that alertness that brings me to anger.

Here she stands alive and mostly well but mourned for her I did. I thought her dead and beyond my abilities for recovery but it is not so. While we battled for our lives, she laid beneath the stars... safe beyond our knowing. I find no injustice in this, in fact I prefer it. Thia Malcolmson's safety. It is that I would prefer her separation from my presence, despite all the benefits of her abilities, if it means she can remain unharmed. Not for the first time, I question the wisdom of bringing this lovely distraction along.

Like lightning these thoughts pass through my mind but I am aware enough to sign in Iglishmek to my men not to approach the woman. A punishment for her or ourselves, I do not know, but none shall take comfort in her emrace on this day. Though met with strained confusion, mostly from the younger members, the command is followed throughout the day. The howling and chase by Wargs is what breaks it but by then I have no mind to reiterate it, shocked into stillness.

"Azog."

"**-Do you smell it? The scent of fear? I remember your father reeked of it, Thorin son of Thrain.-**" the pale orc scans the trees and I whimper as his milky eyes meet my own "**-I have not forgotten your treachery, little she-dwarf. The night is just beginning for you.-**"

"It cannot be." Thorin whispers, totally oblivious to my mental break down

"Oh, but it is." I whisper back hollowly.

His eye brows furrow at my words before he remembers my little meeting with the defiler as well
as my earlier warning. I pause in my shaking when he grips my upper arm tightly. It's not enough to hurt, and I understand he is trying to be reassuring. Being the friend that I am, I make no note of his own unsteady, from anger or fear, hands.

"I will not let him touch you..." He states firmly with pained eyes "Again."

"I will not let him kill you." I return as steadily as I can, silently adding my own *Again*.

"Stay out of the battle." he growls, pressing me further into the tree "You will only put yourself and everyone else in danger A distraction we cannot afford."

The conversation is cut short by Azog bellowing out another order. If I wasn't afraid that I would fall to a toothy death, I would cover my ears. The sound is just as rough as it was before but this time it's filled with such hatred that I feel like my ears are bleeding. Fighting not to raise my hand to check, I glare back at the amused orc who is gesturing towards the king and I.

"*Those two are mine. Kill the others!*"The wargs begin tearing off the branches in order to get to us and I feel my stomach drop to my knees "*Drink their blood!*"

"You have some serious issues!" I shriek as the tree wobbles under the wargs' weight.

Thorin grabs me around the middle and we leap into the next tree, as ours topples over. We keep this up but before long, there is only one tree left. A snarling below me pulls my gaze lower and I kick a mutant mutt in the nose when it gets too close. The thing whines and I almost feel bad until it viciously snaps its jaws at me. A soft noise sounds from above me and I peer up at Gandalf who is lighting pine cones on fire. 'I guess this is pine tree. The more you know!' He uses the flaming seeds as bombs and sends the projectiles hurtling towards the ratty wargs.

"Fili!" he shouts, tossing the pines cones down

The dwarves make the most of the gift and throw them at the animals, causing them to retreat. I make an effort to join in the fun but each time I grab a pinecone, Thorin snatches it out of my hand and propels them at the wargs. A few of the hounds even catch fire and howl in pain as their flesh burns them alive. The feeling of pity returns again, even as the dwarves start to cheer. *Do what you have to. They will kill you if given the chance.* To make matters worse, the last tree finally collapses under our collective weight and falls half way off the cliff.

"Hold on to me!" Thorin commands, and who am I to deny him

Wrapping my arms around his ribs we hang on to each other for dear life as gravity shifts suddenly. Dori, and sweet Ori soon after, are thrown from their spots and only saved by clutching onto Gandalf's staff. I silently commend the elderly wizard on his strength; dwarves are heavy. Thorin steadies me before standing from his place and walking towards the pale orc. Azog doesn't even seem fazed; in fact, he actually looks pleased.

"Thorin don't. Don't do this." I attempt to coax him back by grabbing his coat but he bats my hands away and strides forward "You're only going to get yourself hurt."

"Hurt?!" Bofur exclaims, barely keeping his place on the limb "He's gonna get 'imself killed!"

"I'd never let that happen. Never."

Even as I say that... for all my bravado and will to aid... I am unable to move from my position on the tree. My arms and hands ache from my earlier fall but that is not what keeps me still. I'm not used to all the adrenaline and its making my heart beat scarily fast, but still that is not what keeps
me. I don't have the strength to fight Azog, I know I don't, but I can't let him kill Thorin. I can't and STILL I am unable to lift myself. It is not within my means to do so.

The king foolishly charges the orc and is easily knocked from his feet. He has been pushing his body to the limits and his anger has driven him to take on Azog when he is physically incapable of doing so. The dwarves let out cries of despair as their leader is thrown around like a rag doll, and my heart throbs painfully as his head cracks on the ground. It's really an unfair fight. 'It's like watching an tick tack fight a tree.' I finally get feeling back in my limbs when Thorin is thrown to the ground for the last time and Azog makes another command.

"-Bring me the dwarf's head.-" He orders, grinning at me before turning back to the dwarf "-Let his little mate watch him die.-"

I do not deny the accusation because, honestly, there would be little point in arguing with a maniacal serial killer. The dark orc beside Azog dismounts his warg and struts his ugly stuff over to my mistaken lover with dark amusement on his broken face. Before he can reach him however, Bilbo charges in like a manic hamster and kills it... him... it. 'I didn't even notice him pass me.' He stands as tall as he can but swings his sword as if it's a snake about to bite him and ruins the whole image. Azog peers down at the hobbit in annoyance and speaks the words that would have Bilbo trembling even more in fear if he could understand them.

"-Kill him.-"

The dwarves are having none of that. They had been steadily working their way closer to the scene as the pale orc's attention was on Bilbo. 'I would have gotten up too if they hadn't smushed me down each time I tried to stand.' As the orcs stalk closer to our friend, the dwarves burst forward and bum rush them with a cry of outrage. Bilbo swings his sword at anyone who gets too close but is eventually pushed onto Azog's warg's, let's call her... Lou Ann*, snout. Lou Ann shakes him off her face and Azog raises his new mace to strike the hobbit.

"No!"

Without thought, I jump onto his face, blinding the orc, as he whips his head in confusion before falling off the warg with a thud. He thankfully doesn't pummel me with his mace, which looks just as deadly as the last one. It takes a moment for him to realize that there is actually a person wrapped around his head before he grabs the back of my collar and tries to start yanking me off. I wrap my legs around his neck and curl my body around his head in order to keep him in place even as the material chafes my neck before starting to tear. Growls and snarls can be heard from the creature but they are muffled by my... stomach. Where my vital organs are... 'What a bright idea this is turning out to be.' I feel the heat of his mouth against my belly right before I try to push away from his face.

"Let go Baldy!" I shriek, trying to remove myself

Instead of listening, he pushes on my lower back, causing my stomach to come into closer contact with his mouth. It feels like dozens of tiny knives are piercing me as he bites into the soft flesh of my abdomen. Panic flares in me that my organs will soon litter the floor. I howl in pain and fear, flailing out in an attempt to shake him loose but he apparently has the jaw of a pit-bull. I repeatedly punch him in the temple with all I've got and he finally release me. I tumble a full seven feet and land painfully on my back, dizzy from the encounter.

"-Does the little she-dwarf fear for her mate?-' The orc darkly peers at me with my blood running down his face. 'O.K. So it wasn't the best idea to attach myself to shark face.' He runs his equally pale tongue across his bloody chin, tasting the liquid "-She will join him... after we have had our
fun." I visibly shiver at the threat, breathing heavy as the white monstrosity lomes over me. I'm saved from having to think of another name to call him by the appearance of the eagles. They swoop in and start trashing the place like the police at a drug bust. Orcs go over the cliff, wargs go over the cliff, dwarfs go over the cliff. It's one crazy party. Azog growls in anger and I am able to creep away while he is distracted.

"This just isn't my day."

I spot Thorin staring at me through glazed eyes and I know he saw Azog and my little exchange. Frowning in confusion at his angry yet relieved expression, he thankfully passes out again and I'm free of his eyes. I collect his shield and before I know it, I'm being swept off by talons and away from orc breath.

"Gosh darn it!" I yelp, landing solidly on an Eagle after being dropped by the first "Drop me out the sky a little more gently."

We fly all night but I don't even imagine falling asleep, though my body and mind beg me to do so. The excitement of the day, the worry, and the pain in my body keep me from much needed rest. I settle for lying down and stroking my eagle's feathers; enjoying the sight.

"Thank you for rescuing us. I doubt the dwarves will remember to say it later." I am met with silence so I continue "I know you can understand me, but it's ok if you don't answer. I really just need someone to listen right now any way."

"Then speak earth walker." the bird finally answers "I will lend an ear."

"Mmmm. Thank you." I relax into her feathers and talk about everything and nothing "I miss my home. It's a little simpler but more complex there. I guess it's simple because I know what's going on. But here, I'm nearly useless even when I know what's happening. I can barely do anything aside from staying out of the way. What's worse is that I'm stubborn and a truth speaking liar. Don't get me wrong, I'm needed. Well... atleast I will be... according to myself and others. But that's neither here nor there. My friend Bilbo, the hobbit over there, he was talking about all the things he missed about home."

"Is it wrong to miss home?" the eagle asks softly

"No, of course not. Everyone deserves to have a home, hence this little adventure. I do feel a little bad for him though..."

"Why?" When I do not answer the eagle does a barrel roll, nearly pitching me off "Why do you pity him?"

W-well... he only mentioned objects that he misses, no people." E hums in understanding as I settle myself back into place "Its just sad I guess... having no one to miss and no to miss you. But I know he'll find someone to miss one day."

"What of the half dead one?"

"He is half dead!" I deny, immediately locating the dwarf. Pressing my lips into a flat line, shake my head violently and whisper "He'll be fine. I know it."

"Do you now?" The giant bird coos softly, clearly more interested in my plight than empathizing with it "You know this as you know of the halfling's happiness?"
"Not exactly... I don't know about Thorin, Fili, and Kili. I don't know if they will get their happy endings, even if I save them. I have to change fate and... I'm not sure what fate they will be given in return."

We ride in silence for the rest of the night. I'm glad I got to share some of my fears, even if no solution was offered up. It just feels good to get it off my chest, even if my heart still twinges when I see the motionless dwarrow. Through the night, I peer at him often but he never moves even as the sun begins to wake up again and I can see Carrock approach. Suddenly, E gives me a piece of advice as we approach for landing.

"Fate is flexible. Each path leads to an end, some even lead to the same place, as I'm sure you will discover. This life we a live is a winding path, where each action taken by yourself and others can change where you end up. You have already changed the fate of your dwarves, just as they have changed your own beyond even your sight can ascertain."

I am surprised and screech as E tilts her body, causing me to go tumbling off the edge of her wing. Rolling to a stop in the middle of the stone platform, I jump to my feet and shake my fist at the bird. She laughs at my antics and circles me as her kin drop off the company one by one. When everyone is down, I run to the edge and wave good bye.

"Thanks you for your help!" I call before Gandalf speaks and pulls me back into the dreaded moment

"Thorin!" He runs his hand across his face murmuring a spell or incantation or prayer for all I know.

It runs along my skin like a blanket... No... a net. It snatches at my limbs, yanking them out of whatever depths I find myself in. It takes a moment before I recognize that this is happening to the dwarf king and not myself. How powerful is Gandalf that his spells can-

"The halfling?" Thorin asks roughly as he comes to.

"It's alright. Bilbo is here, he's quite safe."

He gets up stiffly and I search for the hobbit. He stands alone at the edge of the rock looking both relieved and nervous. Thorin wobbles to his feet and angrily storms his way over to my friend.

"You! What were you doing? You nearly got yourself killed!" I know this ends well for him but I feel horrible for the hobbit. Still, it will do him good to stand on his own for a moment longer "Did I not say that you would be a burden? That you would not survive in the wild, and you had no place amongst us!"

"I...uh... but" Bilbo stutters and looks to the group for help

"I have never been so wrong," he pulls a surprised Bilbo into his arms "in all my life."

Envy. It rears its ugly head even as I let out a relieved breath and smile at Bilbo who finally returns the hug. I've hugged the dwarf plenty... or rather clung to him like a desperate child. Ducking my head in embarrassment for my past actions, I make a note not to fall into the dwarf's arms like a bumbling idiot anymore lest someone get the wrong idea. Thinking back to Azog's 'mate' comment, I'm sure it's already happening. After a few seconds of bromace, Thorin releases Bilbo and pats him on the shoulder as the dwarves cheer and gather around them.

"I am sorry I doubted you." He apologizes
"No, I… I would have doubted me too. I'm not a hero, nor a warrior." He laughs, obviously content with the turn of events "Not even a burglar."

A moment of comfortable silence is shared between the group. Gandalf leans tiredly on his staff and we watch the eagles fly into the distance. Thorin finally notices the lonely mountain settled on the horizon and a new sort of silence emerges. He begins to walk to the edge of the rock and the group follows behind like ducklings.

"Is that... what I think it is?" Bilbo inquires

"Erebor!" Gandalf explains happily "The lonely mountain. The last of the great kingdoms of Middle earth."

"Our home." Thorin softly says, seeming afraid to speak louder in case he is dreaming

"A raven!" Oin calls suddenly "The birds are returning to the mountain."

"That, my dear Oin" Gandalf chuckles fondly "is a thrush."

"Well we'll take it as a sign, a good omen." Thorin dismisses

"You're right. I do believe the worst is behind us."

I groan at that because I know it's not. Right now a stupid bird is knocking on the stupid wall near Smaug's stupid head and he is awakening from his massively stupid golden bed. No, he isn't dead at all and no, the worst is not behind us. I gaze around after my inner rant and find the company staring at me. They heard my groan and when a seer groans after a hope for the future is uttered, it's not to be taken lightly. Yet, I am shocked beyond reason as Thorin storms over to me and roughly grabs my arm.

"I am sick and tired of your need to kill yourself!"

"Wha-"

"Silence! You were aware of the danger, I warned you to stay back and still you did not listen!" he bellows into my face and I gaze at his furious face, unable to form a thought "You will tell me all that you have seen for our future or you will leave this company. Immediately."

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

*I have a side story about this chapter from Lou Ann's POV. Granted, Thia is not in but it's still amazing*
Chapter 28

I blink at his words in incredulity. He wants me to... leave? What a joke... a joke so funny... I forget to laugh it's so funny. I turn towards Gandalf to ask him what in the world is going on, but Thorin grips my arms tighter and forces me to look at him. His skin is caked with blood, sweat, and dirt but it's the pure rage on his face that catches most of my attention. Unease bubbles up in my stomach and I try to pull away from his hands but he refuses to let me budge.

"Let go." I command, shifting from foot to foot nervously "You're hurting me..."

"Oh? Azog hurt you as well." he bites out cruelly, his face turning an angry shade "Yet you went running into his arms, did you not?!"

"Thorin, come now." Balin tries to intervene, approaching with calming hands "Let go of the la-"

"No! She does not understand how dangerous her actions are." He drops one of my arms to roughly jab a thick finger into my stomach. Though the wound is not life threatening, the act does cause more pain than I would like. I shove his hand away with a grimace even as he continues his rant "This is merely a love bite compared to what he could, and would, have done to you."

"I know but-"

"You know? You know nothing! If the eagles hadn't arrived all your foresight would have given you is a taste of what vile acts would have been bestowed upon your person. This is no game for you to meddle in as you see fit! Do you not understand?!"

"If you could just-"

"He would have raped you, Thia. RAPED. YOU. Plundered your body and given it to his legions until you were well and truly beyond saving! A fate you scarcely avoided by the aid of giant fowl!"

"I-I knew they were coming!" I push my feet against the floor, trying desperately to find footing both mentally and physically "I'm not suicidal. I only had to wait it out! You don't understand that if I change things-"

"Suicidal?! No, you left you suicidal tendencies on a ledge in the Misty Mountains." he scoffs, clenching a fist at his side and completely disregarding my explanation. He is clearly beyond reasoning with and I do not know what to do "We thought you dead. We MOURNED for you, stupid girl!"

"Thorin-" Gandalf starts sternly but is ignored by the king
"Let me give you a sound warning about this righteous aim you believe you are heading for." he takes up the hand that I am using to try and pry his from my arm, squeezing it tightly between his rough fingers. He leans in to breathe against my ear, whispering as though he were sharing the ugliest of secrets "The way you are going, you will die before this journey is complete. Reveal all you know and I will save you from your own foolishness. Don't, and this cliff will be where we part."

"Don't threaten me!" I try to back away from him again; he's too close and I don't like it at all. I flick my head away from his, hoping he can not heart my heart pounding in my ears "W-we signed a contract, you can't make me do this. I won't let you!"

He uses his left hand to secure my right arm, while using his other to pull my other arm up and behind his head. The position is uncomfortable but not painful, due to his slightly lower height. It does however twist my torso in an odd arch like stretch, tugging my body towards him but also keeping me in place. It pulls on my strained muscles, making them tremble as I try to keep my balance. He leans forward once more until we are nose to nose so he can sneer into my face with eyes so strangely sad, that I almost feel as though I really have wronged him.

"I wish I'd never allowed you to sign that contract." He pushes me away and I stumble, landing on my behind in the dirt "It is proving more trouble than its worth."

There is an awful pang in my chest and I look down expecting to see an arrow. Upon finding no wounds, I can only guess that it is emotional. I reach up and place my hand between my breasts to try and soothe away the intense sorrow that has made a home there. My heart thuds erratically behind my palm, trying to break free of its fleshy cage and express the words my head is too stubborn to admit.

Sadness, agony, and despair rush over me in waves; I close my eyes to block out the swirling of the scene. It hurts so bad. 'Heart ache.' I was warned, wasn't I? Who thought it'd be so soon. Or maybe the advice was late? Still, the tender sting in my heart is not displayed on my face. I reign in all my feelings of misery and grief and leave them to torment my core in the darkness away from all eyes. Clearing my face of any emotion, I lift my head back to his.

"My ring." I call out dully "Give it back."

"...I lost it."

He walks away from me and settles on the other side of the rock. I know that I'm shocked; I barely notice when Bilbo rushes to my side to check me over for injuries. In a daze, I am only vaguely aware of the pitying looks the company gives me. I hardly register that Balin is quietly scolding Thorin for his behavior but it doesn't seem to be doing any good. 'He lost it.' Vision muddled by emotion, I reach my arms out in a desperate attempt for human contact and grasp Bilbo. Though not technically human, he will do. Pulling him into a hug, I bury my face into his stomach.

"Do not cry Miss Thia." He tries to soothe me, petting my hair before patting my back instead "He... he doesn't mean it. He's just… worried for your safety."

"I'm not crying" my words are muffled by his coat but it's true. I'm too shocked to cry right now "I wouldn't cry for him."

It's a lie, my being unaffected by the dwarf. I cried at his death scene; despite knowing of its coming for 3 years, it broke my heart. I hold onto Bilbo until my shock wears off and my anxiety grows too high for me to ignore. Leaning back, I smile sadly at the hobbit before moving to the edge of the rock and sitting down.
Alone, my thoughts turn vicious. 'He doesn't want me here. Not that I'm surprised. I annoy myself on most days with my uselessness. But... He lost it.' I bring my fist to my chest again when it offers a twitch of discontent. The words bounce around my skull until I want to scream, unable to find a fault in them. 'Why stay where I'm not wanted?' I am not left alone extensively, as it isn’t long before Gandalf makes his way over to me. Taking out his pipe, he lights it up and sits quietly by my side. After a few minutes of silence, I understand that he's not leaving.

"Smoking isn't good for you" I state, voice drier than I'd expect. Clearing my throat with a sigh, I press my hands into the earth by my thighs and ignore the sting of rocks "And its even worse for me."

"Hmmm." He hums before putting out the pipe, to which I am thankful "How are you doing, my dear?"

"Oh you know." I say coldly, staring off into the distance as the sun slowly makes its way across the sky "Picking burial spots apparently."

"Do you plan to die?" he asks seriously

"I think most people just die rather than plan it." I shake my head and sigh again but this time in defeat "No, I'm not planning to die. Suicide is a sin, and I'm not letting a mouthy dwarf determine where my everlasting soul will reside."

"Very good then." He tips his hat as though he were wishing me a good morning, which it is in no way "Then I ask, what are you doing all the way over here?"

"Wondering how far it is to Beorn's house."

The honesty of my answer clearly surprises him as well as the content. 'I guess he thought he was the only person crazy enough to plan on becoming a shape-shifter's house guest.' It's true though, I am seriously wondering how many days it would take to get there. How many hours I'm going to have to spend trying not to become a dwarf murderer. 'He doesn't want me here. He lost it.' I shake my head as the words start to flit around my head again.

"I wish I could skip the whole trip."

"Can you not?" Gandalf replies

"Huh?" I pause to think again "Oh yeah. I can. I think. It'll probably do me some good to practice... and to get away. I don't really want to hang around him right now. It would seem that he doesn't really want to hang around me either."

"I mere temporary oversight on his part, easily blamed on the events of last night."

"... Beorn would be much better company until this passes over."

"Are you sure, my dear?" he frowns "Beorn can be-" 

"I just got nearly disemboweled by a spear toothed sociopath to help defend a guy who then tells me he wishes he had never brought me along for the ride in the first place." I caress my stomach lightly and wince "I can handle a giant bear. If I can't, how am I supposed to handle a fire breathing dragon?"

"Hn. Let Oin assist you with that,my dear."
"Smaug is-" I nod before he finishes his question "I see. If you think this is best, then I will not stop you."

"Thanks." I stand and walk over to Bilbo to tell him the good news, calling quietly over my shoulder "I'm leaving in the afternoon."

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

"What in Mahal's bloody beard were you attempting to do, Thorin?"

While rare, Balin, when the occasion calls for it, can swear just as well as his brother. As the dwarves remain settled on the cliff's edge, the elderly dwarrow determines this to be one such moment. Having been scolding his long time friend on the idiocy of his actions for nearly 3/4 of an hour, and receiving only silence, the dwarf is nearly ready to give up.

"Your amad, rest her soul, would turn in her grave if she saw the way you acted with Miss Thia."

"You know just as well as I that my mother has no grave." The statement brings the snowy dwarf up short, as the king rarely makes such cruel mention of the subject. Having been killed during the sacking of Erebor, the late queen does not have a grave as her body was not able to be recovered. Before he can comment on it, Thorin turns towards his adviser with a scowl "Just the same as the woman if she continues her self sacrificing ways!"

"Perhaps she does not act in the most... healthy of ways-" Thorin scoffs at the expression, disagreeing with it's mildness "Yet her heart was in the right place. She was protecting-"

"The halfling, I know." Staring off into the distant in displeasure, the king places a hand over his recently bandaged ribs. Breathing deeply he drops his hand to press it into the earth, welcoming the distracting sting of the rocks "Twice she has quite literally thrown herself into the face of danger for him. It tells too much about the placement of her heart..."

"I should most certainly hope so." The growl that follows has Balin contemplating the subject further, deciding quickly that the king is jealous... in his own way. Thus, he seeks to alleviate his angst, as it will be better for the group as a whole... even if his cousin deserves some unease for his acts against the woman "She was defending a friend, the very same act she attempted to do for you yet we refused to let her go. An honest and brave act you condemned her for..."

"... It was not my intention to... upset... her..." though unable to admit it, Thorin is not relieved to be seen in the same light as the hobbit. In fact, he feels a sort of discontentment with the comparison for reasons he is not ready to disclose. It will do none of them any good, but ignoring it has led to him nearly harming the little woman; an act he would wish to avoid "My only intention was to show her-"

"-that she only needs to fear you?" The two dwarrows glance up, watching as Bilbo approaches. The hobbit, apparently emboldened by his earlier acceptance, stops a few feet away from the pair and glares down at their forms "Because if that was your goal then congratulations; she's leaving."

"Leaving?" Thorin questions in disbelief. Though he had threatened to have her separated from the company he did not expect her to carry it out herself "Leaving to where?"

"To a friend's, it would seem."
"She has no friends." The statement slips from the king's mouth and he immediately knows it did not come out as intended. Knowing that the majority of the company is not aware of her otherworldly origins, his statement comes off as crass "She has no friends in the area. Her only allies reside on this cliff."

"That is debatable, as she still goes."

"She has told you this?" Balin asks Bilbo, though cutting his eyes at the monarch for the cruel statement. At the hobbit's nod, he sighs and rises to his feet "I will speak with her and see if you have not cost us her counsel... and friendship."

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

To say he is upset is putting it very lightly. Bilbo is furious, but not with me. He is ready to tear Thorin a new one for making me feel unwanted. He would have been tossed off the side of carrock but he would have defended me if needed. He's a good friend. I tell Bilbo and, soon after, Balin of my plan so they wouldn't worry because angry or not they matter to me.

Shockingly, Balin agrees that some time apart would be best. I would have taken the hobbit with me but the company will need him. I parted with the group a few minutes ago and I now stand at the gate of bees with the sun high above my head. 'I hate bees.' I've never been stung before but the noise they make if truly horrifying. I mill around the gate for a while hoping one of the animals would come and ask me in or something. It took me a few minutes to get the location right but I managed.

"Who are you?" is all it takes for me to jump forward in fright and accidentally flip over the tall gate, in my surprise.

I peak between the wooden bars at the owner of the voice. The man is huge, even bigger than Azog by at least a foot. 'They grow them big out here.' His shoulders are broad enough to give him trouble walking through a normal door and his skin is a baked tan as a testament to his time spent outdoors. Heavy, broken, and rusted shackles encase his thick wrists. They are old and worn, but securely in places; the sight of them causes a knot to form in my stomach. The blackness of his hair and beard remind me of... well a black bear and his sharp honey colored eyes are currently watching me curiously.

"Oh um" I sit up straight "I'm... Thia Malcolmson."

"And what is a woman doing skulking around my lands?"

"I'm not skulking!" I say offended before clearing my throat and fingering the edge of my sweater "I'm just... standing."

"Ah, but you are not." He waves to my spot "You are kneeling." "That's your fault." I cross my arms and glance away "You made me do it."

"I have never made a woman kneel before me unless she wanted to."

I swing my head back to him wide eyed. 'Did he just say that?!!' I open my mouth to scold him, yell at him, anything but I end up looking like a fish. He chuckles loudly at my face before setting his huge ax down and taking a seat, pretzel style.
"Now Thia" he says my name as they do back home, without a Miss and full of naughty promises. Having been away from such forwardness for so long, I feel my face heat up. I don't take it personally, as he gives me a vibe that he is the type to pounce on anything with internal sexual organs "My name is Beorn. Tell me why are you here?"

I explain as much as I can without betraying any secrets or destinations. The company will tell their side of the story when they get here anyway, so I just indulge in the parts when I separated from them. Hours later, I'm sitting at a table with honey toast, complaining about a dwarf king.

"What about your ring?" Beorn asks intrigued, biting into a piece of toast himself "It seemed of some importance to you."

"My mother gave it to me about ten years ago, upon my request." I feel tears prick my eyes but I blink them away "It's a purity ring, symbolizing a promise I made with God."

"What promise did you make?"

"... To remain a virgin until I marry." I take a slow bite from my toast, pushing it to the side of my mouth absentlly "It's not such an obvious thing where I'm from anymore. But I made the vow and Thorin, he..."

"He threw it away." He growls out, pushing his plate to the side "He took your oath and broke it."

Something inside me wants to defend Thorin but I can't bring myself to because it's true in a way. His loss of that ring was like him throwing away something much more important. It's only a symbol but it means something to me and his disregard... hurt. I nod slowly and the bear man pushes away from his seat roughly with a growl. I don't want him thinking Thorin actually took my virginity and ran off on me, so I follow him out the door.

"Beorn! He didn't physically touch me." I manage to catch up to his long strides "Only the symbol."

"You swore an oath of protection and created a physical representation of it did you not?" he rumbles turning to face me "He then took that oath into his own hands?"

"Yes, but-"

"He was careless and lost the symbol of your purity," he continues looming over me, though I am not threatened by it "is this true?"

"Beorn-"

"Is. This. True?"

"...Yes however-"

"Then whether he laid with you or not" he turns away and begins walking again "He has stolen something precious from you. Dwarves are not known for their kindness of races outside their own. Selfish creatures they are, that care only for themselves."

"They aren't like that at all!"

"... How many came to your aid when this Thorin expressed displeasure in a most despicable way? How many stopped their leader from harming a woman they called friend?" I stare at his back and say nothing. The group had remained mostly silent, even Balin and Gandalf merely uttered a few
words of reprimand before giving in to the king's wishes. Yet would it not be treason or some other traitorous act to go against him? I would have liked for aid but I'm sure they had their reasons for not helping "How many would have stepped in had he been any rougher with you?"

"... He is their lea-"

"Then they follow a fool. How many?" I have no idea. None would be happy standing back but I'm sure they would restrain themselves for as long as they could. For the first time I find myself wishing they had less self control. My silence is all the confirmation Beorn needs as he departs my presence "Stay in the house with the animals. They will provide you with whatever is needed. Do not come out in the night, I will return in the morn."

With that he walks away from me and into the woods. I stand in the archway watching his retreating back before sliding to my knees and dropping my head into my hands. 'Not good. Not good at all.' I really really really hope I didn't screw this up. If Beorn doesn't take in the dwarves, they really will be killed by Azog. And it'll be all my fault.
Chapter 29

"How could I be so dense as to complain about dwarves to a dwarf hater and then expect him to help them a few days later? Yeah, I was angry but that's no reason to go and sabotage the whole adventure!" I face palm myself for my lack of foresight. Me; I seer without foresight. What a laugh "Thorin is going to be so angry... Not that I care or anything. He can go swallow a bee for all I care. Who does he think he is, talking to me that way?!"

I pause to think of my statement for a moment. 'Dang it!' He's a king. Acting all high and mighty is part of his job description. That doesn't extend to abuse though. I rub my arms and wince at the twinge the action causes to run up them.

"Did he have to grab my arms like that? I thought dwarves were suppose to be chivalrous. I swear he's going to get a return to sender on this injury." I pause in my rant to pick up a stick and chuck it through the air towards the setting sun "Not that it even matters if Beorn murders the whole lot of them... Gosh, how could I be so stupid!"

After a few more seconds of beating myself up for my dull witted blabber gums, I take a moment to actually try and think about how to fix this. No one will appreciate the situation as it is. Beorn already has it in his head that Thorin is an oath breaking rapist and I'll be lucky if Gandalf doesn't turn me into a toad.

"How can I make this-"

A sudden wetness on my fingers brings my attention away from my statement. I look down and spot a dog with a stick at its feet. 'The stick I threw earlier.' The german shepherd, at least he seems to be the same breed, is panting excitedly and I can't help but smile. Reaching down without a second thought, I begin to pat his furry head.

"Hey there, boy" I greet kindly as he huffs in contentment "How are you doing?"

If I recall correctly, Beorn's animals are rather smart. I wish they had incorporated that in the movie. Then again, over 100 died during the filming for various reasons Soooo... This will have to do. 'If I speak, they should be able to understand me for the most part I guess.' I kneel by the spirited canine and pull his wiggling body into my lap. I haven't been able to interact with an animal in so long; wargs and ponies don't count. I scratch him behind the ears and coo beside myself.

"You're such a friendly boy. Beorn is lucky to have such a handsome buddy." he rolls over to his stomach and I scratch his belly gleefully "Can I be your friend too? Mine seem to be... busy."
He offers a small yip in return that I take for a yes. We stay together getting comfortable with one another, until the sun dips behind the horizon. He climbs to his feet and nudges me to my own; a clear message to get a move on. I allow him to usher me towards the house before I think of a better plan.

"Alright Duke." I pat his head to let him know I understand "I get the idea. I'll race you to the house!"

I start running without any other warning but it isn't long before the dog catches up to me. I once had a dog named, Daisy. Duke reminds me of her, due to both his breed and energetic personality. Since I can't call him 'dog' the whole time, I have taken to calling him Duke. He was more than happy when I presented him with the idea... I think.

Duke let's me win our race but I can't say I mind. He has four legs, I needed the handicap! Upon walking in, I instantly spy animals peering at me from around the huge barn-like house. I don't know where they were hiding before, but the place is overrun with them now. There are farm animals: cows, pigs, sheep, horses, and ponies as well as animals in the house pet category: dogs and cats. There is also a single owl perched on a low beam. I do not feel any of the anxiety I am known to have with human interaction, so I boldly step forward and introduce.

"Hello, its a pleasure to meet you all. I will be staying here a while, so I hope we get along well." I bow deeply like my Japanese professor taught me "Please take good care of me."

"Baa" a sheep sounds as I stand straight "Baaaaa."

"Oh... um... Baaaaaaa to you to Mr. Shee-" the sheep head butts my hip with the vengence of an angry moose before pushing its head into my hand. Holding my hip in a mild form of agony, I eyeball the creature "A girl sheep then..."

"Baaaa."

"Be a deer, ha ha, get it because..." the sheep doesn't laugh "Ahem, you should greet my companion, Thorin, the same way. Knock some sense into him."

"Ba."

"... Agreed."

Straightening back up I make my way back to the table and finish my meal. I don't care for honey, but I don't dare insult the bees for fear that they may murder me. Not to mention I doubt that they have processed sugar. Duke pads over and takes a seat at my feet. Silently, the other animals return to their places and the afternoon progresses quietly. Every now and again a curious creature wanders over and presses its head into my side, probably a warning from mafia Lord Sheepgirl. I find my phone in my backpack and take pictures of every single one before returning it. After a few minutes of silent interactions the animal wanders away and I am left with Duke.

"I feel like Pocahontas." I say to no one in particular when the owl lands on my shoulder "Should I burst into song again? Like uhhh In 1607, we sailed the open sea. For glory, God, and gold in the Virginia company..." Duke tilts his head, clearly not knowing what a Virginia is so I change the words "In 2941 we climbed the Mounts Misty. For Arkenstones and gold, paired up with Thorin's company."

"Who?"

"Pocahontas, everyone knows Pocahontas." I rub it's feathers "My favorite song has to be 'Colors
of the wind.' It's a good one. I'll sing it for you some time. Unless it's the company you're confused... I'm talking to an owl..."

Getting up, I ask Duke to assist me by showing the way to the kitchen to avoid the odd bird. It flies of my shoulder as Duke lops off into a room off to the side of the house. The owl watches me curiously as I clear off the table and wash the dishes before putting them away in their correct places. It takes a few tries but I get it right, eventually. It wouldn't be polite for Beorn to return from a night of... whatever, and have to clean the house too. I was a girl scout after all. 'Leave the place better than it was when you arrived.' I sweep the hay back into a pile and make sure all the animals are comfortable before I search for a place to lay my own head.

Duke is kind enough to show me to a room with a huge bed. It has to be at least a California king; the sheets are soft and thick to the touch. The entire room smells like wood and varnish, probably due to the solid wood headboard. I run my hand over the structure and admire the beautifully carved bears on the top. I instantaneously decide that I'm going to commission Beorn to make me one to take home.

"Thank you, Duke." I turn to the dog who looks pleasantly pleased with himself "I think I'm going to turn in for the night. Will you stay with me or do you have your own little lady to turn in with?"

The dog yips, turns in a full circle, and rushes over to jump on me. He licks my face fervently and I allow it for a moment, giggling at his show of affection. Petting him in a calming fashion, he leaps off my lap and bounds to the door, somehow closing it behind himself.

"I guess that means 'I love you but my mate awaits' in dog."

I open my bag again and pull out my camisole and a pair of bloomers like shorts that I asked Merilin to have made for me. They are longer than underwear, coming down to mid thigh, but are too light to be shorts. 'Do they even allow shorts here?' Shrugging off my question, I dress in my make shift night clothes and crawl into the humongous bed. The covers swirl around me and I fall asleep much quicker than I thought I would. Cocooned in by my own warmth and the weight of the comforter, I slip into a deep sleep.

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

I wake up annoyed. The sun is beaming down on my face in golden rays that persist no matter which way I turn. I shove my head under my pillow and groan in irritation. Once I'm awake, I'm awake. Even when I want to continue sleeping. 'Like right now.' The bed is just as comfortable as it was last night. I inhale deeply into the sheets and feel a tingle of an unfamiliar scent. Before I can further investigate it, there is a knock at the door. I quickly turn over and pull the covers up to my neck before calling out.

"Yes?"

"It is time to eat." Beorn rumbles through the door "Come."

"Alright. Give me second to get dressed and I'll be right there."

"You can out out as you are." he replies in a flirty voice "I promise not to mind."

"No." I say firmly but just as amused "Thank you very much."

He leaves the door laughing at his own joke, and I imagine that he would fit in really well back
home. I vault from the bed and yank some clothes out my bag. Intending to dress briskly, I forget about my wounds and nearly cry out. Checking myself over, I find bruises and scrapes from the day before but thankfully none have bled onto the sheets. My stomach has long since stopped bleeding and the other injuries can hold for now. Brushing my hand over the twin hand prints on my upper arm I pause, shaking in anger. I throw my hair into a sorry excuse for a pony tail and go to join the semi-gentle giant for the most important meal of the day. Upon exiting the room I am nearly taken down by Duke springing into my arms. I manage to keep my balance but my grimace is not lost on Beorn.

"Put Duke down and eat your breakfast." he gestures toward the food "I will check your wounds after we finish."

"Are you sure I'm not putting you out?"

"If you were, I would not offer my help." I smile at his logic

"Thank you for taking care of me." I place Duke on the floor "How did you know I named him Duke?"

"He told me of your actions yesterday." He gestures towards the open area "All the animals seem to have been very enamored by you."

"Oh. That's sounds nice." I sit down and say a quick prayer before starting "I hope you don't mind the name. I'll stop if you want me to."

"He is happy with his name," Beorn places a hand over the dogs head "He has taken a shine to you; he wishes for you to remain here."

"Thanks buddy!" I smile at the dog "As lovely as that sounds, I have a duty to perform and after that I have to return to my family."

"Has the dwarf king not harmed you enough?" I feel an argument coming along and with it a headache "Why must you follow one who does not wish your presence?"

"I gave my word to myself, the watchers of this world, as well as my friends that I would see this quest through to the end." I spoon some oatmealish substance onto my plate, not wishing to start an argument so early "My oath means nothing if I break my word once given."

We eat in silence after this and its slightly awkward. Even more so when we are done and I have to show him some skin. He checks over the bite on my stomach as well as the cuts on my palms and arms. They are scabbing over nicely, and look just as gross as any healing wound. I hesitate in showing the shifter my upper arms but he spots the bruises on them anyway.

"These did not come from Azog, did they?"

"...No." I whisper lowly

He vibrates with fury as he finishes rewrapping my wounds without another word. He's gentle, but I can still feel the anger shivering under the surface. Once finished he hurriedly leaves the room, brushing gently past the worried animals. I don't bother to follow this time, but he pauses at the door.

"Your friends will be arriving sometime this week."

With that, he disappears into the bedroom I had been occupying the night before. ‘Room service?’ I
decide not to think about it, instead focusing on his statement. The company is coming within the next few days and I haven't thought of a way to pay Thorin back for his purple armbands. Would it be wrong of me to lock him out of the house? I doubt Beorn will chase them down, since he already knows they are on their way but that's... an idea. Calling Duke, we go outside and enjoy life, now that I have settled on a plan. Thorin is going to get the scaring of a life time. One so bad he'll wet himself next time he thinks to put his hands on me.

Once the skin changer makes his face known later that afternoon, I tell him my idea. Beorn is more than accepting of my plan and the laugh we share could make a mad scientist jealous. We go over the plot and hammer out details so smoothly that they could cut skin. I make sure that no one will be harmed in this... game... needing to know that while he is in a more primal stage as a bear, he won't be without thought. Beorn thankfully acknowledges that he can run the dwarves silly without them actually being in any danger.

"This is going to be delicious. I'm sure it's April 1st in some universe!"

I'm shivering in excitement by the time I go to bed. Any feelings of guilt are quickly forgotten when I remember the sorrow Thorin's actions caused me. We spend the next few days practicing, until the only thing to do is wake up and put it into motion. As I snuggle down in the bed I notice that same smell as I did the first night, only stronger. It smells of sunshine, warmth, and... fur? Well, it is his house. It's only natural that his smell is on everything. I once again dismiss the smell and settle down to rest up for tomorrow.
I don't even mind when the sun wakes me up this time. How can I when today is a day that is worth getting up early for? I hop up out the bed and do some stretches for no reason other than the fact that I can; no time for swag. I bend down and touch my toes before reaching towards the ceiling. I then lay on the bed and do a backflip, landing sloppily before getting dressed.

"Who's the man?" I twirl, moonwalk, and strike a pose before jabbing my thumb into my chest "I'm the man."

I take care of all the delicate matters of the morning in preparation of finding Beorn. Morning breath is a conversation killer and so is the pee pee dance. Strolling from the bedroom, I swing my arms and legs in an exaggerated marching fashion and search for my keeper. Locating him by the obviously flirtatious ponies, I approach his side to discuss the game plan.

"Good morning, dearest Beorn." I sing, grabbing his fore arm and using it as a monkey bar to swing my feet randomly in the air "How are you doing on this fine day?"

"I am well, Thia." He lifts his arm and places me on his shoulder as he finishes feeding the ponies, who whiney and toss their heads in an attempt to regain his attention. Fillies, the teenage girls of the animal kingdom "I am very pleased with your plans for the day. It has been a long time since I tore into dwarf flesh."

"And it will be even longer because you promised not to hurt them, remember?" My partner in crime grumbles but says nothing as I flick his ear in reprimand "Flesh will be shredded, but it will be that of the orc kind. They are chasing the dwarves at your borders."

The man giant shifts his head swiftly, but gentle enough not to dislodge me, and stares at me for a bit. He already knows about my 'gifts.' Without any words, he nods and accepts my words for true. 'At least HE listens to me, unlike a certain dwarf I know.' Placing me on the floor, he gets ready to go 'welcome' his guests and chase off some orcs. He ruffles my hair, and after I tell him to be safe he leaves me with the animals. Petting a spotted mare I suddenly become conscious of the fact that I came into full contact with a living breathing human and didn't freak out.

"Well." I pause in my petting before shrugging it off "Technically he's part animal."

"Who."

I flinch at the sudden and unexpected question. Swinging in a full circle, I search for a person but find no one. Scratching my head, I wonder if I've lost my mind until I spot the culprit. The strange
owl from the other day has made an appearance once again. Its short thick body does not diminish
the sharpness of its beak and talons. Even so, its extremely small and cute; can't be larger than six
inches or so. I remember reading about owls in elementary school. Elf owl. 'Better not tell you-
know-who.' The bird is lovable to say the least; it's forest green eyes, strange trait for an owl,
twinkling in curiosity. It cocks it's head at me a coos softly.

"You scared me." I scold before growing curious "Whats your name, birdy?"

"Who."

"You, of course."

"My name is 'Who,' man child." It replies in a clipped tone

I immediately make a run for the door. Any reasonable person knows to avoid talkative animals.
'Look what happened to Adam and Eve!' I'm half way across the room when something small
collides with my back. I lose my balance and fall clumsily onto my stomach, sprawled across the
floor. The bird rights itself and stands between my shoulder blades, unconcerned with my unease.

"Why did you run, man child?"

"Why are you talking, bird child."

"I am no child." It flutters in anger

"Neither am I."

"Alright, earth walker." Who amends "Why were you runnin'?"

"Because sky dweller" I return the strange phrasing "You are talking. Thats a little alarming."

"Were you frightened of the eagles?"

"...no." I honestly wasn't "But I knew they could talk. I didn't know others could as well."

"All animals can speak." he steps off my back but I barely notice with him, I assume it's a him,
being so weightless "You have finally started to listen."

"I can't understand Duke." I roll onto my back and sit up cautiously "Why can I understand you but
not him?"

"How can you claim that?" Who once again cocks his head "You talk to him constantly."

"Well yes. I 'understand' him but he doesn't talk like you do."

"Eagles are the spirit animal of the Vala, Manwë, and were given the ability to speak." he cleans
his brown feathers "That ability does happen to appear in other sky creatures."

"I... see." I ponder the whole idea for a millisecond "Is there something you wanted?"

"I desired to know of whom you were speaking about."

"Oh. Um, Beorn."

"Why?"
"I just... no reason." I murmur, confused

"Hn. My assumption was correct." he spreads his wings a quickly flies away.

--------~Shishi~--------

It's mid-afternoon when I hear Beorn's distant snarls. So I do the only sensible thing a person who has been wronged does. I walk to the open doors and shut them, allowing the lock outside to fall into place. Sheepgirl gives me the baa signal, letting me know that she has my back. I then go sit at the table and wait for the spectacle to start. 'Oh it is on, baby.' It isn't long until I hear the pounding of feet rushing towards the house. Gandalf seems to be the only one speaking.

"This way! Quickly!" He sounds slightly worried and I hope he doesn't have a heart attack "Come on! Get inside!"

The door smashes against the frame but does not give even under the weight of 15 bodies. Still, I jump involuntarily and Duke rushes to my side like a good guard dog. He growls but quickly quiets some when I place my hand on his head to soothe him. The cries of the company grow in fear as the door refuses to open. Its terribly sad to listen to. 'There is a very simple latch on door. Stop shoving and look.' If they were in any real danger, they'd all be dead by now. I hold my breath in an attempt to try to stifle my morbid sense of joy.

"Open the door!" Gandalf shouts, almost as if he knows I'm in here. Which he does. A slight oversight on my part but he'll get over it soon enough. Besides, the latch is on the outside. I cover my mouth and huff out small giggles when I hear Thorin's near terrified voice.

"Quickly!"

I suck in a breath as they finally find the latch and the door bursts open. The company pours into the house and I see Beorn charging toward the open door wearing his best 'I'm gonna getcha!' face. Seconds before he plows into the house, the company slams the doors closed. His massive muzzle gets caught in the door as the dwarves push to keep it closed. Dwalin tries to rally the group with shouts of encouragement but they are no match for Beorn's strength.

"Time to end this."

I don't want to see my friend hurt, I calmly walk over ignoring the desperate calls of the company and wave my hand infront of Beorn's nose so he can catch my scent. When he does, he gives my palm a long lick and easily backs away just as we planned. The company closes the doors and locks them prior to collapsing into various piles of exhaustion.

"What was that?" Ori warily asks to no one in particular

"That was Beorn." I answer before Gandalf can "This is his house. Welcome."

The entire company suddenly becomes aware of my presence and there is an assortment of perplexed greetings thrown my way. They all look a little worse for wear but alive nonetheless.

"Why didn't you open the door?"

Bilbo rushes to my side and I allow the small hobbit to hug me. 'Everyone deserves a hug once in a while.' Pulling away after a moment, I check him for any injuries and when I determine he is safe I grin down at him. He returns it eagerly.
"The lock is on the outside." Shrugging my shoulders as if he'd asked me if I wanted cream or sugar in my tea "Some doors you must open on your own."

And some doors I lock because I'm a vindictive butt head. Nobody is perfect. I ignore the burning in the back of my skull that I know Thorin is at the other end of, instead patting Bilbo's shoulder. Gandalf tiredly continues where I left off.

"It is as Miss Thia has said on multiple points." he nods to me but I know he's a little annoyed at my prank "His name is Beorn, he's a skin-changer. Sometimes he's a huge black bear, sometimes he's a great strong man. The bear is unpredictable, but the man can be reasoned with. However, he is not overly fond of dwarves."

"You have no idea." I mumble under my breath, though not wholly agreeing with the unpredictable bear part

"He's leaving." Ori comments from his place by the door

"Come away from there! It's not natural, none of it." Dori grabs his brother and forcibly drags him away, ignoring the younger brother's whine "It's obvious, he's under some dark spell."

"Don't be a fool." Tapping his staff on the wooden beams, Gandalf chastises the dwarf "He's under no enchantment but his own."

"That's right Dori." I say sticking up for the bear man "I would think that someone as educated as yourself would know the difference."

The dwarf glances at me in surprise before lowering his gaze. What can he do? Deny having brains? 'Kill them with kindness!' There is silence as the company comes to terms with being nearly mauled to death by their host.

"If he is so tame" Thorin growls out, tired of being ignored I suppose "Why did he try to murder us?"

"Well thats simple."

I turn toward the king and take in his disheveled state. His hair is as wild as his eyes, but he holds his side in pain. I almost feel bad for making him run until I look to his face again and it shows nothing but contempt. Whether for me or Beorn, I can't be sure. I walk away without actually answering his question and he growls in frustration as I head for the kitchen area. I snag Bilbo and Balin along the way just to further his annoyance. Gandalf clears his throat to try and defuse the situation.

"Alright now, get some sleep all of you." he removes his hat "You'll be safe here tonight."

"No need for hope Gandalf." I say over my shoulder, even without hearing him murmur the wish "You guys will be safe."

"I will be the judge of tha- Gah, my hip!" Thorin's attempt to intervene again, begins with him thundering after us only to be intercepted with a hip check from Sheepgirl right in his bad side. I even wince as the creature baas loudly before taking off. Mafia indeed "Even the animals are out for blood!"

"Lie still." Oin instructs loudly, and I wait just long enough to make sure nothing is broken "Ye'll be fine, laddy."
With my victims in tow, I leave the fuming king to stew in his juices. The elderly dwarf only pauses for a moment to have a silent conversation with the monarch before following after me again. Entering the kitchen, I commandeer the help of a few less vicious sheep to prepare a light dinner for the company. Setting them to work, I turn my attention to my two buddies.

"How are you guys holding up?"

"Just fine, my dear." Balin replies rocking on his feet "I only wish that we had a warmer welcome."

"I agree, Master Balin." adds Bilbo before facing me, glancing over me quickly to check for wounds "How on middle earth were you able to calm his beast?"

"Oh he's a big softy." I wave my hand and ignore both their hints for more information "Though, I'm sure his bark is just as bad as his bite."

"Judging by those teeth" Bilbo shakes "I do not want to confirm or deny it."

"Nor I but... How are you, Lassie?" Balin pats Bilbo's shoulder before coming over to me. His genuine concern makes me feel... important? Needed? Cared for, I guess "Have you been treated well during your stay?"

"Beorn has been the perfect host, do not worry. However" I go to twirl my ring, as I do when I am nervous but its... gone. I settle for reaching up and twirling my bead instead. "You already know he isn't too fond of dwarves, right?"

"Aye, Gandalf mentioned it."

"Well, while Beorn was tending to the wounds given to me upon my little skirmish with Azog," I emphasize the word 'little' but his eyes still hold a glint of disapproval "he came across the bruises given to me by Thorin... To say it mildly... He isn't too happy about them."

"And if you say it cruelly?"

"... At one point, I talked him out of eating Thorin's face off."

The dwarf and hobbit exchange worried glances and even though it isn't the time for it I'm proud. Bilbo is carving himself a nice little place in the company, making friends and whatnot. When I have their attention again, I explain the whole situation of my ring and how Beorn's general feelings of dislike for the dwarven race became a disdain for all things Thorin related. I pull up my sleeves to show them the bruises, that have only gotten darker as the days passed.

"I didn't mean for him to end up hating Thorin."

"I finish with a defeated sigh, because honestly I hadn't. In my anger, I made that mistake and now must deal with it "But there was nothing I could say to make him forget the whole thing and let you guys stay."

"Is the company in danger?" Balin asks quickly

"Oh no, of course not. I would have led with that information." I wave away his worry "Beorn and I came to an agreement that if he could scare the living daylights out of you all, than he would allow you sanctuary here."

I say this as if its normal to let your friends believe they are going to die. The pair stares at me blankly, then in confusion, followed by anger. However when they go to yell at me, I beat them to it.
"If you say anything reprimanding my behavior, I swear I will make you regret it." I point towards the door "Thorin has been acting far below the status of any self respecting male. There are crueler things I could have done. I settled on scaring you; there was no real danger."

"Lass, there are better ways to get your point across." Balin tries to lecture, and I let him if only to keep myself from feeling too self righteous. I was bitten and, in my own way, I bit back. I can acknowledge that nothing was solved but I do feel like it was needed in order to get to the solving point "You did not need to frighten the whole company in your anger."

"Didn't I? You all let him put his hands on me." Sure, Balin and Gandalf tried to step in but they were really pathetic attempts "He is your king and I understand loyalty, but I still would like to think we are friends. Friends don't let people hurt their friends."

I pause in my rant to control the tears that are threatening to fall. *No need to be a crybaby.* Covering it up by requesting a few more things from the sheep, I take a moment to collect myself. Turning back to the two, I finish up my explanation.

"He betrayed me and he doesn't even know it. He doesn't even care enough to ask or apologize." I bring my hands up to rub my arms gently "I will not stand by and be disrespected or abused whenever he gets irritated."

"Didn't I? You all let him put his hands on me." Sure, Balin and Gandalf tried to step in but they were really pathetic attempts "He is your king and I understand loyalty, but I still would like to think we are friends. Friends don't let people hurt their friends."

"He worried for you-"

"And what would he have done if someone treated his sister the way he did when he was worried for me?" Silence echoes around as before Balin lets out a resigned breath and nods. Nodding my own head stiffly, I fold my arms over my chest "The contract shall be honored because I always keep my word... but I can not guarantee a pleasant trip."

"Lass, you need to calm down." Balin wraps his arm around my shoulders, peering into my eyes "You are right; it was wrong of Thorin too handle the situation so and we should have stepped in sooner. I will speak with him again and try to make him see reason. Just give him some time."

"See that you do, Papa Balin." I insert the nickname to show I am not too angry with him "Because as long as he refuses to see reason, so do I. I will share none of my gifts with people who don't respect or even want me around to use them."

I pat them both on the shoulder before telling them the house rules. Thanking the sheep, I ask the pair to feed the company and begin to leave the room. Duke appears from around the corner and I accept his sloppy kiss before bidding him goodnight.

"Make sure they don't destroy the house, ok?" he yips in return

"You have been talking to the animals all night." Bilbo contemplates, watching the animals scurry around the open area "Can they understand you?"

"For the most part." I stand again and stretch tiredly "Some better than others. I'm going to bed."

"Don't you mean, hay?" Balin murmurs absently, curiously watching the sheep that attacked Thorin peak around a wooden beam

"Nope. You guys sleep in the hay" I bring my hand up to gesture to myself "I however, sleep in a wonderfully carved, gigantic, soft, warm bed. Good night!"

I walk out the kitchen and through the designated dwarf sleeping area, stopping a few times to ensure my well being or offer good nights. Once again feeling Thorin staring at the back of my
head, I pause. Allowing my heart to melt for a moment, I reach into its depth, pulling out I tiny piece of every emotion I feel for the dwarf and allow them to grace my face for a split second. I turn to the king and allow him to see just how badly my heart aches. He physically rears back at the emotions coloring my face and I quickly close off my heart again before walking to my room.

He makes a stuttered sound as if to call after me but I ignore it, refusing to allow either of us the comfort. 'I want to hurt him, don’t I?' I'm a horrible, miserable, childish excuse of a person right now but at least I'm honest with myself about it. I want Thorin to feel just as badly as I do for having to emotionally harm my friends. To make him feel the pain of his words and actions. I want him to hurt... badly... so badly. It's only fair, isn't it, that he has to hurt just as badly as I do. But a little voice in the very back of my mind wonders that if it's so fair... then why does my heart hurt even more now?
1. **CHAPTER 31**

The king’s eyes fly open, or rather, they come into focus. The feeling of weightlessness and peace alerts him to the fact that this is indeed a dream. Sitting up, he gazes around only to find himself surrounded by giant metal structures. Upon closer inspection, he is able to determine that they are some sort of buildings, though the sheer size of them is unbelievable. A sigh from near his side pulls his attention to the owner of the verbal frustration. The seer, Thia, sits on a ledge overlooking the sight with a sense of nostalgia written on her face.

“What is this place?” His voice seems to startle her, as she visibly recoils from it. Or perhaps it is him that she backs away from. Whatever the reason, the dwarf raises his hands to show he means no harm ‘Apologies. My intent was not to frighten you.’

‘... You do a great many things you don’t intend to do, don’t you?’ the bite in her voice is a clear testament of her anger, which only serves to rile his blood but the monarch reigns it in. Before he can respond, the woman snaps her head around to look off at the distant buildings. So large that they almost seem to scratch the clouds with their height 'Of all the things to dream about, my brain conjures you. Nice.'

‘Indeed.’ Thorin knows what this is but does not alert the girl, as she would hardly believe him with them currently being at such odds. Walking over towards her side of the flat roof, he peers over the edge at the drop before asking once more ‘What is this place?’

‘... Home.’ rubbing her arms as though cold, despite the absent temperature of the area, Thia tilts her head towards the sky with a dry laugh ‘Can’t you tell?’

‘I am not the seer here.’

‘Me neither. At least... not here. That only works in your world. Not that you ever listen to me anyway.’ the wind that neither of them seem to feel brushes the hair off the girl's neck. The king watches her pulse throb beneath the surface; constant and steady... alive ‘... Why are you here?’

‘I could ask you the same thing.’

‘No, you couldn't. You only ask of my sanity and supposed suicidal tendencies.’

‘I would not ask if you were not a constant source of frustration for those around you; ally and enemy alike.’

‘Why are you so mean to me?’ the question is thrown out so suddenly that the dwarf must take a
moment for it to register 'I get that you're an untrusting, biased, complicated, compulsive, jerk face.'

'Excuse-

'-who can't seem to stay out of harm's way but I'm honestly trying my very best to help you here.'

'If you recall' throwing caution to the wind, Thorin turns to the girl with a glare 'I did not ask for your help.'

'Right. You didn't, because you don't know that you'll need it.' returning the glare with her own, Thia swings her legs over the banister and places them on the ground before walking towards a door that appears to have been built into the floor itself 'I'm telling you that you will and I'm going to make sure you live long enough to be thankful that I didn't wait for an invitation.'

The dwarf awakens with a jolt at the sound of wood being chopped outside. The company is quickly gathered and introduced to Beorn, the shapeshifter. A large and burly man, Thorin dislikes the idea of the seer having spent any time alone with him. The way he describes her, speaks her name so freely, disturbs the dwarf. Breakfast ends and still the girl has not emerged from the distant room and the king begins to wonder if she will exit at all. He would have words with her about a great many things if only she would rise.

"Are ye just goin' ta stare off at 'er door or go in there an' say somethin' fer yerself?"

Thorin's lack of a response does not deter the hatted dwarf from his goal. If anything, it spurs him on even more. If the king had wanted his silence, he would have demanded it the second he opened his mouth. Ever since breakfast ended, the leader has refused to move from his place across the room. He watches the door dedicatedly, but makes no move to actually advance on the structure. Movement from the corner of his eye has Bofur sighing

"Ye've been sittin' there all mornin'... I ain't meanin' to over step but I think ye'd better make a choice fast. The sheep went and got our... host."

Beorn returns to the home, eyeing the dwarves critically but speaking no words or giving attention to any until he sees the monarch. With a harsh curl of his lip he enters the kitchen, out of sight. Thorn rises from his place, deciding that the girl has indeed slept long enough and their discussion is long overdue. Marching towards the door, he is halted by the vicious sheep from last night that attacked him.

"She does not wish for you to disturb our guest." the bearman walks casually into the room, wiping his wet hands on towel before standing before the door of the woman's room "Thia will come out when she is ready."

"The hour grows late-"

"It is not even midday." snorting out a huff, Beorn looks down at the dwarf "Hardly reason to worry."

"We have much to discuss with our companion, Master Beorn." stepping up to his king's side, Balin inclines his head to the host "She retired at a fair hour and should be well rested by now. We would simply like to-"

"She could sleep until the late evening and it would make no difference." a growl like thunder emits from the man and the dwarves take a defensive step backwards "If she is tired, she will sleep. You, especially you Oakenshield, will wait patiently... or in pieces. You decide."
I didn't sleep well last night. I flipped and flopped all over the place, hitting every corner of the giant bed like a pinball. I fluffed my pillow about 20 times and when that didn't work, I kicked off the blankets. Then I was cold and had to pull them back on. I laid awake for what had to be hours before inactivity finally pulled me into dream land, only for it to be plagued by vague dreams of blue eyed confusion.

When I wake, the covers are coiled around my legs like snakes and the pillows have been thrown onto the floor. Light streams in from the window, letting me know that I must have slept long if it's so high even if it didn't feel like it. I smack my lips and taste the morning breath on my tongue like a thick unhygienic paste of yuck. Groggily, I kick the covers off again and grind the palms of my hands into my eyes until I see starry static. I sit up, blinking into thin air before I pull myself from the bed. Picking up the pillows and fixing the covers as best I can, I promptly face plant the floor and roll under the bed.

"Morning" I mumble to the dog

Duke was kind enough to spend the night with me. I kind of forced him to when I saw him trying to use Dwalin as a chew toy on my way to bed. I would have allowed him to but I didn't want to murder any dwarves that tried to kick him. At first I attempted to get the canine to sleep next to me but he refused to come onto the bed. 'I guess Beorn doesn't let the animals on the furniture.' That's a little strange, especially since he lets them handle food. Duke sleepily licks my nose and I feel like a monster. I must have kept him up all night with my tossing and turning. I gently stroke his furry head.

"I'm sorry that I kept you up, sweetie." he whines in response, making me feel worse "You just stay here and rest. I'll see you later."

I roll from under the bed and get ready to start the day. It'll be a doozy, especially since I'm positive Balín told Thorin that Beorn and I planned a fake assassination attempt. Escalating voices from outside the door further this idea and I decide I'd better get out there before more than words fly. I steel my spine, swing open the door, and run smack into a wall.

Rubbing my nose, I look up and find Beorn standing with his back to the door. The man is so large that he blocks the entire archway without trying. He does seem to notice me, what with me running into him and all, but continues to stand stock still. I peer around him as best I can to find the company gathered and throwing him glares of agitation and malice.

"Let me through." Thorin, voice grinding with strained patience, sounds from close by "You have no right, none, to keep me from seeing her."

"I have every right. She came to me battered and bruised, seeking asylum." he returns, crossing his thick arms over his chest "By taking her under my protection, I have every right to defend her."

"She does not need your protection!" Thorin's voice raises an octave and you can hear him rapidly losing his 'business' temper and falling into his 'butt kicking' temper "She is a part of my company, therefore her well being is my concern."

"Does your protection include abusing her?!" Beorn uncrosses his arms and takes a threatening step toward the dwarf king. I grip the back of his pants, holding his belt in an attempt to keep him from hurting anyone. He thankfully steps back at my silent insistence but his words continue "You take
her honor and throw it away. You do not deserve her!"

"I have not touched." Thorin pauses in his retort before he can utter a lie "I have not lain with the woman..."

His pause gives me pause as it almost sounds as if he, for lack of a better phrase, feels some type of why about not... sleeping with... me. Disappointment? Regret? I can't quite pin it down but it doesn't matter. The thought of us, Thorin and I, doing anything romantic causes heat rush to my face... and some place else to my utter mortification.

'The heck is this?! Am I a closet masochist?! Feeling anything for that... that... wife beater.'

N-not that I'm his wife or even want to be- Now is not the time for my mind, or hormones gotta be the hormones, to wander. Especially since his disappointment probably has more to do with my sex rather than me as a person. As if Thorin could even want... me. NOT that I'd want him to, especially after he-

"You did harm her." Beorn surprises even me with his next statement "Now she sleeps in my bed."

"This is not what it seems." Balin calmly but quickly tries to defuse the situation as I stand in shock. My hand drops from his belt as I place my hand over my face in embarrassment. So thats why it smelled like him and Duke refused to get on the bed. You don't sleep in another man's bed. Good critical thinking Thia. "I'm sure Miss Thia only sleeps in the room. He only touched her-"

"You have touched her!?!" Thorin roars and I attempt to step in but Beorn purposely leans further into the doorway. I pinch the back of his thigh to let him know just how I feel about that "How dare you dishonor her in such a way and claim to protect her!"

"She has not suffered under my hands." the skin changer is only making the situation worse as he sneers down at the king, not correctly denying the accusation "That is more than I can say about you, Oath breaker."

"I have broken no oaths, skin changer." Thorin spits back, fuming like an overheated engine "You have shamed her, return her to m- us."

"Beorn, maybe it would be best to let us greet Miss Thia." Gandalf fruitlessly suggests "She is a good friend and our trusted companion. We only care to ensure her safety again."

"I would keep her if she wished to stay, regardless of her status." The skin changer seems not to deem Gandalf worth answering. Yeah well... he can be a bit... I duck my head and rub my cheeks vigorously at the idea of the whole situation "You dwarf, shame her without even knowing. You are both blind and neglectful. Your protection is as good as Azog's!"

"You know of Azog? How?" Thorin shakes his head violently and I can hear him pacing the room. He's too agitated and in a fight with Beorn, and all his animals, I don't think it would end pretty "This is unbelievable. Where is she? I demand to see her!"

"Beorn stop this." He says nothing to my whispered plea but I keep trying "He doesn't even know what he has done."

I don't need this to get any more out of hand than it already is. Yesterday was punishment but that is over. Now is the time for explanations and healing. I push his arm, gently asking for permission to leave the room.

"And yet he has done it."
Instead of doing it the easy way, the man scoops me up and carries me to the breakfast table bridal style. I squawk from my position in his arms but quickly calm, so I do not alarm the edgy company. Bifur and Dwalin, along with a few others, are actually holding their weapons. They follow behind cautiously and take up places around the table. Beorn sits in his giant sized chair and positions me on my knee, like a child. I turn to scan the company and see even Bilbo looking a bit untrusting. Deciding to get this show on the road, I answer Thorin's question.

"Yes, Beorn knows of Azog." I feel his muscles tighten beneath me and I pat his leg in reassurance "You aren't the only one in the world with troubles."

"My people were the first to live in the mountains, before the Orcs came down from the north. The Defiler killed most of my family, but some he enslaved." He pauses to reach up and twirl my bead, the company eyeing the movement with varied expressions of anger "Not for work, you understand, but for sport. Caging skin-changers and torturing them seemed to amuse him.

"There are others like you?" Bilbo curiously questions

"Once there were many."

"And now?"

"Now there's only one." he breathes out a laugh after a moment and I turn to gaze at him in confusion "Unless Thia would like to help me repopulate my race."

My eyes widen much like the first time he made a playful pass at me. I try to lecture him with my eyes. 'Now isn't the time for this, foolbear!' He merely looks back at with a smile, honest to God, waiting for a reply. From the corner of my eye, I see Thorin clenching his hands so tightly that I'm sure he has crescent shaped cuts on his palms now.

"A-as much as I would like to help you with that, Beorn, I can't." I pause to think of a good explanation to politely reject having a man's baby in order to rejuvenate the near extinct population and decide on honesty "I'm just not ready for motherhood at this point in my life."

"Is that so?" his eyes twinkle in amusement, making me want to gut him with a rusty spoon "Well then grow up quickly and come give me a son."

I hear something snap down the table but when I try to locate the source, everything looks normal. Business commences and I drown most of it out over a plate of french toast. Its a difficult and messy affair as every time I try to bring a bite to my mouth, Beorn bounces his leg and I end up with syrup all over my face. I glare at him while cleaning my face and he grins back in amusement. I don't stab him with my fork in an attempt to keep him in a semi good mood, but I'm running out of utensils. Its easier for the company to convince him this way.

"These lands are crawling with Orcs, their numbers are growing and you are on foot. You will never reach the forest alive." I pick up the little white lab-rat-mouse that Bofur flicked off his arm earlier and pass it to Beorn. He accepts it and strokes the ears gently "I don't like dwarves, they're greedy and blind, blind to the lives of those they deem lesser than their own."

I wait for him to finish the statement but he is quiet for much too long. I face him and find the man viciously staring down the dwarf king. Thorin returns his stare with the ferocity of raging tiger. Beorn stands up and places me on the large chair before he steps over to Thorin, who has also risen from his seat. The next few moments should have been placed in the movie because it is awesome. I don't know who swung first but the two are just going at it like animals. Beorn punches Thorin in the face and Thorin returns the hit with a kidney shot.
"Um... Is this...ok?" I turn towards the company in alarm but they are all watching the scene unperturbed as if this is normal. Even Bilbo seems to be totally at peace with it "Some sort of... male thing I guess you guys do around here?"

No one answers so I silently sit back and wait it out. Things get a little weird when Beorn grabs Thorin and swings him upside down by his boots, giving him a violent shake. The monarch reaches forward and sinks his teeth into the skinchanger's calf; gnawing at him like a dog. 'Ankle biter' comes to mind and I can't control myself. I burst into a laughing fit, complete with a gaggle of unattractive snorts and streaming tears. I hear the fighting stop but my laughter only gets worse; I hold my stomach and roll onto my back on the large chair.

"I don't like dwarves" Beorn repeats again for good measure, still holding Thorin by his ankles, as my laughter subsides into sporadic giggles "But I like her more than I hate both races. What do you need?"

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

"What was that fight all about?" I ask Balin later on

"Well, my dear..." he begins as we walk through the house lazily "Territory. Power. Perceived threat to what is their own... women. Males may exchange blows to decide who has rights to certain... assets. Does this not occur in your home?"

"Not really but I understand, though that would make Thorin in the wrong." Men. Dwarves. Elves too probably. All stuck in a time I hope loses it's popularity "Its Beorn's house, plain and simple."

"... It was really about the house, lass."

"Oh?" I gaze around at the members of the company intently trying to remember who I didn't see in the fountain naked "Why then?"

"Why?" he seems amused at the question, ducking his head with a laugh "I would think it is collectively because of your attractive features in body, mind, and personality."

"Thank you for that." I pat his arm kindly, dismissing the nonsense of anyone having the gall, or interest, to over me "But it will do them no good. I'm not currently accepting courting or marriage proposals. I even turned down Bifur and he's awesome."

"Bifur asked for your hand? Why was I not informed of this?!"

The king chooses that one statement to over hear. I close my eyes and purse my lips before turning to his majesty. His hair is once again a mess and his face looks worn out. 'Dangling upside down probably didn't help.' He marches over and reaches for my arm but I quickly throw myself out of his range and stand behind Balin. Thorin slowly closes his hand around thin air before straightening up.

"Thia-"

"Miss. Or Malcolmson." I interrupt, crossing my arms "As of now, you are no longer allowed to call me simply by my given name."

"...Miss Malcolmson." his face falls slightly but I have yet to forgive him "May I please talk to you in private?"
"Are you... serious?" I ask looking at him askew. He does appear to mean, causing me to laugh "Not a chance. There is no way I trust you enough to go anywhere alone with you."

"Lass." Balin turns and faces me with a pleading expression "I will stay near enough to assist you if there is reason for me to intervene."

"Some help it was last time."

"Please... Hear the lad out."

I want to refuse again but I find a plethora of reasons not to. Balin has a talent for making you want to act like the bigger person. It helps that he called Thorin a boy. Secondly, I will be traveling with them and it will be really hard to help a guy who I would like to hit with my car. Not to mention, really don't mention it, I was kind of throwing myself into dangerous situations. Folding my hands tighter across my chest I breathe deeply before looking back at the snowy dwarf and agreeing.

"Fine. I'll listen to what he has to say." I stomp over to the king and glare at him "Know that if you so much as think of laying a finger on me, I will let Beorn eat your face off. Don't. Tempt. Me."

I walk past him with my head held high, not waiting for a response or to see if the pair are following. Locating Beorn prior to leaving the house, I nod to the bearman and I indicate with my eyes that he should follow. 'I'm not willing to take any chances.' He discretely leaves the house as well as I guide the two dwarves to the small apple orchard around the back of the house. Balin stops a few hundred yards away, out of earshot but close enough to help. I slowly flick my head around; catching sight of Beorn in the distance. Taking a seat under one of the trees, I gesture for the dwarrow to do the same. He hesitates but then complies, seeming almost nervous.

"So." I start coldly "What is that you wished to discuss?"

"We are very close to reaching Erebor." he begins and I know I'm going to be annoyed. The expectant look on his face is dead giveaway to his desire "I wish to know if there is anything you would like to warn me about."

"If I would like to warn you?" I repeat staring at the dwarf like he's crazy, I feel a head ache coming on "No, there is nothing I would like to warn you about."

"So the rest of the journey will be safe?" he asks relieved and I briskly burst his bubble

"Of course it won't." I roll my eyes in an exaggerated fashion "It will be filled with more danger than we have faced thus for."

"Why did you just lie then?" he tries not to growl out

"What are you talking about?" I play clueless "I didn't lie."

"You said there was nothing to worried about."

"No I didn't. I said I didn't want to warn you about anything." I lean forward "Which is true because I wouldn't warn you about anything at the moment. That doesn't mean there isn't any peril ahead; merely that I'm allowing you to walk into it blindly."

Awful. I'm being awful but I have an unquenchable desire for him to know that he needs me. That I'm not a burden. If it means showing him that only I can keep him, all of them, safe then...He clenches his jaw tightly and glancing down, I see his hands are doing the same. Am I deliberately being unfair? Yes. Do I care? Not so much.
"You would allow my company to walk straight into danger?" he leaps up from his place and harshly points at me "First you lay with a skin changer and now this? Have you no honor?!

"You dare to ask me of honor when you are the epitome of disgrace?" I slowly raise from my spot as my face grows hot, walk over to his raised hand, and grab it "You dare point this finger at me in accusation?"

"Your eyes glow again." he tries to step back but I follow "Just as they did in Rivendell. What do you know, woman?"

"I know that you are scared. You fear your blood as you rightly should for it will be your undoing. It will blind you but that is not the problem for now. I know you fear your own inability to protect your kin. I know you fear your lack of foresight and hindsight." I gesture to his hand "You have wronged me with these hands of yours and they prove it even now in your accusation."

"I apologize for hurting you on Carrock." I look into his face as he stiffens his hand to point at me again "However I have not disgraced you! You did that on your own."

"One of your fingers points at me, and it shows my lost innocence" I meet his eyes "However three of your fingers point back at you and they admit your guilt. I am guilty for giving you the symbol of my purity, and you are guilty of tarnishing it."

"What symbol! I was given no-" he halts and lowers his hand slowly "... the ring?"

"Indeed, the ring you lost." I turn around and go sit under the tree again feeling tired "It is a symbol of my innocence, to be kept until I wed. Due to certain... circumstances, it was entrusted to you. You lost it. And you call me dishonorable?"

"I did not know the importance it held." He lowers his gaze, shame faced before glaring up at me "Even so, you did not need to lay with the skin changer."

"You are still so blind. Can you not see how wrong you are?" My face loses its heat and it leaks into my voice "You really are an idiot. I did not have sex with Beorn!"

"But..." he seems to be at a loss for words

"Its a ring. A symbol that has sentimental value to me." I roll my eyes "It's a representation of my promise, not a chastity belt. Just because you weren't careful with it doesn't mean I going to screw anything that moves."

He stares at me and I have to fight to hold back my laughter at his open gaped mouth. Running over the conversation thus far, I notice it has taken a very American colloquial turn that he probably wasn't ready for. 'I have blown the words right out his brain.' We sit in silence as I wait for him to get over that fact that my vocabulary also includes words pertaining to sexual interactions. He slowly comes out of his stupor and starts laughing. I pat my face in case something amusing landed on it. My actions are completed stopped when he dips into a deep bow; his hair dusting the floor.

"I have severely wronged you Lady Malcolmson." I shift my eyes and I can just make out Balin and Beorn's smiling faces "I took your oath and broke it. I often take your advice and disregard it. I lastly took your trust and betrayed it. There is no way that I have not disgraced not only you and my position as king, but also that of a dwarf. I would like to beg your forgiveness, though I am undeserving of it. Please accept my humble apology."

"Um... Could you lift your head?" he complies with the request and I can see in his face that he is sincere "Alright, I accept your apology."
"Truly?"

"Yes. Do you know how harsh the world would be if people never forgave each other." I ask the question fully understanding that he knows exactly what it is like "One must learn to forgive in order to move on from painful memories."

"What if a person is unforgivable?" He stands straight again and walks over to lean on my tree. I have a feeling of who he might be thinking about "What then?"

"No one is unforgivable." He scoffs softly but I ignore it "Some people are just harder to forgive than others. Still, you must forgive them but be sure to never forget. When you forget, you repeat mistakes."

"Is that what you are doing?" He asks without looking at me "Forgiving me so you can move on? Aiding us with your sight but no more than you have to?"

"Yes. It takes a lot of energy to be angry with someone, so I can easily forgive." I get up to look him in the face "I can easily forgive a person who is truly remorseful. However I have a very good memory. I forgive you, but I won't forget what you did."

"That is an eccentric method to follow." he admits and I honestly agree "I can see the logic in it however."

"Yeah?" Before I can help it, a yawn stretches my jaw "Sorry. I had a long night."

"... Dreams?"

"Yeah. I know I had them but I can't remember what happened in them, you know?"

"You've no idea."

We talk for a while longer, me assuring him that I'll give him a warning if an arrow flies his way, before the dwarrow takes his leave. He greets Balin and the two enter the house to discuss other matters. I wave to Beorn to assure him that I am alright and he too disappears to do whatever he does when he isn't sexually harassing me.

"Bears."

I lay on my back and think about the next leg of the journey: Mirkwood. I love to eat; my family calls me the bottomless pit. I doubt getting lost in the forest and starving will be very enjoyable for me... or Bombur. Nor do I think being trapped in a dungeon will be very amusing. At least I have my gift and it'll come in handy. 'I wonder what Thranduil is doing right now.' As soon as the thought finishes I close my eyes and try to undo it.

"I don't wonder. I don't want to know. I really really don't want to know."

"I would like to know how a human woman has come to be in my dressing chambers."

"She didn't. I didn't. I-I-I mean I'm not." I open my eyes and am met with a highly unamused, towel clad, volatile elf king before turning tail and running from the room "No one is here. You're dreaming. Yea, dreaming, lets go with that! Just ignore this occurrence!"

I reach the door and tug at the handle but nothing happens. I push to make sure I'm just unlucky enough to 'jump' into a locked room with Thranduil, King of the Woodland realms. 'Why do they always have to be naked?" I stand at the door cursing my luck as the king walks up behind me and
takes a firm hold of my shoulder. Peering up at him, my arms break out into goose bumps as he returns my gaze coldly before calling for the welcome committee.

"Guards!"

~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

Good day to you all! Let's give a warm welcome to Thranduil and his partner, towel! Why did I bring them in? For the same reason I brought in Azog: There is no good reason! Your reviews are most kindly appreciated. And the song, one I really enjoy, is Honey, I'm good by Andy Grammar. Until next time.

~~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~~
Chapter 32

"I resent this treatment! It's unfair and completely uncalled for!"

I'm ignored by the two elven guards who have firm grips on my arms despite my obvious ability to walk. (Kicking and screaming was always a strong trait of mine.) Their hands aren't painfully tight but I still can not break free regardless of all move wiggling and my old bruises twinge in discomfort. 'If they would let go, I could try and get out of here.' Unfortunately, no one seems to want to give me any alone time.

"Take her to the throne room." Thranduil instructs coldly; tying his robe into place to cover his nakedness. Thank goodness too. I thought I'd go blind from the pale illumination of his skin. He peers down at me, seeming to commit my face to memory, as I avoid looking down his shirt "Do not release her arms. I intend to find out exactly who she is and how she got in here."

I'm dragged from his chambers and hustled down the corridor without so much as a please. It is filled with guards who watch me closely as I pass by, seeming both curious and aloof. Their stares make me nervous and I trip over my own feet but I am caught around the waist before I meet the floor. The guard who catches me seems to be genuinely surprised by his own actions as he stares wide eyed for a moment before glaring angrily as if it's my fault he can't keep his hands to himself.

"Feel free to let go at anytime there, buddy."

"Not on your life."

"Well alrighty then."

Setting me on my feet, we continue at a breakneck pace until we arrive at our destination. The throne room is a big empty space with a dangerously large number of torches and a single seat; the throne. I'm brought before it and silently freeze, not liking the unknown situation. We only have to wait a few minutes before Thranduil enters the room, fully dressed this time. He is tall; a little less than two Balin's worth of height if I have to guess, which don't. 'Everyone in this world is super tall or super short.' He does not even look in my direction as he passes us to sit on his throne, rude. His posture is stiff and I can only imagine thats its probably due to his heavy antlered crown. Once settled in, he finally blesses me with a calculating stare.

"Why were you in my chambers, woman?"

"Maybe I'll be more inclined to speak..." I shrug my arms in the guards grip "if I wasn't held down by your minions. Terribly rude, you know."
"Is that so?" he asks almost cordially "Would you prefer chains?"

"No. Thank you. I would not like that at all." I answer without hesitation. I don't want to return to the company in chains "Still, is all this necessary? It's not like I can run away with you guys right here."

"You materialized in my chambers without the use of the door, or do you think I missed that?" He lifts an eyebrow and I only last a second before I drop my gaze. Guy knows how to stare you down "The guards will remain."

"Fine. Be that why." I huff and decide to bide my time "I didn't mean to enter your... chambers. It was an accident, honest. I wasn't trying to peep on you. Let's just chalk this up as an honest mistake and call it even."

"How came you to enter my kingdom?" he totally ignores my offer and continues his interrogation "You carry no provisions, yet you do not appear to be starved or unwell."

"I came the same way I came into your room."

"Why?"

"Ah... well you see." I clear my throat and search my brain for things to distract the elf with. He has no care for anything outside his kingdom so internal harm will have to do "The Valar sent me here to warn you about a threat on your kingdom."

"Did they now?" he asks suspiciously, getting on my nerves. Always answering with a question, I'm starting to see Dwalin's problem with these folk "Why would they send you?"

"Do you honestly wish to question them?" I ask, banking on a negative answer

"... Well?" he asks ignoring my question "What did they task you with warning me about?"

"The Greenwood is sick, Thranduil. A darkness has fallen over it, nothing grows anymore." I take Radagast's words and relay them as my own. Hopefully he won't mind "At least nothing good. The air is foul with decay, but worse are the webs."

"I am aware of the spiders." the uppity king sniffs, all but rolling his eyes "My soldiers have already begun to destroy their nests."

"I am aware of your knowledge of the Ungoliant spawn." I reply with a sniff of my own. Two can play at that game buster "They come from Dol Guldur."

"The old fortress is-"

"No Thranduil, it is not." I can see the surprise in his perfect eyebrows and fight against a smirk. Surprise mother trucker! I'm... So lame... "I have seen it, though this is the first time I have stepped into this forest." Your borders will soon be compromised if you do not act."

"You have 'seen' it?" He emphasizes the word, correctly determining what I really mean by the word, proving that he can read between the lines "What exactly have you seen?"

"A dark power dwells in there, such that has never been felt before." I grow more uncomfortable with being touched and with speaking such dark words. With each one that passes my lips, I feel a lurking shadow drawing closer to my back. Yet... I know that no one is there "It is the shadow of an ancient horror. One that can summon the spirits of the dead."
"A necromancer."

It isn't a question. He knows there is a darkness crowding at his borders. I'm suddenly struck with a realization that pierces my soul. 'The necromancer revived Azog.' I would bang my head against the wall if one was close enough. My face is unexpectedly gripped hard by Thranduil's hand, pulling my attention back to him. How he got so close without me noticing, I'll never know but it's the intensity of his gaze that sets me off. I frown deeply and lose my patience with all the man handling.

"I do not like being touched." I say, yanking my face out his hand "I'm tired of being held. Release me."

"I can not do that, my little seer." he snatches my chin back into his hand, once more examining my face. My jaw tenses under the scrutiny, causing my teeth to creak in protest "There are so many more questions I have for you to answer."

"Firstly, I'm not your anything nor am I little. I'm just the right size to be me." I can't deny being a seer when I just flaunted the fact but this chick isn't a free fortune telling machine "Secondly, I am currently on retainer for another King at the moment. So I can not stay here and be your magic answer maker."

"Another king you say? There are few left. Regardless, you will stay fore I will not allow you to leave." he takes my arm from the guards, shooing them from my sides "But since you are so eager to be free from your guards they shall bring me some chains for our talented guest."

"What?!" I shriek in anger, yanking my arm violently "That isn't fair. You can't just hold people against their will and turn them into your own personal servants! You're not even paying me, you slave owner!"

Thranduil disregards my demands for release and firmly holds onto my arm as the chains are brought forth. I've never worn chains before but why would I? Nonetheless, I can judge just by the looks of them that they are going to be heavy and uncomfortable. They look like they spent a year soaking in water rusting over and I'm sure my arms will fall off from gangrene or something if I have to wear them. Pulling harder makes no difference as the elven king hardly notices my struggles. If I wasn't sure I'd regret it instantly, I'd kick him below the belt and make a break for it.

"Do not worry, little pet." He wraps my wrists in bandages to protect them from the rough material before snapping on the shackles and I remind myself that we will return here so decking this psycho will only make things harder later "You will be well cared for."

And so begins the worst hour of my life. Thranduil drags me around the halls, constantly keeping himself in contact with me. I just need him to let go for a moment, just a moment, but he seems to sense that thats exactly what I want and strives to do the opposite. He bombards me with questions I don't want to know the answers to but I remain silent until he finally grows irritated. Raising his hand to strike me, I flinch but the blow never comes. After a moment, I tentatively look up and find him looking at his own frozen raised hand in confusion. I then remember my other gifts.

"It's insurance." His head snaps in my direction, eyes squinting in anger "The Valar gave me the gift of protection and no forest or those who dwell within it may harm me."

"How very lucky for you then."

In his annoyance, he makes the mistake I have been waiting for and releases my arm to regally walk away from me. The king only gets three steps away before he quickly turns back around. I
only get a glimpse of his enraged face before I land on Beorn's dining table. Plates clatter and food spills everywhere, covering me in the lunch special. The whole group erupts in shouts of surprise. My name is called so many times, I swear it actually got worn out.

"You've been gone for hours!" Kili bawls, hugging my calf as I sit up "We were thinking to start up a search!"

"We were so worried!" Fili adds from around a mouth full of bread

"I wasn't." Nori adds but is hushed and brushed aside by the rest of the company

I am quickly helped off the table by Bofur and Bifur before I am tugged into a tight embrace by Ori and Bilbo. A few of the other dwarves pat me on my back before I notice Thorin, Beorn, Gandalf, and Balin are missing. Duke trots over and circles my legs, barking happily.

"I'm happy to see you all too." I reach down to pet his head when I feel the tug of the shackles

"Uh... W-where is the rest of our merry group?"

I keep my hands hidden, though I'm not sure how, as the group happily directs me to where I can find the missing members. They were all finishing lunch while the missing bunch decided on how to find the missing me. I locate them around the back of the house arguing... again. Clearing my throat, I get their attention.

"I hate to interrupt your little pow wow" I lift my clasped hands "But I have a slight problem."

The group starts over to me but Beorn moves much faster. He rushes to my side and drops to his knees to better access my hands and his face crumples into despair as he takes in the sight of the shackles. I look to his own and I know he must be very pained to see them on another. Shifting from foot to foot, I wait for the other three members to trot over. Thorin immediately sees my problem and bites out a curse.

"What have you done to yourself?" he drags a hand down his face but I don't get angry about it since its an understandable response "You were not missing for more than two hours and yet you are in such a state. What has happened?"

"You see... what had happened was" I hang my head but continuing unabated "I accidentally jumped to Thranduil's dressing chambers, had to give him a prediction, and then escaped when he tried to make me his personal seer by putting these shackles on me."

The miniature group does not seem pleased in the least. Gandalf grumbles about attracting trouble and tries to bespell the manacles off but they stick. Thorin tries cursing at them and Balin examines the keyhole before offering to go get Nori to try his luck. Beorn grabs the cuffs and tries to pull them apart but it puts too much strain on my wrists. He drops my hands with a sigh and collapses next to my side, looking forlornly at his own iron clad wrists.

"I would not have wished this on you, Thia." he eyeballs the handcuffs with disdain, taking my hand into his own and stroking the inside of my wrist gently "I would rip the elf king's head from his shoulders if he were close enough."

"You will find no objections from me." Thorin adds from his spot leaning against the house. Though he speaks in agreement, the dwarf looks like he wants to rip Beorn's head off too.

"Do not be so quick to shed blood." Gandalf scolds, leaning heavy on his staff "It will do us no good."
"The blood might serve as a lubricant." Beorn offers with a huff before bringing my hand to his mouth. He doesn't kiss it, just... breathes on it while smirking "About bearing my son-"

"I'll bury you first." Rumbles the king

"They're both very aggressive in there gore filled feelings for my predicament." I incline my head in mock thanks towards the wizard, ignoring the fleshy pistol whipping contest going on at my side "But let's try to look on the bright side."

"What bright side?" Thorin's growls only dissipate when Beorn releases my hand and I almost think he was jealous. Wouldn't that be something "What could possibly be the bright side in all of this, Miss Malcolmson?"

"I am able to 'jump' much further than before."

"Yes, congratulations," he responds uninterested, running his fingers through his hair. I bet it's soft... Come on me. Get your mind out of there "Why is that any better than what you could do before?"

"Jeeze Mister grumpy butt, I'm the one in chains. Calm down." His eyebrows rise and Gandalf chuckles. Probably the butt thing "It will be useful in evading enemies such as orcs and you know, a dragon?"

"Hn." he responds without commitment
Balin arrives with Nori and unfortunately the rest of the group as well. Who knew that dwarves were such tag-a-longs? They begin to take bets on how long it will take the thief to remove the iron bracelets, which he only attempts prove that he can and not for any love of me. Unfortunately, no one wins the bet because after an hour of trying it is determined that they are apparently impossible to remove without the actual keys... Which apparently are about a month away. 'One step forward, two steps back.' I plop down on the floor dejectedly and drop my head into my hands.

"I can try to go back and find the keys." I mumble into my palms "Not that I know where to look."

"I would not suggest it." Gandalf counsels sagely, placing a comforting hand on my shoulder "King Thranduil is most likely prepared for you to reappear."

"So what am I supposed to do? Wait a whole month?!"

"What do you mean, Miss Thia?" Balin wonders, not realizing I made a prediction. I hiss at the mistake but decide it's not worth trying to hide "Why would you need a month?"

"We are going to get completely... utterly... hopelessly lost in the forest for about 2 weeks or so after about two or so." I ramble off, not even caring at the frowning faces around me "We'll then be found by the elves and taken prisoners. THAT'S what I mean, papa."

"Captured by elves!" Dwalin spits "I'll chop off-"

"Why did you not tell me this information immediately?!" Thorin rages, interrupting his cousin. He paces the length of the house in agitation as I watch "We will not go anywhere near his halls! There must be another way."

"Not really. Your kingdom is on the other side of HIS forest. You have to cut through if you want to get there in time."

"There MUST be another way."

"Check your map and tell me what you WON'T find, then. On that note, what am I suppose to do until then?" Completely ignoring the snarl from the dwarf I lift my shackled hands and shake them at Gandalf "I can't just walk around like this for the next month, let alone live the rest of my life with my hands like this."

"Cut the middle chain."
"Huh?" I turn to Beorn who had just spoken. I blink up at him by the far end of the house as he makes his way back over to us "Even if I cut the chain, the cuffs would still be there."

"I am well aware." he holds an ax in his large hands and I feel my chest burn at what he is saying. It should have been obvious before, it was obvious enough to him, but I shake my head regardless "This is the best thing we can do for now."

"But I..." my voice is thick with emotion but I'm not going to cry. I'm not but that doesn't stop me from wanting to. Looking down at my bound hands I fruitlessly try to slip them out of the cuffs "I-I don't... I don't want to wear them... They're heavy a-a-and they hurt and... No. I-"

"There are no alternatives." Nori cuts me off harshly. I know I must sound like a spoiled child but I can not help it. The very idea of wearing chains for the rest of my life is... is... not appealing in the least "This is the best plan we've got, so deal with it."

"Though it could be said with more tact on either end, both Nori and Miss Thia are correct." I duck my head at Balin's words, knowing they are true but not liking them anyway "The simplest plan is not always the most desirable."

Beorn walks over to me and holds drag, half gently guides my dazed form to his log chopping block and positions my hands in place while he retrieves his axe. Staring at my hands, I shake in fear of what could happen if he misses. 'How would I explain a missing limb to my parents?' The company gathers and a few offer to do the deed instead but the skin changer refuses.

"I will do it." he states simply "No one else can imagine the importance of this moment."

"... Do not miss." Thorin agrees with a warning

Then to my surprise, the king kneels behind me and envelopes me in an embrace. I understand as he holds my arms that he is keeping me steady so I don't reflexively try to retract them when Beorn swings. Although I haven't fully forgiven him, I am thankful for his presence at my back. His breath on my cheek is like a warm breeze and I close my eyes before turning to bury my face under his chin.

"A-Alright." I try to steady my breaths but it's really hard when someone is swinging an ax at you "Let's do this."

Hearing Beorn heft up the ax, I moan softly and Thorin tightens his arms around me. I shriek when the ax comes down over the chain with a shuddering 'thunk' as it settles into the wood. I stay motionless, buried in Thorin's beard and coat, until I am sure the deed is done. Gently wiggling my fingers to be sure they are still there, I crack my eyes to peer at them through tear blurred eyes. I let out a breath upon finding all ten fingers still attached. Even so, I can not feel relieved as the weight of the manacles is still very present. Beorn tears off the remaining chains, only leaving behind a single link on each of the cuffs themselves.

"Thank you." I say, unable to offer any other words

"Do not thank me." clenching his hand around the metal, the bear man sounds just as depressed as I do "I have cursed you to the same fate as I. There are no thanks for that."

"There are worse things that could have happened." I try to think of any but my saddened mind offers no examples, so I fake it till I make it "Tonight is our last night here before we head off. Let's have a party to celebrate our friendship!"

"A celebration?" he questions
"Friendship?" Thorin utters from beside my ear causing my belly to warm

"A great idea!" Bofur catches on to my plan quickly; that or he just loves to party "A lovely plan, lass."

"Well, there has to be ale." Gloin contributes

"And food." Bombur adds "Don't forget the food."

"Will there be any chips?"

"Yes, yes, yes." My mood is only half faked now "I will specifically make some chips for you, Ori."

"The proposal is acceptable." Beorn admits walking away "I will gather the mead."

"Do not forget music, little one."

I turn my head to Bifur and nod to his suggestion. The group begins discussing the prospect of the upcoming festivities. A party will surely need music to keep the mood light, and they plan to deliver. I can only hope that the dwarves don't get too reckless and break anything. I won't stop Beorn from throwing them out for the night. 'I probably wouldn't have let them in in the first place if it were my house.' Thorin lets out a sigh that tickles my ear again and I quickly bring my hand up to cover it while struggling to get up. The clinking of the left over chain link on my new accessories swiftly halts my motions. Bringing the ugly bangles up to my face, my mood sours again.

"There is... something I need to tell you."

Thorin's voice vibrates through my back let a content kitten... or a washing machine. 'I... love the smell of clean laundry.' I give him my attention, as does everyone else within ear shot. It's obvious that they are interested but don't want to get caught staring. Fili and Kili look like their eyes are going to pop out from excitement, worrying me as to what the dwarf needs to say.

"You... I..." Catching sight of the eavesdropping company, Thorin glares at them before standing and swiftly pulling me to my feet "Ahem. Once Erebor is restored I will have a key created to unlock these bonds."

"Really?" my own voice sounds so tiny and uncontrollably desperate "What if... what if only the original key works?"

"Then I will personally march into Mirkwood, find Thranduil, and make him give me the keys."

"And if that doesn't work?" fingering the lone link, I shrug nervously "What if he'll only give you them if you ask nicely."

"...Then... I'll ask nicely."

"Really? I mean... I'll ask nicely too but..." I ask again, perplexed. I'd have thought the king would rather chew my arm off than ask Thranduil for anything "Do you promise to try?"

"I would find it easy to seek audience with Mahal but if that is what it takes, so be it."

"Cross your heart, and hope to die?"

"... Why would I do that?"
"I-its an oath used where I am from." I turn to fully face him and he hangs onto to every word "You broke the last one so I am taking extra precautionary measures."

"If you are able to free yourself, is my oath broken? If my word is broken... will this action take place?"

"No and indeed, respectively." I confirm with gusto, really getting into it "This is almost as high of a promise as a pinky swear."

"Pinky... swear?"

"That is reserved for higher promises of the utmost importance." I explain, inwardly smiling at his worried eyes "Are you ready, willing, and able to take this oath?"

"If it will give you ease of heart" he stands straighter and I follow as he bows his head "then let it be so."

"Do you, Thorin Oakenshield, King under the mountain, son of Thrain, son of Thror, cross your heart and hope to die by sticking needles in your eyes if in this moment you speak a lie to free me from my bonds by the methods aforementioned?"

"Balin!" the king suddenly calls out "Come bare witness to this."

Well color me surprised. A childhood swear has turned into an all out verbal contract. I didn't think he'd take it so seriously, but I'll be damned if I back out now. It's as binding as I know how to do anyway. The elder comes over in a very professional manner and stands on the right side of the king. Without even being called, Dwalin follows and stands on Thorin's left. The king reaches for my hands but pauses and silently asks for my permission. I hesitate slightly before raising my hands, ever cautious. Encircling the large fetters in his own hands, he accepts the oath.

"I, Thorin Oakenshield, King under the mountain, son of Thrain, son of Thror, cross my heart and hope to die by sticking needles in your eyes if in this moment I speak a lie to free you from your bonds by the methods aforementioned."

"It has been seen." Balin confirms without prompt

"So it shall be done." Dwalin agrees

I reach forward, careful not to dislodge his hands, and cross his heart. I then bring up the heals of my palm and softly press them into his eyes. By this time I am now just winging it but even in it's randomness, I mean it all. Removing my hands from his eyes, I bow my head and fold my hands as if I were praying.

"Then by the power vested in me by the guardians of this world" and God, and all the children who have ever held this promise true "I now pronounce this oath validated. You may kiss- I ... uh... That part-"

Thorin bows his head and brings my hands to his mouth and brushes my knuckles with his lips. I stand leaning back, head tilted, eyes wide open and probably looking like an internet meme: 'I ain't even mad.' Thorin's eye twinkle in amusement and his lips curl at the corners before he blows lightly on my knuckles. If my eyes could pop out my head, I'm sure they would. 'This cocky bastard!' He acts like an antagonizing jerk for the first half of the trip and now he's flirt central. What in the world is happening around here?! Are there aphrodisiacs in the water?! I'm about to give him a piece of my mind when he is saved by Duke. Did I say 'saved,' because I meant cursed. The dog is not too pleased with our prolonged contact and decides to take a quick tinkle on
Thorin's boot. The dwarf leaps away from me and Duke struts to my side proudly. The dwarf's face darkens with annoyance.

"Don't be mad Thorin." I pet my friend and he preens at the attention "He was just trying to seal the deal in his own way. Oh! Watch out for-"

"Gah, my hip!"

"The sheep..."

"More like their marking their territory!" Bofur yells effectively ending the conversation as the animals circle me happily before bounding away "Let us know when yer done makin' eyes at the king."

"I was not making eyes at anyone!" I return, ducking my head in embarrassment "We were making promises."

"Of loooove no doubt."

"Oi!" Dwalin cuts in, saving me from having to strangle the dwarf "Don't ye have some pipe to smoke, preferably somewhere else?"

The two get into a light hearted argument that the whole groups joins in on quickly enough. I make to go inside but Thorin catches my arm and gently turns me around. I frown in confusion when he says nothing. Waiting expectantly doesn't seem to encourage him so I lightly shake my head.

"Whats the matter?"

"I will keep my word." he fingers the shackles "I will not have you remain like this."

"Then I thank you. If I'm unable to help myself, you're the next best thing I have." I try to keep my tone even, not wanting to be accused of visually molesting the king again "I hope that this oath is better than the one you lost and the one you wish you never made."

"To be sure." he confirms stiffly "I thought you forgave me for those."

"I did." I shake my head again, attempting to find my calm "I do... I'm trying."

"But you have not forgotten." I shake my head a third time, annoying even myself with my lack of words "Do not. Remember; it will help me keep this promise."

He walks away and that stupid tug happens in my chest but I push it away again. Rubbing the spot in an effort to ignore the way my chest heats under my palm, I watch the company disperse. I know exactly what this pain is, at least... I think I do, but here and now is not the place or time. Too much can happen and I'm really bad with spontaneous action. It usually leads to things like going on adventures to slay dragons and... pinky swears. 'So no more heart tugs!' I shake my head to myself and begin to walk towards the house once more when I hear Bilbo softly call me.

"Miss Thia?"

"Oh, Bilbo." I sigh at his appearance. I can always expect serenity with the hobbit, which I desperately need as the moment. "Just call me Thia. You can 'miss' me when I'm gone."

"Al... Alright." he stammers like he hasn't done in a while, alerting me to something afoot "Thia then."
"What's the matter, Bilbo?" I ask concerned "You're acting a little strange."

"Can I talk to you about..." he shifts his eyes nervously "about what happened in the mountain?"

My friend wants to confide in me for the very first time. Sure, I'm having a pretty hard time myself but I know that his problem is much larger than an ugly pair of bracelets. I grasp his shoulder and guide him past all the dwarves and into the house. Checking to make sure the coast is clear, I pull him into my room. Or Beorn's room, depending on who is in the bed.

"What is it Bilbo?"

"There was something... something I found in the goblin tunnels..."

"What did you find?" I ask cautiously watching him finger his pocket

"... My courage."

"Did you bring me here to lie to my face?" I express authoritatively before shrugging with a light smile "You know it will do you no good."

"I-I-I..." he stutters, horribly embarrassed "I found a ring..."

"I know."

He looks surprised but then lowers his eyes to his pocket once more. He caresses it almost lovingly before gripping the fabric tightly. I patiently wait for him to loosen his grip and dip his hand into his pocket. Slowly he reaches inside and pulls out a small gold band. It's not at all what I remember it to look like. Its much thinner and encrusted with diamonds chips set in a spiral shape. It actually looks more like...

"My ring!"

~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

A.N:

So just for the record, I am going to list her gifts from the Valar. Just for those of you who are energy conservationists and don't want to go back to search for them. ;) For now, most of her gift marks are invisible because she isn't using them. Alternatively, some are internal or not on her physical body. Teleportation and her developing seer powers are NOT gifts from the Valar. They come from within her but can only fully be used in middle earth for various reasons I haven't given yet, but allude to her heavenly father watching her back.

Mahal==========braid and bead=The purpose hasn't been revealed yet. Or has it?

Yavanna========mark around stomach area== The purpose is for protection. But of what?

Manwê and Varda== language =The purpose is for ignoring the language barrier. On whose side?

Ulmo==========mark on hairline =====Protects Thia from water and all creatures within it. To what end?

Oromê==========mark on hairline= Protects Thia from forests and all creatures within
it. *What if they leave?*

Mandos==========invisible mark on soul ==== She can escape death one, and only one, time. *What of her body?*

Nienna==========mark on heart ========= Heart ache and courage. *What defines those?*
Chapter 34

"Oh my gosh, Bilbo!" I jump up and down like a toddler on Christmas "My ring! You found it!"

"I did?"

"Yes, yes. Oh goodness gracious, yes!" I drag him into a quick hug before bouncing again "I'm so happy. I can't wait to show Beorn. Oh, and Thori-"

"No! You can't!" his sudden outburst stuns me into surprised silence. Watching him silently causes the hobbit to fidget at the attention "I... I mean, you said you forgave him. You should not bring this up now. I-it would not be polite."

"Oh." I calm myself, allowing reason to seep into my excitement. Bringing this up to Thorin would surely open up a can of worms... or whoopass "You're right, it'd be rubbing it in his face. That would be terribly rude of me."

"Yes. Rude." he vigorously nods in agreement, causing his light hair to fly every which way "You two just made up. It would be better if I... held on to it... Just for a little while. U-Until the adventure is over."

"You want to keep my ring?"

"Just until we reach the mountain, you see." he closes his hand around the band protectively as if he were afraid it might shatter if the world saw it "We wouldn't want you to lose it again, hm?"

I frown deeply at the situation at hand before stepping away and studying the hobbit seriously. He shifts under my gaze and I suddenly remember what he actually found under goblin town. 'One ring to rule them all. The one ring... is mine? Cool!' I know I should be worried about the fact that I have been carrying the embodiment of evil for the past ten years, not to mention how I got it in the first place, but I'm too astounded to care. I have actually become a factual part of the story! Bilbo shifts again and I'm brought back to the issue at hand; Mister hobbit has my ring.

"Bilbo... I consider you a very good friend of mine."

"...Th-Thank you." he stammers in confusion, unsure of what is happening "But what-"

"I just want you to know that no matter what happens next" I pause for emphasis, pressing my lips in a firm line and raising my eye brows "I am only doing what is best for everyone."

"Thia, what are-"
"I'm going to need you to hand over my ring."

His face freezes in confusion before it quickly melts into something much much scarier. He hunches over in an attempt to use his entire body to cover my ring as his mouth opens and he bares his teeth at me with a feral hiss.

"You can't have it." he snarls; words dripping with malice and scorn "It's mine!"

"I thought you might say that." I sigh before crouching into a stance of my own "However that ring is mine and there is no way I'm letting it corrupt you."

That is all the warning I give him before I tackle the small hobbit with all I'm worth. We fall onto the bed and he tries to crawl away but I grab his hairy foot and yank him back to me. Not at all pleased, the hobbit shrieks at me in wordless anger. Flipping him onto his back, Bilbo takes one of his large feet a kicks me in the stomach making me wince. The air whooshs out of my lungs but I dodge the second blow, not wishing to take another gut shot.

"Mine, mine. It's mine!" He cries out, attempting to scoot away from me "I won't let you have it. It's mine!"

Scrabbling up his body, I quickly pin the smaller creature beneath me. Straddling his waist, I make quick work of prying open his tiny fist, ignoring the bite of his nails. He buckles and growls beneath me before the ring finally falls from his hand. It bounces off the bed and I dive after it only for my head to be snapped back painfully. With my neck bend at an awkward angle, I can see that Bilbo has a fist full of my hair and is using it as a tether to keep me away from the ring.

"No hair pulling!" I cry out in pain as exorcism needed Bilbo gathers more of the curly locks "That's fighting dirty!"

"Don't touch my precious!"

He gives my hair a mighty tug and of course my head follows behind it, causing my to fall backwards and almost off the bed. I reach up and try to untangle his fingers from the length but he has a good grip. Deciding that I've had enough, I fight a little dirty myself and hope for the best. Spinning to face the hobbit, I sucker punch him in the stomach before solidly headbutting him in the face. He immediately lets go of my hair to hold his stomach and now bleeding nose. I want to rush over to help him but I know I need to do something about the ring first. Dashing over to the band, I slip it on my left hand quickly before approaching the bloody hobbit cautiously.

"Bilbo..." I grab a towel and offer it to him, cautious in case he tries to jump me again "Are you alright now?"

"Ugh... what..." he presses the towel absently against his face in a dazed manner "What happened?"

"You found my ring and it drove you mad." I explain without remorse, but smiling gently to lessen the impact "When you wouldn't give it back, I decided to take it by force. We tussled. You lost. The end."

"But why?" he is so confused, poor thing "I don't... You're bleeding! Did I hurt you?"

"I'm not bleeding, just you." I say after touching my sore and blood stained forehead but finding no wound "You tried to hurt me but-"

"Oh Thia I'm so sorry!" he drops his towel, ignoring the fresh blood that leaks onto, once pristine, his shirt "How could I-"
"Bilbo, its alright." I raise my hands and they clink along with my calming gestures "I understand what happened. It wasn't your fault."

"You do?" he questions dazed, as I hand him the towel again "Because I don't."

"Gollum. You remember him." he shivers but nods "He was a hobbit once, about 500 years ago."

"That can not be!" he shuffles towards me and I wince at the black eyes he's going to have come morning "Hobbits do not live that long. I do not know what he was, but he was not a hobbit!"

"The ring turned him into that... thing. It twisted him; physically, emotionally... mentally." I lift the towel and replace it on his face lightly, too disturbed to just stare at his quickly swelling cheeks. Hobbits are clearly not made for combat "It would turn you too if given the time needed. Already started."

"And you?" he asks a good question to which I just blink at. He points to my hand where the ring rests "Will it turn you?"

"No, Bilbo." I assure him, though I don't know why I know that it won't but I know. I just know it won't. Or rather, it can't "Anyway, I need to discuss this with Gandalf. Not to mention, I promised to make Ori some chips."

~~~~~~~~~Shishi~~~~~~~~~~

After we clean up ourselves and the room, Bilbo and I split up. I head to the kitchen and he goes of to search for our wizard friend. I begin to chop potatoes while I wait, having nothing better to do.

"Chop chop chop, go the heads on the block."

"That's horribly morbid, earth walker"

"Ah, look who it is." I giggle at my own joke "How are you doing, Who?"

"The wind carries me well today." he answers, either missing or not bothering to respond to my jest "And yourself?"

"Uh... The earth stands steady beneath my feet."

"I am glad to find you well." he flies over to perch on my shoulder as I continue my work "Will you make good on your promise now?"

"What promise?"

"You promised to sing for me the day you first arrived." he coos low in his throat "A song about the wind and its colors."

"Ah yes, colors of the wind. I did say I would, didn't I?" he hums in agreement and expectation "Alright then. I've got time. But first you must answer my question."

"Which question would that be?"

"The day my company arrived and you viciously attacked me" I ignore his affronted fluttering "you said that your 'assumption was correct.' What assumption were you talking about?"
"Hmmm, just that your thoughts were filled with Beorn."

"Well yea... I mean he was just there..." I'm not good with this sort of thing. Though what this sort of thing is, I don't know "I tend to think of people I'm around, you know? Its only polite..."

"So there is hope for the other."

"Other?"

"... You earth walkers are a strange breed."

"Hey!" I cry out as he pecks at my bead "If you don't cut that out, I'm not singing."

"My apologies, mistress." he mock bows in the cutest fashion "Please do not punish me."

"Alright alright. Enough of that."

Without further adue I begin to sing one of my favorite disney songs of all time. I start off low, its almost a hum. I only start to get louder as the tempo picks up. I pet Who when it mentions creatures and he buries his head into my hand.

"But I know every rock and tree and creature
Has a life, has a spirit, has a name"

"has a name" he hoots in echo

With each verse he either echos me or actually answers. Its an amazingly adorable rendition of the song and I feel my heart lighten with each passing line.

"You think the only people who are people
Are the people who look and think like you"

"Like you."

"But if you walk the footsteps of a stranger
You'll learn things you never knew you never knew"

"Never knew."

I'm reminded of the scene with the bear. I was so happy John Smith didn't kill the mama bear, or else the babies would have died. 'Beorn will have a son.' I nearly pause in the song when the thought crosses my mind. I know it's true, Beorn does have a son before he dies. However, I didn't know that before now. It's not part of the movie and I don't remember reading it in the book. I shouldn't be able to know it, but I do. Accepting that maybe there is some truth to my cover story, I smile a bit wider.

"Have you ever heard the wolf cry to the blue corn moon."

"No I have not."

"Or asked the grinning bobcat why he grinned?"

"Is it because he's happy?"
"Can you sing with all the voices of the mountains?"
"I've never tried"

"Can you paint with all the colors of the wind?"
"Yes I can!"

"Can you paint with all the colors of the wind?"

"The wind!"

Who leaps from my shoulder and flies out the door. I lower my knife and follow after him because wherever he's going is sure to be a ton of fun. I chase him out the house and we circle the dwarves who look on in amusement.

"Come run the hidden pine trails of the forest"

"forest"

"Come taste the sunsweet berries of the Earth"

"the earth"

"Come roll in all the riches all around you"

"round you"

"And for once, never wonder what they're worth"

I grab the closest dwarf, who just so happens to be Kili, and swing him into a dance with me. He laughs openly and we gain momentum until I think my feet may fly off the floor. He sets me right and I pick dance partners like berries.

"The rainstorm and the river are my brothers"

"The heron and the otter are my friends"

"Are we friends?" Who asks excitedly

"And we are all connected to each other

In a circle, in a hoop that never ends"

"Ever?"

"How high will the sycamore grow?"

"I... don't know"

"If you cut it down, then you'll never know

And you'll never hear the wolf cry to the blue corn moon"

"Whats that?"

"For whether we are white or copper skinned"
"or feathered!"

"We need to sing with all the voices of the mountains

We need to paint with all the colors of the wind"

"Wind! Wind!"

"You can own the Earth and still

All you'll own is Earth until

You can paint with all the colors of the wind"

Applause crashes into my little sing song world and it startles me so badly I nearly collapse. Who flies over and rests in my hair, hiding beneath the messy updo. 'Daddy always said that crazy people had birds in their hair... and Radagast proves that true.' Plucking the small owl from his place, I let him rest in the crook of my arm as I bow.

"How did you get the bird to hoot along with you?" Bombur asks, obviously curious

"He did it on his own." I begin to go finish my work, not feeling so brave anymore "He's not a pet I can teach tricks to."

"That's a pretty song ye've got there lass." Bofur smiles "Will you be singing tonight too?"

"Only if inspiration hits!" I say running back into the house

"Thank you for the song." Who hoots

"It was no problem." I reply quickly, catching my breath "Now fly off, I've got work to do."

He does as instructed and happily flies off into the barn area. I make my way back into the kitchen and finish chopping my now soggy potatoes which sizzle horribly in the oil. I'm nearly done frying and salting them when Bilbo finally arrives with Gandalf. After delivering the wizard, he scuttles off to lick his wounds in private. Gandalf walks into the kitchen and I wish Beorn had a low chandelier for the wizard to knock his head against just because.

"My dear, I hear you have something of importance to discuss with me?"

"Indeed, its about my ring." I wipe my hands on a hand towel and give the elder my attention "I found it."

"Ah well that is wonderful." He smiles nodding "Now you-"

"There is one problem." I cut him off as he takes a seat "A really big problem."

"Well my dear." he huffs sitting up straighter "If it's damaged or-"

"One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them" I hold out my hand and his eyes grow dark as his finally understands what I'm carrying "One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness, bind them."

"Thia Malcolmson." he says my name so coldly that a shiver actually runs through me "Where did you get that?"
"It's mine, Gandalf." I twirl the band around in my palm nervously before slipping it on "My ring is the ring of power."
Chapter 35

The temperature drops dramatically despite the heat of the kitchen as Gandalf grows to fill the room and I struggle not to cower from his frightening form. A clueless Ori comes wandering around the corner, only to stop short at the sight. He looks confused at the wizard's back before shifting his eyes to me in open wonder. All it takes is a slight jerk of my head and the dwarf wisely high tails it out of the vicinity.

"You are sure?"

"Yeah but a little confirmation wouldn't hurt."

I do not fear the wizard, even now, but I am overwhelmed with the need to exercise caution. 'Even wizards aren't immune to this thing's power but the effects seem to be lower when I wear it; lucky me.' I watch attentively as Gandalf virtually glides over to me and reaches forward to take my hand. Bringing my fingers up to his face, he examines the ring closely while ignoring me all together. His eyes glaze over with fascination, uncertainty, and inquisitiveness but I only snatch my hand out of his own when he tries to tug the band off.

"That's enough looking for now." I tuck my hands behind my back and twirl the ring around my finger to settle it back into place "What do you make of it?"

"You possess his ring." he states plainly as he tries to recover from his momentary brush with an evil lust of power "How... Do you know the weight you carry?"

"I vaguely know of it's importance." my eyes begin to burn again and I painfully spout that which I know that I didn't know moments before. "It was forged in SA 1600 in the fires of Mount Doom by Sauron in order to control the 19 rings created before hand. Those 19 were divided up:" Suddenly I begin violently coughing around my words "-Shre nazg golugranu kilm-nudu, Ombi kuzd-durbagu gundum-ishi, Nugu gurunkulu bard gurutu.-"

"Miss Malcolmson-"

"-Ash burz-durbagu burzum-ishi, Daqhburz-ishi makha gulshu darulu.-" It's like blades running up and down my throat but I can't stop "-Ash nazg durbatulûk, ash nazg gimbatul-"

"Miss-"

"- Ash nazg thrakatulûk, agh burzum-ishi krimpatul. Daqhburz-ishi makha gulshu daru-"
"SILENCE, YOUNG SEER!"

Gandalf's hand covers my mouth before the vile words can finish pouring out. It feels as though my very soul was being emptied out with each word I spoke and yet I couldn't stop them. The wizard continues holding my face as he mutters under his breath some kind of incantation. I don't lessen the burn in my eyes but my scorched tongue cools slowly so I am thankful for whatever he is doing. It takes a few minutes but soon the wizard is able to remove his hand without the pain returning.

"I-I don't know what that was about..."

"Something, or someone, was attempting to use your gift as a way to speak forgotten things back into existence."

"Gandalf, I-"

"A worry for another time, my dear." settling himself back at the table tiredly, the sorcerer inclines his head for me to do so as well. Drained, I comply without much of a fuss "Now, continue."

"But-"

"This is your gift, Miss Malcolmson. Harness it. Control it. Do not let it control you."

"... It... The ring... holds Sauron's power; it is him and he is it." Unlike before, I do not feel overwhelmed though there is a sense of urgency to get the words out "It was borne to him for 92 score and ten years before being taken by Isildur."

I bite my tongue as I feel whatever sight I'm supposed to have try to take over again. Before now, I'd not known a 'Score' to represent 20 years, merely a way to decide a winner. Standing; I pace the floor nervously. Reigning in my breath, I press forward while trying to remain in control of a gift that apparently has been inside me this whole time

"F-for 2 years he held the band before he lost it and lost it remained for 123 score and 1 year until the Stoore hobbit, Déagol, found it. He bore it for mere minutes before his cousin Smeagol killed him to possess it. Smeagol held it for 23 score and 18 years- mmmmm... 478 years before it was recovered by Bilbo Baggins who held it for-"

I slam my hand over my mouth to stop the fountain of information from pouring out, even as Gandalf tries to assure me that it is different than last time. The force causes me to stumble back and nearly sink my other hand into the pan of hot oil. Quick reflexes on Gandalf's part saves me from an untimely injury. I continue to choke on the words that have yet to stop bubbling out of my throat and the wizard guides me back to my chair where we wait for the tornado of information to pass. I keep my hand firmly in place but the knowledge filters into my mind nonetheless, though this much... this part I already knew. 'I also know I'm going to have a major headache when this is over.' I finally stop gagging on my words and rest my forehead against the cool table top.

"You will become accustomed to it in time, as did a great seer before you. A good friend of mine, Lady-"

"Galadriel. Yes... Still haven't met her yet..."

"Yes well... perhaps you would want to brush up on your definition of 'vague' before you do, hm?" Gandalf raise an amused eyebrow and I can only shrug in exhaustion "It is of the utmost importance that you keep this new information to your self. You are a deep pool of knowledge and I can not decide how the future will be affected by you."
"I know, Gandalf." I lift my head and try not to sound too pathetic but it's pretty difficult when you're a newly appointed glorified fortune teller "I am well aware of how dangerous I am, even more so now. I will be careful."

"See that you are, my dear." he reaches out to pat my hand but shifts to my shoulder instead "... Why did you not include yourself on the list of ring bearers?"

"I don't think I ever really held it," the old wizard tilts his head in confusion and I return the expression "I'm working on a theory. Would you assist me?"

"...Alright."

"Tell me what you see." I hold out my hand and allow him to see the ring

"My dear, you know-"

"Describe what you see, please."

"If you insist." he turns his attention to my hand "I see a plain gold band, secretly harboring great evil."

"What you see is the ring of power." I retract my hand and look down at my ring finger "I do not see that."

"What then, do you see? Your sight is a valuable asset."

"I see a thin gold ring with delicate diamonds chips." I place my hand on my lap, mentally laughing at the irony of it all. My purity ring is meant to invoke impure events "I think we aren't seeing the same thing, because... it isn't the same thing."

"I'm not sure that I understand."

"I am from a different world, as I maaaay have previously mentioned when we met. There is no One ring where I am from. How can I see or be affected by something that doesn't exist? I can't." I wait for the wizard to nod before continuing "I carry it, but at the same time I don't. You must understand that this whole world is... a make believe story in my home. One thing you learn about a story is that it is always current, regardless of when you read it."

"A story that runs on a separate time line then your own." I nod at his comment liking how fast he is catching on "So our world's coexist in the same, yet different times."

"Yes and by that definition, I was born before, after, and during the total combined existence of this world. Stay with me, I'm going up another level." The wizard furrows his brows and leans forward as I run inception all over this kitchen "In a way I possess this ring, I have always possessed this ring and I will always possess this ring. I am the true owner but I am not he who made it. Nor does my power reside in it."

"When you entered this world something must have shifted. The one ring and your ring are both one and the same as well as two separate entities." He catches on, stroking his beard at the insane logic of it all. I could be wrong. I could be 1000 miles in the wrong direction but worse case scenario... is that I'm right "You control an immeasurable amount of power."

"Yet, I can never use it. I think this is the gift given to me by Yavanna; To protect." I upturn my hands in a half shrug, having no other way to describe whats going on "I am the carrier of the ring. This way, I can actually protect the whole of middle earth without endangering myself."
"I see. As long as you remain in possession of the ring..."

"Sauron's power is safely contained and limited." I bounce in happiness

"What will happen once ye leave to go back to yer world?"

Oh boy, oh boy. I just couldn't have a nice quiet conversation about the fate of the world as a whole between me and a wizard without being interrupted by a busy body. Is it too much to ask for people to just mind their own business around here? Nori leans against the doorway and intrudes on our conversation, clearly having come to investigate what sent his brother running for the hills. I slowly turn my head away from him to talk myself out of teleporting him into Mirkwood and leaving him there. I am not nearly calm enough when he saunters over and slams his hands on the table.

"What will happen to this world once ye grow tired of playin' 'little miss useless adventurer'?!"

"My job is to get you guys to Erebor in one piece." A lie; my job is too make sure they stay in one piece after they get there "I'm not a guardian of this world, or even a resident. Are you so incapable of fending for yourself, useless little son of Korin?"

I can not help but return the barb he threw at me. I have no need to explain myself to the dwarf, nor should I feel insecure by his dismissal of my usefulness. 'Like he's one to talk. He's a thief and can't even be the burglar of the group!' He growls lowly in his throat and I thumb my nose at him. He rounds the table and stands before me in anger, pointing a finger in my face and shouting.

"Ye know nothin' of my position, girl!" he waves his hand in my face as though he were drawing a very vengeful picture in the air "The only reason yer here is because His Majesty is interested in what ye have between yer legs. Ye've lain on yer back enough. Leave! If it-"

"Shhhhhh." reaching out I place my hand over his mouth, as is the habit in this room, and a finger to my own "No."

"Wha-"

"Excuse us, Gandalf. Nori and I have an appointment to make."

I 'jump' myself and Nori far into the sky above Beorn's house. The dwarf struggles behind my hand before he snatches his face away from me. We fall a few dozen feet before I 'jump' us higher and higher until we are falling up instead of down. This is the most control I've been able to exhibit over this gift and the more I do it now, the easier it is. The dwarf begins hollering his head off with a colorful symphony of curses and I smile cruelly. Dwarves seem to bring out the... not nice side of me.

"What's the matter, Nori?" I ask, mockingly singing his name "Is this too much of an adventure for you?"

"You're insane!" he struggles away from me and I let him

"Well gee wiz, buddy. If that's how you feel, I'll leave you to it." I cross my hands over my chest, totally nonchalant about the force of gravity pulling me towards the earth. Ah... I remember my first time hurtling towards the earth. Kind of how I met Thorin. And Azog. Shivering, I toss a glance to the dwarf "Find your own way down. See you at the bottom."

The dwarrow immediately understands my meaning and makes an attempt to air swim back to me. It's hilarious watching a dwarf do the butterfly stroke in midair. I think everyone has a mean streak
but mines always include someone potentially dying. 'Am... Am I a psychopath?' Lord, protect my future husband. Nori's face is the picture of pure terror and I feel bad until I remember his words. I wave goodbye sweetly before 'jumping' back to the kitchen.

"It was really good to talk to you Gandalf." I walk over and turn off the stove before grabbing Ori's chips "I have to go now though, I want Ori to have some of the chips I made."

"What do you mean?" He asks from his spot " What did you do?"

"Who? Me? Nothing... I just thought Nori would like to try sky diving." I say walking out the door "I forgot to give him a parachute though."

I walk out the house and peer into the sky. I see Nori slowly hurtling toward the earth but he's still just a speck. Taking my time, I walk over to Ori and Dori and provide them with the gift. They dig in, totally oblivious to the extreme fear their brother is experiencing right now. Gandalf hobbles out the house and searches the sky, much like I did and upon finding the dwarf, he looks at me disapprovingly.

"Miss Thia..."

"Alright alright alright." I throw my hands up in the air because I just don't care. Which is a lie... I do care "I'll get him."

I 'jump' to the screaming dwarf and as soon as he notices me, he attaches himself to my side like a leech. His face is streaked in tears running the wrong way and his hair is whipping me in the face violently. His closeness makes me want to push him off but I don't really want the guy dead. I allow us to fall a little while longer before 'jumping' into the entrance of the house. 'I always wanted to go skydiving but back home... no need to tempt gravity.' As soon as our feet touch the ground, Nori collapses and throws up all over the floor. Bending down, I pull the hair out his face like a good friend and rub his back soothingly. Once he finishes, I make sure he understands.

"Now, what have we learned?"

"That ye are a crazy bi-"

"What was that?" I hold my hand over my ear "Did you say you want to go again?"

"NO!" he cries out before quieting down "I-I... I said I was sorry."

"Foor?" I prompt as if he were a child

"...Bein' rude. Don't send me up there again... please."

"Now was that so hard?" I smile at him "I feel better. How about you?"

"Ugh."

"Great!" I grin as he looks about to barf again before I drop my act of excessive joy and lean into his face "If you ever make a reference to any part of my body in a way that isn't respectful, I'll make this fall seem like a trip on a pebble."

"Ye can't..."

"I will." Standing up, I crack my spine "Get it?"

"...Got it."
"Good. I'll do my part in all this for the greater good but it's not my responsibility to save the world, Nori." That's someone else's job and I'm not going to steal their thunder. I turn and strut out the house again to visit the wizard "See, Gandalf? I can be nice."

"You can not 'sky dive' all the people who insult you." he lectures

"Of course I can't." I agree wholeheartedly "But I can make sure at least one person won't do it again anytime soon."

"Hm..." the grey pilgrim seems unconvinced, giving me a side glance "Dwarves are a stubborn bunch."

"Then I'll fit right right in."

Nori walks out the house a few minutes later and takes a seat near his brothers. To the plain eye, he looks just as aloof as ever but I can see the shaking of his limbs and the paleness of his face. I smile brightly when he glances in my direction, before he quickly averts his gaze. 'You know what they say; If you can't make them love you, make them fear you.' I'll apologize later though, I don't want it to be spread around that I dump guys out of the sky. Especially after I punched Fili in the jewels back in Rivendell. And got accused of bumping uglies with Beorn. And after I locked the group outside and made them think they were going to die. 'I may have some issues...' This should probably stay between us...

"What did you do to Nori?"

"Ah, Fili!" I flinch at the sudden appearance of the blonde dwarf, quickly raising my hands like a ninja. He just stares at me, seeming to not care that I nearly karate chopped him the throat "W-what makes you think I did something?"

"You're grinning and he is cowering." Kili answers from my other side. This time I do chop the guest in the throat, not that he even falters in his statement "It makes us wonder what you did to him."

"He disrespected me." I answer holding my head up before rolling it to the side in a half shrug "So I... made him regret it."

"What did he do?" the two ask simultaneously, crowding me from both sides

"He... Well...Its between he and I, so back off."

"Ohhhh, a secret." Kili opens his mouth in a large 'O' form

"We wouldn't want to make you give up any secrets, now would we brother?"

"No, not in the least." the brunet strokes his peach fuzzed chin "But if we were to simply find out..."

"Then there would be no harm in that." Fili finishes

My assault of a fellow company member becomes a game and it spreads quickly that I have done something to the thief. It only gets worse when neither of us will tell what has occurred. Bets are taken and shouting matches begin; It's a lovely affair but I wish I wasn't in the middle of it. I ignore all the hubbub and slowly make my way around to each member as Beorn brings the mead and the party commences.
Hello my people and merry Christmas! Couple of things going on in this chapter.

1) You may remember, you may not, but Thia has a temper when it comes to respect. If you disrespect her, you should grateful if you live to regret it. I thought Nori would be the perfect person to exercise this out on. She also has a self awareness, so she does know that sometimes she goes overboard.

2) Her ring is the ring. How? Two different universes that run on two different time lines. By the time Thia was born, the entire series of Middle Earthy stuff was written so time does not apply the same. It can't since everyone is long dead. At the same time, literature is always read as if it were present, because it is in fact timeless. Now, this begs the question: How did she get it in the first place?

3) Something, or someone, made Thia use Black speech. Basically reached inside her and yanked the words out. 3 guesses as to what... or who.

Howdy you feel about it? If you are confused, ASK. I'll be more than happy to clear things up. This chapter was written to the annoying buzz a light makes, which is probably why it's so violently passively aggressive. Until next time! I next time!
Let's talk it out

CHAPTER 36

Deciding to start the night off fun, I walk myself over to Bofur. I want to talk to the jollier dwarves before they get passed out drunk on me and from the way they are going, it'll be soon. The toy making miner is trying to coax Duke into a game of fetch but the dog is wholly uninterested, resulting in Bofur playing catch by himself. Becoming aware of my presence, the canine stands up and rushes over; knocking Bofur flat on his butt in the process. He lets out a small "ooof" and blinks comically from his position; clearly surprised at being overtaken by a dog. Smiling at the scene I greet the pup before we both go back over to the fallen dwarf. I crouch at his side and pat his arm before glaring good naturedly at the dog.

"Duuuuke. That wasn't very nice." The dog lays on his stomach and proceeds to cover his snout. Scratching him behind the ears, I glance back at Bofur "Do you accept his apology?"

"Well ah'll be. Ye got 'em to apologize. Tha's some skill ye 'ave there, lassie." the sloshed dwarf reaches out his hand and after sniffing it cautiously, the dog extends his paw and they shake "I accept yer apology Mister Duke."

The dog yips and sprints away leaving us humanoids on our own. I shake my head before turning to the hatted dwarf with a smile. His hair curls into braids that match his mustache and I smirk. 'Even his hair is happy.'

"If I had a beard" I babble mindlessly to keep myself from yanking on the strands "I think I'd want to have one like yours."

"W-well, now." the dwarrow blushes and rubs the back of his head in embarrassment. It wasn't my intention to make him feel bashful but it's cute anyway "That's got to be the nicest thing anyone has said to me in a long while. Ever, even."

"Well then, I'll have to say it more often." I reply as he blushes harder. Dwarves and hair, what can you do? "Is it like that naturally or do you do something special to it?"

So begins my conversation with a dwarf about hair and what products to use to get banging curls and a luxurious shine. 'I've been away from t.v for too long, I'm making commercials out of my friends.' From hair we move onto hair styles, followed by hair accessories. I never had girlie talks like this with my friends back home, but I can do it with a bearded male in an alternate universe. I don't know what my problem is.

"And thats why I never eat Bananas." he finishes and I nod at his sound reasoning "Did I ever mention how strange yer bead is?"
"It's strange?" I grasp it self consciously, tugging it forward to examine the metal clasp "I-I-is it really odd?"

"Maybe strange is the wrong word." With a laugh he puts his hand to his mouth in thought "Unique. Different. Ye."

"Me?"

"Aye, it fits ye perfect." he gestures behind me, slurring heavily around his mug "i'nt tha right, Bombur?"

I turn around to greet the rotund dwarf when I get a face full of stomach. I recoil quickly but his bulk follows me down. He does his best not to land on me, but it doesn't help; he tilts away but when he collapses we look like a screwy capital 'T.' I would have laughed if I could breath, which I can not at the moment. I try pushing him off my face but he's too heavy. My chest burns from the lack of air and I start to mildly panic.

"Mmmmph!"

This is not how I pictured dying. 'She went on an adventure to fight a dragon and died? Well of course it would kill her! What do you mean she died from dwarf compression?!' I can see my mother freaking out now. Right before I start seriously contemplating coffin colors, my face is freed and I am saved from asphyxiation. Bombur expresses his deep regrets while helping me up, whereas Bofur, who I assume removed the large dwarf, looks like he's done this way too many times.

"No harm no foul." I wheeze at the apologetic male "It could have been worse."

"How so?" he asks depressed

"Bofur could have been weaker." I joke and Bombur grins slightly

"Speakin' of weak," the jovial dwarf cuts in "What did ye do to Nori?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all." I answer pulling a straight face "I blame it on the booze. It was the henny!"

"What's 'Booze'?" Bombur asks "and 'henny'?"


"I did see evidence of someone being sick by the door." Bombur admits

"There was ale involved?!!" Bofur grins and I regret my song "I knew there was somethin' goin' on. What did ye get him to do?"

"What?" I try to stop this train wreck by waving my arms wildly "I didn't make him do anything."

"So he was willin'! Oi, Nori!" he turns and yells in the thief's direction, successfully getting his, and everyone else's, attention "The lass was so impressive that ye went and heaved all over the place?"

The star headed thief turns white as a sheet prior to shifting his eyes to me. I lift my hand to tell him I'm sorry but he turns away quickly and literally melts into the shadows. Like ice cream down a drain on a hot day, this guy was gone. 'I probably went too far with that payback.' Bofur, oblivious to his friend's plight is laughing up a storm. I pat his arm and walk away in search of
Nori; fully intent on apologizing for my earlier actions. I find him a few minutes later cleaning up the proof of his spew. He flinches as I approach and I shift uncomfortably.

"What do you want?" he huffs testily, continuing to clean the entryway floor boards "Have you come to finish me off?"

"No... I..." I was never good at apologies, even when I am in the wrong. I just hate admitting it since I can always hyper rationalize it away. I won't do that now... I shouldn't because it... wasn't fair. I should have just knocked his lights out "I came to apologize."

"Apologize?" he repeats, sitting back on his heels and turning cold calculating eyes to me "Whatever could you apologize for? Droppin' me out of the sky? Havin' me think I was going to become a pancake? Or embarrassin' me in front of everyone?"

"All of them at once I suppose." I attempt to joke but he turns his attention back to the floor as I grimace with a sigh "Look. I'm sorry, alright? It was really immature of me, and you if I might say so, but it won't happen again."

"You just don't get it, do you?" he throws the brush across the floor and I flinch as it clatters into the house "I thought I was goin' to die! You can't just run around doin' whatever you want, simply because you can!"

"I get it! I-"

"No. No you don't get it!" he cuts me off, quickly standing from his spot and facing away from me and pressing his hand against his upturned face "You can not imagine what it is like to be like us. You're NOTHING like us. We are bound to this earth in ways that you can't even begin to imagine. You can leave whenever you want but we have to live with the outcomes of this journey. The future is in your hands and you don't even care."

"What..." I'm lost as the conversation seems to dart from topic to topic. I can't tell if the dwarf is upset about the sky falling, my conversation with Gandalf, or both. Neither? As he begins pacing, I frown in confusion "...I-"

"It was the most exhilaratin' moment of my life. Crashin' down through the clouds with my heart racin', KNOWIN' that I could die. Acceptin' it..." he slowly faces me again with tears pouring from his eyes and I feel my gut wrench at the sight as he finishes "Welcomin' it."

No no no no. This is no good at all. This isn't right. Nori is unshakable, unmovable. Cool and collected, and vain to a fault. He's the dwarf that is totally on his own and proud of it. This can't be right. I shake my head refusing to believe I broke the dwarf. 'He's not a toy for you to break.' I stumble forward and feel tears start to well up in my eyes. My words come out so garbled that they sound unintelligible to even me. The dwarf's face scrunches up causing more tears to fall from his eyes. I start wailing while fanning my eyes to keep the tears away from my own. I hear a hiss escape his mouth and I stop fanning to determine whether he is going to explode or cry some more. To my ultimate surprise, its neither. His face turns an awful shade of red before his eyes roll back in his head and he bursts out laughing. Great! No he's having a manic episode. I reach toward the dwarf only for him to grin and bop me on the nose.
"Gotcha." the bop causes fat tears to leak out the corners of my eyes and roll down my cheeks "Oh don't be like that."

"No, they're just... left overs." I explain prior to squinting at the dwarf suspiciously "You were... playing a trick on me?"

"I didn't think it would work this well." he wipes his eyes while chuckling "You deserved it though."

"I guess..." I frown before sniffing "I thought I caused you to have a mental break."

"If I were a lesser dwarf, I probably would have." he tilts his head up to look me in the eyes "And if you weren't essential, I'd have killed you for it."

"Well." I say taking his threat in stride "It's a good thing I'm essential then."

"Hn." he answers before walking around me to rejoin the party outside "Think about what I said, it wasn't all a joke."

I'm left trying to determine how much of his speech was true and how much was solely for the intent of making me feel like a jerk. One minute he's insulting me, the next joking, and departs with a warning like threat. I just can't win. Deciding to save it for another day, I go over to the sink and wash my face with the intent of joining the festivities. Just as I finish though, it would appear that Oin has different plans. He noisily enters the room and upon spotting me, charges over.

"Where have ye been, lass?" he forces me over to a chair hastily, worrying me "I've be looking for ye all evening."

"Oh, um... why?"

"To check on yer wounds, lassie!" he replies as if it is obvious, which in a way it is "Lift yer shirt and lets have a look see at that bite, shall we?"

It's not a question, as before it leaves his mouth he's lifting the hem of my shirt. We go over my wounds one by one, making sure they are healing well and aren't infected. After half an hour filled with tongue clicking, pokes, growls, and prods the healer determines that I am not dying. THEN the questions begin.

"When was the last time ye moved yer bowels?"

"Excuse me, what?"

"No need to be embarrassed, lassie." he pats my arm smiles gently "I'm a healer."

"Yea... I know..." I close my eyes and try to be a good sport "I don't know, yesterday maybe?"

"Mmhmm." he starts writing on a piece of parchment from out of no where and I hope he never shows it to anyone. Sure, everybody poops but I don't want that on record "And when was the last time ye bled?"

"Why are we doing this?" I groan loudly "Its not important in the grand scheme of things. Smaug is not going to give us a handicap just because I'm a functioning woman. You don't need to know. Why why why are you doing this to me?"
"Do not make this more difficult than it need be, child. I am the company healer" he repeats his answer, matter-of-factly as if it matters "and ye have been avoiding this conversation for the whole trip."

"With good reason!"

"...Lady Thia." he places his hand on my knee with a serious expression that I find disturbing "Are ye with child?"

"... Three weeks ago." I give up "I... bled... two weeks ago."

We spend another ten minutes of me wanting to die before its finally over. The process is made even worse by me having to shout humiliatively private things repeatedly in order for him to get it all straight. He gives me a clean bill of health, which in dwarven terms is a slap on the back, before leaving me to sit quietly in mortification. That's how Balin finds me; sitting in an empty house with my face in my hands trying to gather my scattered wits.

"What is the matter, Berch Kannag?" he asks, placing his hands on my shoulders

"Oh, papa." I sigh rubbing my eyes "I still don't know what that means."

"One day, you will." I turn my head to face him with a pout "Until then, I will be sharp enough for the both of us."

"Gee. Thanks." I roll my eyes but lean into his hands "Balin... do you think I'm inconsiderate?"

"Inconsiderate?"

"Yea, you know... thoughtless, unfair, self centered..."

"What has brought this on, my dear?" he asks coming around to kneel by my knees

"I had a... an altercation with Nori earlier and it got me to thinking that" I rub my shackled wrists "maybe I'm not being the best person that I could be..."

"Thia..." the dwarf extends his hand to stroke my cheek "You have left your home, had gifts thrust upon you without warning, and accepted a mission that has no personal gain for you. In what way is that self centered?"

"But I worried you all on the misty mountains and with Azog and then I let Beorn chase you and-"

"You caused us worry because you put our needs first. You then stood up to Azog to protect our King. It was very honorable of you and you have our thanks for it. While I do not condone you allowing the skin changer to frighten us" he looks at me pointedly but cruelly "I understand that you were angered and hurt. I admire that even in your anger, you would not allow any harm to come to us. So no, I do not find you uncharitable or inconsiderate in anyway. You are in fact one of the most thoughtful women I have ever met. Anyone who says otherwise is either blind or a fool."

"... You don't know how much that means to me." I dip my head as tears roll down my face again, coating his hand in salty fluid. I've been crying a lot today "I just feel like half the time I'm doing an alright job and the other half I'm being a stubborn brat."

"You walk amongst dwarves, my dear." he consoles, petting my head "If you weren't stubborn, you'd never get anything done. Now wash your face and lets get back to the party before the lads drink up all the ale."
I laugh and offer the elderly dwarf a watery smile before heading to the sink once again. I clean my face and nose before having Balin rewrap my hands so the metal doesn't skin my wrists. I straighten out my rumpled clothes and after raising my head, I nod to the dwarf and walk out the door. I know I’m not perfect; I get angry, and sometimes I respond too harshly. Even so, there are people who I care for, and they care for me. The least I can do is enjoy the good times along side them. Grabbing a piece of toast, I join the party.
DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 37

"Thorin, you must calm do-"

"She is tou- She is STROKING his hair!"

"No. No, she isn't. She's just…"

Looking over to where the young woman is conversing with Bofur, Bilbo studies the scene and cringes as she ghosts her hands over her companion's head. She clearly knows enough about the dwarven culture not to actually touch their hair but the closeness is evidently enough to set the king off. He growls menacingly and nearly tosses the hobbit aside to intervene.

"She's just… um… well… I-"

"Oi, Bombur!"

The two stop arguing as Bomber trips over his own two feet and lands on the girl; covering her upper body with his bulk. So shocked are they that Bofur has already leapt into action and rectified the situation before they are able to collect themselves. As a pair, the two watch the girl shake off the event and enter the house alone. It is the Shireling's insistent tugging on the monarch's arm that keeps him from following and demanding answers.

"That can wait." he huffs, after gaining the attention he sought "Do you not have more important things-"

"More important, Master Baggins? What is more important than my-"

"Your what?"

Beorn appraises the shorter males with something akin to curious suspicion that becomes an intense interest as Thorin refuses to respond. The tight lipped king eyes the skin changer cautiously even as the hobbit's gaze darts between the two of them. Sighing at the incomplete statement, Bilbo shrugs in frustration.

"We'll if you will not admit it-"

"I merely wished to assess the well being of one of my company members." the emphasis he places on 'company members' is meant to reiterate the girl's position but the possessive snarl over 'my' is
clearly meant to dissuade the skin changer's overly friendly behavior with the woman "Is that an issue?"

"N-no… but-"

"You are correct, Master Baggins, there are many other pressing matters I must attend to." Flashing his eyes at the taller male, the king lifts his chin with a borderline dismissive head inclination "I will instruct Oin to see to her. Master Baggins. Master Beorn."

"… A dwarf who suppresses his own nature for another… " watching the king rejoin his kin, the large man strokes his beard thoughtfully "Interesting."

"Whatever do you mean, Master Beorn?"

"Your leader is not as stone as he'd like everyone to believe." chuckling to himself, the skin changer walks away from the lost hobbit "I've never known rock to burn."

Stepping back into the party I begin stuffing my face with food and start counting off dwarves. 'I've talked to Bofur, was squashed by Bombur, got depressed by Nori, molested by Oin, and consoled by Balin.' Five dwarves down, eight more to go. The dwarves are scattered around, completing various tasks. Most including food or drink; even Thorin has joined a drinking game with his cousins.

Some of the company sit under the trees but most are at the acquired tables, yacking it up with each other. A couple, mostly the grumpiest ones, sit alone 'keeping guard.' Deciding that I'm going to be a little daring, as well as sociable, I walk up to the solo Dwalin and challenge him to an arm wrestle. He peers at me through slitted eyes before shrugging his shoulders and accepting. Balin chuckles at my antics, then walks off to converse Thorin as I roll up my sleeves. I turn my attention back to Dwalin and nod.

"Don't start crying when ye lose, lassie." we make our way over to a table the dwarves brought out earlier "Ye asked for it."

"Same goes for you." I retort, getting into position "Try not to get all excited and break my arm."

I saw that on a video once; a girl gets her arm snapped trying too hard to win an arm wrestling match and ugh. Just ugh... I don't know if it was faked or not but ugh anyway. Dwalin gives me a bored expression but places his elbow on the table across from mine. Raising my hand, I allow him to fully engulf my appendage in his large fist.

"Do not break my arm." I reiterate firmly " Seriously."

We count off as he gifts at my warning and begin. Not surprisingly, my arm instantly flies towards the table top. However right before it hits,our arms still for a second and then shift back in the opposite direction. A glow forms beside my cheek and I momentarily peel my eyes off our hands to peak to the side of my head. My bead is glowing a dull brown and pulses slowly. I smirk, accepting that my last gift has begun to reveal itself. 'I'm not sure what it is exactly, but if it makes me stronger then I'm all for it!' Flashing Dwalin a radiant smile, I slam his hand into the table. He stares at it in disbelief before turning his confused face to.

"I win." I say smugly
"How did ye..." he trails off speechless then quickly glances around to see if anyone noticed his failure "Ye shall not mention this to anyone."

"Wha-"

"Do ye understand?"

"But I-"

"No one!"

"Hey!" I call as he leaps up from the table and storms off "That's not even fair!"

The dwarf ignores me so I sit back and pout. Kicking my feet for a few moments I take a moment to try and harness the power of the bead. Getting up, I walk to the edge of the table and lift. It doesn't move. I flick the bead in an attempt to wake it up and try again. Still nothing. Letting out a breath, I cross my arms and tap my foot in thought leading me to jump when someone taps me on the shoulder. Swinging around, I find Ori shyly standing behind me. He fidgets slightly before thrusting a fuzzy object into my chest causing me to rock backwards before grasping the object in my hands. I look down at it, feeling its softness.

"Thank you, Ori." he blushes and lowers his head "I love presents and all but... what is it?"

"I made them... they are gloves..." he gestures toward my handcuffs "for your wrists. So you don't have to keep them bound."

"Ori..." I unravel the gift and they indeed gloves. Something akin to knitted racecar driving gloves if racecar drivers would wear knitted gloves. The material is so soft and warm; with the weather getting chillier, I'll be needing them soon anyway. The y are a deep pink; a cross between magenta and boysenberry and I wonder why he would carry such a feminine color before determining that colors probably don't matter for sex like at home. I pull them on and the young dwarf assists me in pulling them up, having them reach my elbows snuggly "Thank you. I really really REALLY appreciate you doing this for me."

"You... You're welcome." he stutters out softly "Like you said after the trolls; this is what friends do, right?"

"Yea. I did say that." I smile and lightly punch him in the arm "Thanks for listening when I speak."

"Anytime." he squeaks quietly, before "Maybe later on you could... tell me some stories from your home? I-i-if it's not too much trouble that is."

"You really want to hear about my home?"

"Indeed! You rarely speak of it." he chirps, slowly losing his nervousness "I would definitely enjoy listening to anything you'd like to share."

"Then I will enjoy telling you." I twirl my bead in thought "Why don't you make a list of things you want to know and we'll spend all the time you want answering them."

"Truly?!" he asks in excitement and I bounce my head repeatedly "I will go start right now!"

The dwarf scurries off and I giggle at his eagerness. I can only imagine what he will ask. 'I wonder if Thorin still wants me to keep silent of my home?' Ah well, I'm sure he won't be too upset as long as I don't reveal anything to important. I'll talk to him later but before I speak with Ori, just to be
safe. Speaking of safety first, I follow Ori's form as he makes his way to sit by his brother. I pause before going over and settling next to Dori at the table. He glances in my direction and inclines his head in greeting.

"Good evening, Miss Malcolmson."

"Good evening to you as well, Mister Dori."

"I must thank you for suggesting this gathering," he gestures around at the merry making dwarves "It has been a while since we have been able to enjoy ourselves. Not since the Shore, I imagine."

"Yea, you guys spend a whole lot of time running away from danger." I bob my head "It's only a little more, hang in there."

"I would prefer to stand, if its alright," he responds with a slight frown

"It's an expression from my home, Mister Dori." he makes the 'really?' face and so I explain

"Mmmhm, it basically means don't give up."

"How strange." he muses before realizing that his words may have been offensive "I only mean that I have never heard of such an expression before."

"I'm not offended. It's just the way my language is built; its full of idioms and metaphors, as well as plenty of other figurative language." he turns his body towards me in interest and I know I've captured his fancy "It's a very colorful language."

"How fascinating." he says absorbing the information before frowning again "You keep saying 'your language' as if you are not speaking Westron."

"That's because I'm not. I'm speaking english." I openly laugh at his confused face "It's one of the gifts the Valar granted me. I can understand all languages, and all can understand me."

We engage in a conversation about the differences of our languages before moving on to all the languages of middle earth. We eventually make our way to the languages of my world which is extensive. We banter on the subject and before I know it, the sun is setting. I go to wrap up the conversation and make a flippant comment on earth's extensive linguistic skills. Dori nearly falls out of his chair when I mention that there are thousands of languages where I'm from.

"How is that possible?" he shakes his head, though not enough to disturb his hair "Where are you from?"

"Oh." Its unlikely that they could have so many languages on middle earth and not know it "It's no where near here. You have never been there."

"I agree." he backs off easily enough "I would not know which language to speak."

I laugh at his huff and get up from the table. I spot the Durin boys engaging in a drinking contest with Fundin sons while Thorin acts as a stoic referee though his eyes shine with a gentle buzz of tipsy. Not wanting to disturb their game I keep searching for a buddy. Beorn has long since gone to tend to the animals for the night and Bilbo along with Bifur went with him. I find Gloin sitting under a tree, drinking slowly and looking all too lonely. I feel a magnetic push towards him and decide to walk over. He barely even notices my approach, gazing sadly into a dull silver locket. If I remember correctly, it has a picture of his wife and Gimli in it. He sighs deeply and I can't help but feel his pain.
"I miss my family too." I say sitting down cross-legged beside him

"Oh?"

"Yea." I persist, undeterred by his bleak response "You never truly miss someone until you can't see them when you want."

"Ye speak the truth lass," he murmurs, taking out his locket again and showing it to me "This is my wife, Rhimla and my son, Gimli. He wanted to come with us but he is too young."

"They both have impressive mustaches," he beams at my comment, gazing down at his family with adoration "You are very lucky to have such a striking wife and strong jawed son."

His laughter booms out and he dives into telling me story after story about his family. I laugh and aw at all the right moments, though not to say I'm bored. I'm genuinely interested, as I have not seen the Lord of the Rings so this is my first 'meeting' with Gimli. Gloin is ecstatic to have someone listen to his stories and I am more than happy to offer an ear and kind word... Sort of...

If you don't have anything nice to say, turn the bad into good. Where Gimli can be described as stubborn and creepy looking, he can instead be said to be dedicated to a standard of living and visually imposing. I listen to Gloin gush over his family for nearly an hour before he finially asks me about my own.

"Thank ye, lassie for listening. Most of the company has grown tired of my stories but I still enjoy speaking of my family." he tucks the locket back into his clothes and close to his heart "What about ye? What's your family like?"

"Yea! What's your family like?"

Gloin and I turn towards the voice and see a lone Durin approaching. Kili, not paired with Fili, wobbly walks over and joins our group. He smells heavily of alcohol and I wrinkle my nose at the scent, having never been a fan of spirits. The youngest Durin tries to sit down but ungraciously falls onto his face before scooting backwards to lean against the tree. 'This is exactly why I don't drink.' Settling himself in, he smacks his lips before turning to look at me expectantly.

"Well, my family is pretty big." I start off after a moment "I have seven siblings-"

"Tha's a lot of of siblins" Kili slurs and Gloin shushes him

"Um, yea." I say speculatively, wondering if he can get alcohol poisoning from being this sloshed "I have an abundance of siblings."

""Are ye the eldest?" Gloin asks, trying to keep me focused

"Second, I have an older sister-"

"M'be she can marry Fili." Kili drunkenly cuts in again "Then he wouldn't be such a jerk."

"I don't think thats such a great idea, Kili."

"Wha? Why not?" he pouts and frowns all at the same time "You think yer sista is better 'n my brother? e's the best guy I know!"

"Lad, yer drunk." Gloin explains patiently "She isn't insulting ye or yer brother."

"So she'll marry 'im?!" his eyes glint in his drunken haze "I always wanted a sister!"
"Kili. My sister isn't marrying your brother." I say firmly "She would chew him up and spit him out. She's vicious."

"She ate him?! Oh no!" the dwarf shakily jumps up from his spot and takes off in a zigzag line screaming for his brother "Fili! Oh no! She's eaten him!"

Gloin and I stare after him and laugh each time he crashes into something. He does eventually find his brother and commences to giving him sloppy kisses all over his face. The older dwarf looks so disgusted that I burst into laughter, holding my stomach as I roll over to my side. Fili slowly catches on to his brother's garbled speech and looks over to us in confusion. I wave and he comes over, dragging Kili behind him.

"So." he stands with his arms crossed over his chest, almost looking authoritative "Your sister wants to 'eat' me?"

"Lad..." Gloin chastises lowly

"Oh Fili." I shake my head in pity "The only way my sister would touch you is with a ten foot pole. Ands that only because she would be beating you with it."

"She sounds like a fierce woman." he replies with a laugh as Kili collapses again

"For years I thought she was a man." he is sparkle in amusement "She has a very... strong personality."

"Wha's 'er name" Kili drawls

"Leah."

"You have seven siblings, correct?" Gloin asks and I confirm "What are their names?"

"Seven?!" Fili exclaims before copying my sitting position "This, I want to hear about."

"Yes yes. There are seven children, eight if you count me. I have one older sister, her names is Leah as I said." the duo nods and Kili passes out. Lovely "Then there is me, Thia. Next my brother, Leo, who is a year younger than I and after him, my step sister Alexa-"

"What is a 'step' sister?" Fili interrupts

"She is my sister by marriage, not blood." Anticipating another question, I further explain "My parents separated after Leo was born and each remarried. My step mother, my father's wife who isn't my birth mother, already had a daughter, Alexa."

"I... see."

"Of course you do." I know they still harbor a little confusion but continue regardless "After Alexa is Quinny, she's four years younger than I. She and my next brother, Maximilien, are the children created from the union between my father and my step mother. Are you guys still with me?"

"I believe so." Gloin tries to sort the information "Your parents had three children together before separating."

"Your father's new wife already had a daughter." Fili adds slowly but accurately "Together they then had two children."

"Wha about the other two?" Kili murmurs from his face down position
"The youngest two are Symphony and Micah." I smile at the mention of the two youngest. They are mine in most ways "They are my mother and step father's children."

"That is an impressive family." Gloin mutters

"Yea. We aren't always on the best terms but they are family..."

"And you love them." Fili finishes patting his fallen brother.

The four of us sit in friendly silence, enjoying the quiet comradery. It isn't long though, before Fili decides that Kili is really out for the night. Poor kid barely made it an hour past sundown. The older brother hefts up his brother onto his back and begins the laborious task of taking him inside. I offer my assistance to 'jump' them into the structure and after a bit of pushing, he accepts. Turning to say goodbye to Gloin, I feel the familiar burn in my eyes and latch on rather than dart away in fear. Its more of a tickle or a sting, now that I'm getting used to it. Reaching out, I grasp the confused dwarf's hands before speaking.

"Your son will grow to be a fierce warrior; embarking on a journey much greater and no less important than this one. He will encounter many, loss much, and gain more. You have raised your son well. Fear not, trust in his ability to do what is best."

The dwarf grips my hands tightly and I feel him trembling softly. He lowers his head to my fingers and thanks me in a quiet voice, then walks away. I wish I could have given him more but even with the knowledge given to me about Gimli, I don't know enough about the entirety of the fellowship to impart too much information. Turning back to the brothers, I place a hand in Fili's bicep and 'jump' us too the house.

**AN:** I am allowing you to participate! Ori needs a list of questions to ask Thia. Make a list and leave it as a review. I will try to incorporate as many as possible without throwing off the fluidity of the story. So make them good! All questions are welcome. If they seem to be a bit too raunchy, I may have one of the other dwarves ask it instead my cute little Ori.

Hello there! I inserted a few details about our favorite little OC. First things first! The side story has begun! Go take a look at it when you have time and tell me if you like it or not. There is no point in having a side story that no one likes! Secondly, we only have a 2 or 3 more chapters at Beorn's. This is all the same night, Thia is just talking to EVERYONE so it's taking a while.
Chapter 38

Not having a specific enough place in mind when I 'jump,' the three of us end up squashed in the linen closet of doom. Though bigger than your average closet due to who the owner is, it is still not made for three individuals to crowd into together. Fumbling in the darkness, I reach around the dwarf pair and find the knob before any creepy crawlies can get us. Twisting it, the door springs open and with the sudden release we fall out in a tangle of limbs. Before I can rise I whimper out a squeak when Kili's arm whacks me on the back of my head.

"The dwarf king would not be pleased to see this."

Rubbing my sore noggin, I look up and take notice of Beorn standing over us. Fili, being the little trouble maker he is, places his hands on my lower back and moans in mock lust for... what? A warning sign? I haven't the slightest clue, but I know he doesn't see me that way. Beorn arches an eyebrow at the noise and I roll my eyes at the dwarf's antics. I smack the moron upside the head and get up with ease; purposefully standing on his chest. He doesn't appear too concerned with the weight, so I bounce for good measure. That at least gives me an 'oof' response, but he stays in his place under my feet so I doubt it really bothers him.

"Did your mother ever tell you that it is rude to stand on people?"

"Uh, no?" I answer, frowning down at the humanoid foot stool "That would be an odd thing to say."

"You ARE an odd girl." He snorts

"Good evening, Beorn." I greet, ignoring the dwarf for the moment "How are you enjoying the party?"

"It is acceptable. I am learning much about my guests." he glances at my feet with a crooked smile "Though it would seem that you are having a much better time than I."

"Indeed we were." Kili grumbles from his place "Her sister was eating Fili."

I smack my forehead as Beorn's eyebrows raise a little higher. Fili's chest rumbles under my feet and I wave one hand in the air to keep my balance. 'These innuendos will be the death of me.' I peek through my fingers and see Beorn's shoulders shaking in merriment and its not so embarrassing. Sliding my hand down, I offer him a small smile and shrug my shoulders.

"I give up trying to explain their outbursts."
"Their 'outburst' must have been massive if you had to change the sheets." he replies without hesitation further opening his mouth in a toothy grin. That flirtatious streak he has sparks in eyes and I all but cringe at his suggestive statement "Shall I make up for their clear failures? I am sure I have much better aim..."

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**Fili POV**

I don't know what I expected when Miss Thia offered to... what is it she called it... 'jump' Kili and I into the house, but ending up pressed against a very shapely young woman is not it. Having her tucked in between us is bad enough, but when she starts pawing at my chest looking for a way out, I'm not sure what to do. While it isn't all together unappealing, I can not fully enjoy it knowing Uncle's feelings for her. Thankfully she finds the knob and we fall out the closet. She lets out a ghost of a whimper when Kili's arm collides with her head. Unfortunately, we land at the feet of the skin changer.

"The dwarf king will not be pleased to see this."

No, no he wouldn't. Miss Thia is sprawled across my chest, straddling my waist. Kili is passed out on her back; his face pressed into the crook of her neck. Uncle would not be pleased at all. Still, I do not like this man, even if he is helping us. He is much too casual in his interactions with Miss Thia. She is Uncle's-... I stop the thought there as she rubs the back of her head, causing Kili to shift closer to her. The shape shifter watches me critically and I quickly grow annoyed. 'Uncle. Please forgive me.' Placing my hands on Thia's lower back, I arch my back and moan lustily.

Maybe if he thinks she is taken, the bear will stop pursuing her and leave. To my annoyance, he merely arches an eyebrow. I am rewarded with a smack on the head and her feet on my chest. The woman bounces for good measure and I let out a huff to humor the her.

"Did your mother ever tell you that it is rude to stand on people?"

"Uh, no?" she pouts at me from her perch, seeming at a loss from the question "That would be an odd thing to say."

"You ARE an odd girl."

"Good evening, Beorn." shes says, ignoring me as I poke at her ankles "How are you enjoying the party?"

"It is acceptable." the man looks down at me with a smirk "Though it would seem that you are having a much better time than I."

"Indeed we were." Kili grumbles from beside me, where he fell when Miss Thia stood "Her sister was eating Fili."

I chuckle despite myself, nearly throwing the seer from my chest. I quickly stop when I see the massive man chuckling as well. Miss Thia smacks her forehead before smiling and shrugging her shoulders.

"I give up trying to explain their outbursts." she says with a shake of her head, causing her hair to dance

"Their 'outburst' must have been massive if you had to change the sheets." the skinchanging replies before showing me his teeth. I know he is simply trying to get a rise out of us but it is working regardless "Shall I make up for their clear failures? I am sure I have much better aim..."
"Beorn!" the woman shrieks in disbelief "No!"

"You prefer to be ravished by..." the giant man gazes down at myself and my brother with a look of disinterest "ill-experienced children?"

"Ew! Beorn! Don't say things like that!"

We both chuckle at her cries but the laughter does not meet our eyes. I'll be damned before I allow him to show her any kind of 'outburst.' Kili starts snoring again as she steps off my chest and charges at the large man; repeatedly punching Beorn in the chest, though her blows barely faze him. 'It is better she be angered by him.' She huffs angrily, glares at us, and then stomps out of the house. The skin changer watch's her closely as she walks away and I grit my teeth knowing that he is enjoying the view of her retreating backside. I climb to my feet and roll my brother onto a pile of hay prior to standing before the bearman. He peers down at me, all amusement gone.

"What do you want, dwarf." he rumbles coldly

"Keep your distance from her." I growl in return "She is not yours to do with as you please."

"At the rate your king is going" he sniffs out a laugh "she will not be his either."

"Keep your distance." I repeat, leaving the house to rejoin my kin

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Thia POV

I wander for a few minutes, saying hello to any animals I pass, before locating the hobbit at a small end table. He and Bifur sit together, silently sharing a meal. Walking over I settle down next to the pair and pop a few berries into my mouth, savoring the tartness prior to addressing the two.

"Have fun with the animals?"

"They made me sneeze." Bilbo grumbles, wiping his nose in a very hobbit like way "They liked Bifur well enough though."

"Oh yea, you have that horse hair allergy." he nods along and I turn to Bifur who seems quieter than usual "Did you enjoy your time?"

"The skin changer has many friends." he mutters around a mouth of food, appearing to glare at the plate in an odd moment of frustrated contentment "The work was extensive."

"Don't complain." I scold good naturedly, poking his nose and trying to lighten his mood "It could have been worse."

"How so?" Bilbo sighs dropping his head onto the table in exhaustion "I think I may have pulled a muscle lifting all that hay."

"No need to exaggerate. You could have had my afternoon." I sigh remembering my earlier conversations "It was... not pleasant."

"What has happened while we were away from you, little one?" Bifur asks concerned

He places a hand on my shoulder and leans his face close to mine, pinning me with a slightly crazed stare. Its similar to the unwavering eyes of a doll; empty and perfect. Yet at the same time something deep in them reveals a heat that seems so familiar to me. Confused, I open my mouth a
couple of times before I tear my gaze away and shove more berries in my mouth. 'Was the inability to discern personal space one of effects of frontal lobe damage?' I wish I paid more attention in that psychology class.

I tell the two about my evening, skimming over most of the personal details: read 'the Oin fiasco.' Nor do they need to know I cried my eyes out because of Nori's trick or that Beorn is a horny hibernator. Speaking about what I'm able, especially the hurtful and eye opening parts, I feel a lot better and can even laugh about certain memories as I'm looking back. However when I finish and look up at the pair, Bilbo's face is ashen and Bifur's is red with anger. Neither are looking at me though; their attention is fully on the dark shadow standing a few steps away. I sigh and turn to the figure with a saccharine smile, hoping it will calm him.

"Hey Thorin." I exclaim in a sickeningly sweet voice "How long have you been standing there, buddy?"

"Long enough." he says with ill concealed fury and I grind my jaw at the sound "Where is the second son of Korin?"

"I... don't know, but-" he turns away and walks towards the larger group of dwarves. I jump up and chase after him, trying to stop the inevitable. One day, one day I'll learn to just shut the heck up and bear my problems on my own "Thorin, it's fine. There's no need to-"

"Despite my earlier mistakes on this journey" he says without stopping his stride "your worth is measured far beyond what lies between your legs Miss Malcolmson. I will not allow any of my members to hold such a degrading view of your position in this company."

I pause for a second to try and wipe the smile from coming onto my face. I'm thankful that he has acknowledged his wrongdoings and is striving to correct them. It's one step closer to keeping him from falling into gold sickness and alive. 'Not to mention it's unbearably sweet.' The smile quickly turns into a grimace when the king finds Nori and promptly smashes his fist into his face.

"Uh.."

If we were back home, the silence would have been filled with 'oh's and cheers. However here, it is just silence before all hell breaks loose and in a way that's still similar. Its a one hit total knock out; Thorin's fist clips him on the chin, Nori immediately hits the floor, his brothers jump his side in worry, and the rest argue about how smooth the transition was. It's a few moments, along with some help from Oin, before Nori awakens again. He looks around confused until his eyes meet the king's and then subsequently my own. He purses his lips and mutters darkly under his breath.

"So the little woman couldn't handle a one on one. Went and cried to her beloved, did she?" he scoffs mockingly and spits on the floor. A mouthful of blood and spit coat the floor in respect of his busted lip "I knew she was too soft to fight her own battles."

"This is not a battle and I didn't send him to-"

"How far did you have to bend this time to get his attention?"

"Nori!" Dori cries, pulling away from his brother

"Oh please! We all know it's true!" he gestures to my position dismissively "How many times has she helped us avoid danger, even though she is a seer? It's obvious that she's here for his pleasure, not business."

"That's not true..." Ori whispers, sounding close to tears "She... She's my friend... and..."
"Don't worry Ori." he grins a sneer at me as I stare darkly at him "I'm sure if you ask nicely, your friend will give you a ride too."

I feel my face heat in anger and embarrassment. 'How dare he?!' I don't feel nearly as bad for dropping him out of the sky now. I haven't even done anything that would warrant this horrible image he is giving me. Useless is one thing but I'm not chasing any proverbial tail, or wagging my own here. The dwarves are just as enraged as I; yelling about how wrong he is and promises of retribution for the defamation of my character. I start to defend myself as well but Thorin beats me to it.

"SILENCE!" he bellows and the sound echoes through the trees. The company falls into a distinct hush in respect of their leader as he swiftly grabs my hand and half drags, half leads me over to my offender. Nori glares daggers at the king, refusing to back down or even acknowledge my presence. Thorin drops my arm and crosses his own "Apologize."

"No." the thief says from between his clenched teeth

"Nori, you will apologize for your slanderous words" Thorin growls, clenching his jaw firmly "or I swear that I will debar you from the sight of all in present company."

A hushed gasp runs through the company and my stomach drops again. It is held in the cold grip that snared it earlier when I thought I'd broken Nori. It's made worse this time knowing that the odds of this being a joke are slim to none. I step towards the two but Bifur suddenly wraps his arms around my waist and forcefully drags me backwards. The two glaring dwarves turn in our direction in surprise as I twist in Bifur's arms.

"This should not be discussed in front of little one." he ignores my protests and begins to heft me towards the house "Argue amongst yourselves and when you have come to a decision, you may retrieve her."

"Stop it!" I try to argue "Bifur, put- Ugh! Let go!"

"Go with him lass." Dwalin steps between us and the group "A lady should not have to bare witness to this."

"That's not-"

"Go inside Thia." Fill, who I didn't even notice returned, commands authoritatively. I gape at the scene, before struggling harder "Bilbo. Bofur. Go with them. And keep her there."

---

**Thorin POV**

The little woman growls fiercely but the outcome is the same. She fights against being led away, but it does her no good against three males. The skin changer takes her place soon after and I turn my attention to the offending dwarf. He glares angrily at me, breathing harshly from his place before climbing to his feet.

"You would have my kin dismiss me all for that little harlot?!"

"She is no harlot. She would not have been chosen if that was the case." Gandalf warns, appearing suddenly from around the house "And it would serve you well to cease your ignorant ranting."

"She may not be a whore" the dwarf breaths out in aggravation "but she is hardly a proper woman. She should not be traveling without an escort with a group of males yet you allow her to. What else
could she be here for if not to warm your bedroll?"

"She is here for reasons I can not fully disclose at the moment." I say through gritted teeth "She
has helped when she could; her loyalty can not be questioned."

"Oi, yea." he laughs darkly "She's loyal to your di-"

"Finish that sentence and I will tear your spine out and wear it as a belt" Dwalin cuts off "I'll not have you talkin' about the lass in such a way."

This is my fault. It would be best to confess all and sweep all this slander away but I can not. I can not divulge her origins or why she must remain; they would think me mad. However things can not continue as they are. While she has not been a burden in her own right, her predictions have always been warnings of situations that did not need to be forewarned. They could easily have been deadly but weren't. Neither did we avoid them, so the warnings were not needed. If I could prove that she is necessary, then it will cease all wagging tongues. In addition to that... an escort should be selected for her. I was remiss in that instant.

"Tonight." I cut off the arguments "I will ask her give a prediction that will prove her necessity. I will also select a suitable guard for her."

"Sure. You get a prediction and she gets some more... diction too."

Gloin punches the thief in the nose, swiftly breaking it before patting me on the back.

"That will do fine laddie." he says and settles down to finish his meal, the rest of the company following suit.

---

Thia POV

I growl and demand my release but the entire group agrees with the verdict. Before I know it Bifur, Bilbo, and Bofur collectively drag me into the house. 'This party sucks!' I am able to yank my arms away from them every now and again but three against one is an unfair fight. I lose all hope when we enter the house and Beorn walks out. He places a large hand on my head, tussling my hair into a mess before closing and locking the door behind us. Once the doors are sealed, my three captures release my arms and I glare at them angrily.

"I am an adult!" In reality, I could just return to the scene with my gift but something tells me they would just keep bringing me back. So, I stay put but express my unhappiness with the situation "You do not make decisions for me!"

"We know that lass but-"

"No! You guys always do this!" I pace in annoyance after pulling on the door doesn't open it, not that I thought it would "You won't let me weild a weapon. You won't let my actively use my gifts. You won't let me help you at all!"

"Thia. We care for you greatly." Bilbo tries to call me down with reason "We just do not want to see you hurt. Can you not understand that?"

"I understand that perfectly." I breathe deeply, pressing a hand to my head "Don't you see that I care for you all just as much? I want to keep you all safe, happy and healthy but you just won't let me!"
"Little one-"

"I am not little!"

"He only meant-

"I'm a full grown woman who can tell right from wrong. I'm not small or or or or little or insignificant." No one has my back in this. Anything I say can and will be used for the greater good but who is to say those good intentions are helpful? I can't say... what I want to say and now I'm accused of terrible things for trying to keep people alive! I can take it... I can... I clench my fists until the nails bite into my palms "I'm strong enough to do things on my own, thank you very much!"

"Lass-

"I have a damn name!

"Ye-

"And I can make things right..." barely hearing my companions anymore I bow my head as a soft sob tears from my throat at the overwhelming feelings of inadequacy threaten to choke me. The sudden feeling of imminent death is stifling, especially with it not being my own "I can change this."

I fall to my knees succumbing to months of hidden loneliness, faked strength, and confusion. It has minimal to do with Nori or his words to be honest; I'm just so... sad. Having never been away from my family for more than a week, this whole thing is finally coming to a head. I want to go home so badly but I need to complete this mission, I know that. And having my honor questioned time after time isn't helping any. I miss them terribly and I'm honestly not even sure if what I'm doing is the right thing but I've no one to help me. I'm all alone. There is no one I can turn to with out damaging the future in innumerable ways. I'm feel so small compared to this burden...

"I want to be strong... but it's so hard." Staring at the ground for moment longer, I trace a heart into the earth before lifting my head "And gosh darn it, I miss my family!"

"Oh Thia." Bilbo sighs before kneeling and wrapping his arms around me

"Ye miss yer home."Bofur joins in the hug, sounding relieved at discovering my secret. Though I said plenty of other things, I don't mind us addressing this one issue. Selfish or not, it is actually my biggest problem "We can all sympathise with that, la- Miss Thia."

"Allow us lend you our strength, Berch Kannag." Bifur is the last to join the group hug. At least he is not calling me little anymore "Let US also help YOU."

"We all love you Soooo much, Thia." Kili drawls drunkenly from somewhere in the house "You are the bestest."

The small group vibrates in laughter and my chest warms at the feeling. Squinting my eyes, I actually notice a small glow coming from over my heart. It's similar to the shine of my bead but its a soft blue instead. Peeling my shirt slightly away from my chest, I see the kiss mark from Nienna illuminating the inside of my shirt but instead of lips, thank goodness, it is in the shape of a water droplet. I quickly release the neckline of my blouse when I notice Bifur peeking over the hem. He grins in mirth and shrugs his shoulders. He is related to Bofur after all, and is in Beorn's home: a collection of pervs. 'Wait for it... wait for it..."
"That's some love bite ye've got there." Bofur waggles his eyebrows suggestively "A gift from the Valar?"

"Yes." I say pulling about of the embrace

"Which gift is it?" Bilbo asks, straightening out his coat

"Heart ache." the group frowns and glances at each other "And courage."

"**Then let us grant you more courage than heartache.**" Bifur bows his head before puckering up his lips and making kiss noises **"I'm feeling most courageous."**

"I agree." Bofur copies his older cousin

I laugh but push my palms into each of their faces. The group soon descends into light hearted conversation of family, kiss marks, and love bites. None the less, I am still going over the glow of my chest in the back of my mind. I can only hope that it is a promise of courage and not more heartache. I'm not sure how much more I can take.

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1) I will be adding a few more chapters to the side story. It will be the alternate POV of this chapter. There were so many that I wanted to get in but I didn't want it to seem like you were reading the same thing over and over again. Thus in the side chapter we have Bifur, Thorin, and Bilbo's POV of different portions of the scene. So if you have some free time, go read it and review.

2) Ori's Q&A is coming up soon, so tell me any more questions you want to be asked. Im still working on incorporating the previous ones but we still have a few chapters before that is up. Tell me what you think. My job is to listen, so tell me something.
To end in fire

Chapter Notes

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 39

It isn't a long while before Fili comes to retrieve us from our prison. I'm tempted to snub him but a well placed look from Bilbo has me following the dwarf prince out the house without much of a fuss. 'I mean seriously, come on. Who does he think he is ordering me around?" Dang it... he holds the position of crowned prince.

"Prince or not," I grumble under my breath "I take that to offense."

We meet up with the group, who are sitting as if they are posing for a teen flick drama. The older gents, like Balin, Oin, Gloin, and Gandalf are seated at the various the tables. Where as the strongest members, such as Dwalin and Dori, along with Beorn for good measure, stand beside Nori. I wouldn't be surprised if I saw the king Sun bathing on the roof of a dodge. Barechested. Tanned... muscular... ahem.

But no. Thorin stands alone; beckoning me to his place standing in the center of the company. Bilbo departs from my side to sit beside Bombur and Ori, who are far enough to be out of the way but close enough to hear. Fili tugs on my arm to move me forward; towards his king and away from Bifur and Bofur, who are quick to follow as personal security. Fili passes me off to his uncle and I feel like I'm at a wedding for about two seconds until we turn and face the kneeling dwarf who most certainly isn't a priest.

"Uh... What are we doing?" I ask finally, slightly weirded out

"We are hear to determine a great many things." Thorin starts off as if he were making a presidential speech "We will clear the air of all doubt pertaining to Lady Thia Malcolmson. We will then have all ill spoken against her revoked. Lastly, we would ask that you, Miss Malcolmson, provide us with a prophecy to prove that we can not continue this mission without you."

"A prophecy?" I ask, quite stunned at the turn of the events. I was only find for about 20 minutes and they've come up with this game plan "L-like what?"

"Aye, a prophecy lassie." Gloin explains hurtful, but not cruelly, from his place at the table "Ye have given them before. This time however, we would like ye to make it so we can plan to avoid the danger."

"I do not fully agree with this course of action" Gandalf offers, looking all too put out. If I'm honest, I don't like it either but my pleading eyes to the wizard are met with a resigned smile "Nonetheless, it has been decided."
"Of course it has..."

"Do you think you can provide a prognostication without the destruction of the times to come?"

"I... I'm not sure. I just... well. I could... try."

"That is all we can ask of you." Thorin pats my arm before turning into a spokesman... spokesdwarf... again 'Before me stands a woman who is honest of heart, faithful, and strong. She is honorable in her ways and swift in her judgements. Can this be accepted as true?'

"Aye." a nearly unanimous agreement rings out

"He who disagrees may speak their peace." surprisingly no one objects "Son of Korin, has your mind been emptied of your earlier misgivings?"

"I will speak neither against nor for the integrity of the woman until I am able to fully discern her usefulness" he pauses then smirk behind his beard "outside of the bedroom, of course."

I bite the inside of my cheek but ignore his insult. I know that his words are not true and that is enough for me to hold my head high. So I do just that; lifting my head head I give the thief my best disinterested look accompanied by a parentally disappointed sigh.

"Well alrighty then."

I walk quickly into the house, grab Kili's fiddle (its a miracle they kept their instruments through all this) and return to the group. The offensive dwarf immediately frowns from his place but I ignore him; finding a chair and dragging it over to sit in the middle of the company. Smoothing my clothes and crossing my legs, I fold my hands across the fiddle in my lap and wait. I feel my anxiety rising from the attention but I stuff it down into the bottom of my feet, hoping I can stave it off until this night is through.

"The air has been cleared. The ill spoken words have yet to be revoke however." I glance between Nori and Thorin "I will accept an apology and in return will give you the prophecy you desire so greatly."

"That-"

But be forewarned" I interrupt the dwarrow with a quick gesture of my hand. I pause and look in each males face to be sure they are listening "This whole business of foresight is like grasping at water. Just by touching it, you make ripples and truth be told, I don't know how far they reach. In addition to that... Well... whether or not it is avoidable is not my choice to make."

"So you say."

"Some things aren't avoidable." I hiss dangerously, glaring at Nori. He returns it full force but with a sprinkle of caution "You all came on this quest knowing full well that there was a high chance that you'd die. Even with my help, or perhaps because I it, you very well might."

"This..." Fili calls softly and the sound of his voice makes me shake in distress "We understand... Speaking of what you know may lead to an even less desirable outcome."

"...and yet you still want to know..."

"We must try... We must."
"... ok... ok, fine." Shaking my head in an effort to rid myself of the chill up my spine, I direct my attention to Thorin "This could end very bad for you. Do you accept this warning?"

"I do." He answers but in my gut, I know that he doesn't. If he did, he'd run. Or maybe he wouldn't. I'm not sure which prospect is worse: A living coward or a dead hero. The dwarf king turns to Nori during my mental assessment "Son of Korin, what say you?"

"... I apologize... for making accusations without damnable proof." he concedes, mostly out of curiosity

"This prophecy." I present more formally than I knew I could "Do you all accept willingly and with an open heart. Will you all hear it?"

"We do." they answer entranced, clearly affected by whatever magic is running its course "We shall."

"I can not willingly allow you all to interfere with the plan of this world. Even I have... and will do... too often." Nodding to myself, I tap on the fiddle to remember the beat of the song "So I offer you no malleable possibilities or vague warnings but rather, an undeniable truth."

Slowly plucking the strings like a guitar for the instrumental beginning, I summon forth the words In my mind. It might be easier for most people to just say what they need to say, but I connect with music better than with people. As such, I learned to play a large number of stringed instruments including but not limited to the violin and guitar. 'Thorin plays the harp.' The trickle of that knowledge almost makes me smile but my message is not a happy one. In fact, it is something I am sure the king is aware of, but has not shared with his kin in order to bear it in silence. In my heart hearts, I know this session is not based on his lack of belief in me. The exact opposite if I'm being cocky. Closing my eyes, I let the music run through me to tell the story.

"Oh, misty eye of the mountain below
Keep careful watch of my brother's souls
And should the sky be filled with fire and smoke
Keep watching over Durin's sons."

There is a gasp but I can't tell you who it came from. I inhale deeply and begin to strum the little instrument in a way it was meant to be played and yet... somehow the notes do not break. They ring clear through the air, carried smoothly by the wind. My voice is steadier than I feel as I continue in the silence.

"If this is to end in fire
Then we should all burn together
Watch the flames climb high into the night
Calling out father oh stand by and we will
Watch the flames burn auburn on
The mountain side high"

I pause to collect my strength for the next part. I need to say this, sing it, show it. I can only hope
that it is enough to be understood as a warning. That warning being: Smaug is alive. And when he wakes fire shall rain from the sky. Gandalf and Beorn exchange looks of pity, as if knowing the song would only get progressively worse. The wizard most definitely; having been informed of it on Carrick. Bilbo, sweet Bilbo, looks so close to tears that I quickly avert my gaze from his face and press my eyes closed. Strumming fluidly, I press on.

"And if we should die tonight
We should all die together
Raise a glass of wine for the last time
Calling out father oh
Prepare as we will
Watch the flames burn auburn on
The mountain side
Desolation comes upon the sky"

I force open my eyes to look at the group. The image is enough to make me want to stop. Each person in attendance watches me with an expression of haunted despair. Balin drops his head into his hands as Gloin and Oin lean into one another. Dwalin wraps an arm around Fili's shoulder, allowing Nori to do the same with his brothers. Nori... Nori watches me, with a silent plea on his face for this to be a payback joke. And I wish it was because who can stand before a dragon, warning or no?

I press on, meeting Thorin's eyes and he returns my gaze unwavering but with pure anguish. His mouth is parted as a near silent breath of agony escapes his lips and all I can do is suck in each one. I shakily inhale at the heated pain in my chest and without even looking, I know my mark glows. Still, I unceasingly push forward.

"Now I see fire
Inside the mountain
I see fire
Burning the trees
And I see fire
Hollowing souls
I see fire
Blood in the breeze
And i hope that you'll remember me"

I pick up the bow and start to play the instrument as it was meant to be played, skipping a verse since it does not pertain to the message I am trying to convey. This isn't about a pretty song this time. It's about a probable death and I need them to hear it. Bofur removes his hat and places it in his lap, releasing a shaky breath as he drags his brother and cousin into a tight hug. Bifur gazes at
me with such confused misery that I can no longer watch the scene. I close my eyes against my friends tormented faces and trill the next part of song out. My voice picks up in volume as the bridge rolls along.

"And if the night is burning

I will cover my eyes

For if the dark returns then

My brothers will die

Die, die, die, die .die. They'll die if I can't do this right. Fili. Kili... Thorin will die. Be gone from this world. DEAD. I grit my teeth against the barrage of images of his death. The painted stones over his eyes. The pale skin stretched across a shallow carcass. That damned arkenstone, pressed firmly into his cold hands. And then come the images brought on by this \textit{GIFT}. The visions of his body laid to rest on the freezing stone. His corpse rotting and his eyes... The worst vision is of his eyes. His beautiful blue eyes... never to open again. It's like a blow to my very soul and once again I question my irrational tie to this dwarf. I'll save him. I will because I have to. Future be damned, I'll save him.

And as the sky is falling down

It crashed into this lonely town

And with that shadow upon the ground

I hear my people screaming out"

My voice cracks as tears trail out my eyes and slip into my mouth. My throat constricts around my words. I stop strumming and turn the fiddle into a drum to keep the bass. I am hardly singing anymore, just talking against a tune.

"And I see fire

Inside the mountains

Burning the trees

Hollowing souls

Blood in the breeze

You know I saw a city burning out

Feel the heat upon my skin

And I see fire

Burn auburn on the mountain side"

There is a hush across the group as I finish. The occasional sniff and shuffle of clothing is the only sound offered. The wind blows quietly and I close my eyes savoring the moment. It picks up my hair off my neck in a playful fashion that hardly fits the moment but I welcome the distraction. If I hadn't just told the group that they were going to burn to death, I might be inclined to smile. Placing the instrument on the floor, I open my eyes and walk over to Nori.
"That is why I am here." I say standing tall "I'd appreciate it you didn't call me a whore for trying to save your lives."

"...I... It would seem that... I was... mistaken."

"Unforgivably." Ori adds, dropping to his knees and pulling his brothers down with him "Please. He does not deserve it but I ask nonetheless. Please, forgive him."

"It was... not my best moment." The dwarrow concedes but I say nothing. It's a waiting game but I understand that this is a matter of pride. I can be patient. He looks up with his mouth in a thin line and I know we still have our issues, but in his gaze I at least find some remorse "I was mistaken. Accept my apology."

"Nori." I kneel in front of him and offer my hand "I don't like my comrades bowing to me."

"Comrades?"

"As annoying, rude, and disrespectful as you are" I begin with a sad smile "I would still rather be friends than enemies. If thats alright with you."

"I..." he seems at a genuine loss for words "I think I would prefer that... very much."

Determining that the easy part is over, I turn my attention to the angst ridden king. He, like many of the other parties percent, is still in a state of deep sorrow. I rise from my position and stuff my anxiety further into my feet. 'Just a little more. He needs this.' I walk up to the king and after taking a deep breath, I engulf him in my arms. Pulling him tightly against me, I sway slightly as my mother often did to me when I needed consolation that words couldn't give. After a few seconds his arms rise up and encircle my shoulders, pulling me deeper into our embrace. I lean into his ear to whisper calmingly.

"I am here. I will change this."

"How can you be so sure?" he asks while tightening his arms "What if-"

"I did not cross the space/time continuum just to watch morbid fire works." I lean back in his embrace to look him in the eye "Will you please trust me? It's about time you started."

"You are correct." he pulls me back into his embrace and I start to lose control of my anxiety again. I mean, I think it's anxiety "It is time I started trusting you."

He thankfully pulls away then and I can breathe a little more freely. I feel myself getting lightheaded from all the attention and barely notice Bifur coming over to me. My control totally slips when the dwarf grabs the back end of my shirt and lift it; subsequently showing my long hidden tattoo. He sweeps his hands across the skin there and I all but lose it.

"Uh- Uhhh. No. No that's... No."

I quickly yank the shirt down but it would seem that the king and ax head have already spotted the inky piece of artwork. Looking at my toes I try to calm myself as my vision blurs. It wouldn't be so bad if the tattoo wasn't what it was. I'm a fanatic of the Hobbit trilogy, one might even say I am obsessed with it. So much so that I got a tattoo of... well... the arkenstone. Full color, scaled to life, realistic to the 'T' and expense as heck.

"Why do you have the king's jewel embedded in your back?" Thorin asks slowly, misunderstanding the image
"...Please leave a message after the beep." I reply fainting.

IMPORTANT! No, the tattoo is not the actual arkenstone. It's JUST a tattoo. I felt it would give a pretty good reason for a couple of dwarves to want to see her back though. So don't be alarmed, she doesn't hold all the goodies on middle earth.

How did you like the chapter? The song is I see fire by Ed Sheeran. I listened to it on repeat while writing this chapter so any complaints can... still come to me because I doubt he'd know what you are talking about.

Don't forget about the side story. It'll hold all the overly sexy bits in it. We shall be leaving Beorn's house next chapter, so get your gear ready.
Chapter 40

I've had dogs before; four or five to be exact. There was my mother's dog, that didn't live very long after I was born. 'I've long forgotten it's name; call me Gandalf.' Then there was Bandit and Muffet; a son and mother pair who lived with my paternal grandparents. The last was Daisy; a well trained German shepherd-collie mix. My siblings and I loved that dog, and animals in general. One could even say we grew up with some pet always in the house. Even so, waking up to a furry anus is not something I enjoy.

"Duke." I moan, throwing my hand across my eyes "Get your butt out of my face. Literally."

"Ah! Welcome back, my dear." Gandalf's voice crowds into my space "You were out for so long. We would have thought you might have hit your head."

With a bit of effort, I rise up on my elbows. I drag my hand across the surface beneath me, acknowledging that I am, once again, resting on Beorn's bed. I also note that my clothes have been changed into my night gear. I close my eyes and sigh deeply before glaring at the wizard.

"Gandalf."

"Yes, my dear?"

"I'm not wearing any pants."

"I would think not." he shakes his head with a cough "You are in your night clothes."

"Gandalf."

"Yes?"

"Someone changed my clothes without my permission."

"Well, you were not awake to give your consent." 

"Gan-" I space out his name to show my displeasure ":-Dalf." 

"Yes?" he answers, nonplussed

"What is going on?"

The wizened old man offers me a not-very-reassuring smile. I twirl my ring and wait for a
response. He sits on the bed and appears to be thinking of how to break bad news. In response I reach out and pull Duke into my arms, scared of what the wizard would say. The dog whines softly but quiets easily enough.

"You have a very... eccentric birthmark." he starts off

"... Really?"

"On your lower back-"

"Oh! It's a tattoo, not a birthmark."

"You are sure?"

"Uh, yeah. I distinctly remember having to pay for it."

"... why would you choose something so culturally meaningless to you?"

"Its... I... once I saw it, I knew I wanted it. So I got it."

"Hn."

"Its not all that strange were I'm from. I know are girl who has the dwarven call to arms tattooed on her. It's no big deal." I state before blinking and catching on. Pushing my hair from my face, I frown deeply "Those pervs wanted to see it, didn't they?"

"My dear girl, you must understand." I raise a brow as he seriously tries to explain this "You hold the image of the arkenstone on your back in it's exact likeness."

"So you allow them to strip me down and paw at my back?" I ask

I say it without any real heat because I know how it must look. Girl pops up with your right to rule on her back, you'd wanna see. Honestly, I'd want to see it too. That's kind of exactly why I got it. Even so, I feel like it's going to be really awkward from now on. If it could have been helped, I would have avoided showing it all together. I have no idea how Bifur spotted it in the first place.

"No no, of course not." Gandalf interrupts my musing "Oin is the only one who examined you."

"That doesn't make me feel any better, Gandalf."

"I did not think it would." he sighs and rubs his temples "Nonetheless, Oin has discussed it with your guardian as well as with Thorin and myself. It has been determined that you are a portent of sorts."

"Like the birds of Yore returning to the mountain that you guys are always talking about?" I pause to think of the name of the darn bird "A thrush... no, um, a raven."

"Something akin to that." he gives, shifting in his seat "The dwarves see you as a good omen towards Thorin's birthright."

"As if things weren't complicated enough with the transferring of worlds and assorted gifts." I set Duke down and pull my knees under my chin "So now what?"

"Now, you must dress yourself." he pats my leg and stands; his bones snapping into place "It is nearly sun up and we need to start moving if we are to make it to the mountain in time."
"Wait!" I call before he can leave "What about this 'guardian' business? I don't need a babysitter, Gandalf."

"We shall see." he replies cryptically.

I throw a pillow at him but he has already gone through the door. I am left alone, as Duke apparently skipped out with the wizard. Stretching, I roll out of the bed and search for something to wear. *Not that I have an entire wardrobe to choose from.* Selecting a drab tan top and black pants, I pull on the articles, wishing we had time for a bath before we set off. Pulling up my pants over my underwear I pause; I miss my collection back home.

I am fond of bright colors when it comes to under clothes; you'll be hard pressed to find any plain lingerie in my drawers. Even so, I am tired of the sparkling *Terrific Tuesday* sprawled across my backside. Most of the glitter has been washed away from too many scrubbings. Merilin provided me with some Middle Earth styled pairs back in Rivendell but...

"It's just not the same..."

I pout as I pack my things prior to pulling on my comfy boots. I give the room the once over to ensure I haven't missed anything, make the bed, and head out. Strolling into the community room, as I've dubbed the large space, I am immediately greeted with silence. No one will meet my eyes and I start to feel both nervous and angry at their silence.

"If you guys are going to make this weird" I say loudly "then I am going to just go to Erebor on my own and hope for the best."

The reaction is instantaneous. The group starts shouting denials and what not; forbidding me from taking any course of actions in that direction. I grin as they eventually calm down enough for an actual conversation to take place. I grin at Bilbo, who seems to be the only one who knows that I wouldn't do anything so rash. Yet. Thorin advances on my position and I bite my lip thinking of how this would go.

"You bear the King's jewel on your back Miss Malcolmson." he begins without hesitation "Why didn't you tell me?"

"You have an arkenstone in the mountain. You don't really need to see the look-a-like on my back."

"I see. Even so," he turns his head away slightly and speaks so only we can hear "It is beautiful."

"Thank you."

"Just as you are."

"Thank yo-" I stutter to a halt "Wait. What?"

My question is met with nothing but a smirk as the dwarf fully turns and walks away from me. I watch him go, wanting to punch myself in the chest as I feel the familiar heat rising. The need for personal violence increases when he returns with Fili. His smirk is more subdued now but knowing it was there in the first place causes the heat to turn into its regular glow. He lifts an eyebrow and I pout, refusing to meet his gaze.

"You are glowing, Thia." Fili states the obvious

"Yea, I do that sometimes." I reply dryly, trying to act indifferent about it "What do you guys need from me now?"
"It is not we need from you" Thorin answers "It is what you need from us."

"A sword?"

"Yes."

"Oh my gosh." I smile, completely forgetting Gandalf's earlier wording "I get a sword?"

"Indeed." Fili answers stepping up "Here I am."

"...You're a dwarf. Not a sword." my brain empties of the excitement "I'll tell you like I told Gandalf; I don't need a sword wielding nursemaid."

"I may not be able to nurse you" Fili winks at my disgusted face "but I will make it my duty to protect you."

"You really don't need to-"

"It has already been decided." Thorin cuts in, much to my displeasure "He will be your sword and shield for the remainder of the journey. Do not argue."

Not that I can since the pair immediately walk away and I am bombarded with attention from the rest of the company. I allow it to slide only because I think it could work out well if I kept one of the line of Durin with me. 'I don't plan to die, and if he's with me, all the better.' Beorn calls to me and I begin to saunter over to him only to be stopped by popup Fili. Looking at the dwarf in annoyance does no good as he only has eyes for the skin changer. I roll my own eyes before shrugging his arm off my shoulder and drifting forward once more. That isn't enough as the prince's arm shoots forward again to halt my movement.

"Is there a reason why you are stopping me?" I say calmly but really meaning 'Let go before I drop kick you into next week.' "Because there needs to be."

"The skin changer." he growls out, still refusing to take his eyes of Beorn "I do not trust him."

"That's really too bad." I say, in mock sympathy "Because I need to talk to him. Either come or stay, but I'm going."

I cross the ten step gap between us and him with Fili trailing cautiously behind. Reaching the bearman I smile and offer him up a hand. He blinks at it for a moment before grasping my forearm and gently shaking it. I think that's all until he suddenly wraps a bright pink cloak around my shoulders and ties it under my chin.

"A gift." he says, finishing the tie neatly "I heard that you are fond of this color."

"Oh I am! Very much so." I twirl, allowing the cloak to billow around me like a dress "It must have been so hard to make it."

"Indeed." he agrees and shakes his head playfully "But it is a gift from both myself and the creatures who dwell here."

"Thank you." I say genuinely "I will treasure it like... well... treasure."

I grin and he returns it before yanking my arm up and pulling me into his arms in a bear hug. Well then... Fili starts freaking out, pulling his sword and cursing under his breath.

"Release her at once!" he shouts loudly gaining the attention of the company
"Why would I do that?" he replies, not making any move to do as the dwarf ordered. In fact, I'm more than a little sure that this is just to upset the dwarves "She has slept in my bed for nearly a week, may I not finally hold her in my arms before she goes?"

"Hey, this again?! That isn't far!" I cry, pushing against his treetrunk arms but only getting arms length away "I didn't even know it was yours until recently."

"Her place is not by your side." Kili comes to stand beside his brother, though he keeps his bow lowered "Turn her back into her guardian's custody."

"Guys... Guys, this isn't a custody battle."

"What is going on here?" Thorin thunders over and I mumble under my breath at the chaos "What is this?!"

"I have taken Thia into my arms." Beorn answers truthfully and with no small amount of pride "As you can very well see."

"I gave you the task to protect her not an hour ago!" he roars at Fili, who drops his head in shame

"Hey now, It's not really that serio-"

"Return my seer to me, skin changer!"

"She is yours now? I find only my scent here." Beorn chuckles as I sit in his arms wholeheartedly confused. Nuzzling my cheek in a successful attempt to aggravate the dwarf further, Beorn rumbles in amusement "It would look to be that she does not recognize your claim."

"Is this a turf war? I think this may be a turf war." My gaze darts in between the two as they neither deny nor confirm my turfyy suspicions "What are you guys talking about?"

"Hmm? Oh... It would appear that the dwarf king is in lo-" Beorn starts only to cut off by a snarl from Thorin

"Enough! You gave your word that you would assist us. You have done so. Now let us be off!"

The bearman grins down at Thorin before setting me on my feet where I am immediately shoved behind the Durin brothers. We move so quickly that I do not have time to argue. I'm grabbed and hustled onto a horse of my own and led out the barn door without a chance to say good bye to my friends. I have a feeling that the skin changer will follow until we reach the border but I will not be able to talk with him. Since I don't even get to hold the reins of my horse (my 'guardian' is tasked with that) I am able to turn and yell a quick goodbye.

"Thanks for all the help Beorn! Take care of Duke and Who!" I yell out, startling Fili with my volume "See you in a few months!"

"Indeed!" he laughs back "Shall you bare my sons then?"

"I doubt it!" I answer smiling before the eye burning starts "You will have your son, but I can not say he will be from me. He will be named Grimbeorn and he will succeed you when you pass on."

"Is that so." he asks without it being much of a question. His trust in me in warming "Then you have already given me a son."

"She has done no such thing!" Fili growls before yanking me and the horse away
I wave to the bearman and he waves back; his smile only dimming when my bangles clink. The group trudges along in silence and I am not inclined to break it. It isn't long, however, before Kili joins his brother and they speak in hushed tones, much to my irritation. They aren't even being secretive about.

"I'm right here you know." I say, waving my arms in the air "Either talk aloud or scoot."

"Oh. Well um... we were just wondering..." Kili stammers

"If you would show us the arkenstone." Fili finishes

"No way." I say, twisting my mouth up on one side in a snarl like fashion "I have too much self respect to go around flashing skin to every Fili, Kili, and Lili that asks. Go ask Oin about it if you're that interested."

I cross my arms under my chest and refuse to acknowledge their pleadings. It's enough that Oin saw it. And Thorin. And Bifur. If I showed these two numb skulls, I'd have to show everyone and I have no interest in fainting again. Tugging my reins out of Fili's hands, I nudge the horse's side and ride up to Bilbo. He smiles and nods, allowing us to fall into a comfortable silence... momentarily.

"About the ring..."

I groan and bury my face into the horse's mane. I miss the days when all I had going for me was a mild understanding of the future. This all inclusive vacation is getting on my nerves.
Chapter 41

It takes me an hour of company hopping before I can find someone who doesn't ask about my 'blessing from Mahal.' 'Seriously. His gift was a semi-strength enhancing bead that I haven't gotten the hang of yet, not a tattoo.' This is exactly why I didn't mention it, too much drama. I ride next to Ori; taking advantage of his timid nature, while ignoring Fili's presence. He has been following me around from the beginning of my pony dodging days. The sheepish dwarf keeps shooting me curious glances but has yet to say anything of consequence, for which I am eternally grateful. Even so, I feel for the little guy, and decide to throw him a bone.

"Ori. We never got to have that Q&A session last night." I offer him a half smile "I kind of passed out on you."

"Oh. Um... It's alright. We forced you to use your gifts too much." he nibbles his lip before continuing "What is a 'Q&A' session?"

"Ah, Q stands for question and A stands for answer." I patiently explain and correct his assumption "Anyway, I didn't faint because of overusing my gift. I only get tired 'jumping, if I go too far."

"Why did you faint then, lassie?" Gloin asks from behind us

"Hmmm. I have social anxiety." at their confused expressions I explain it as best as I can "It's kind of like a fear of social situations."

"Like giving a premonition to a large group of burly dwarves, for instance?" Bilbo offers

"Yeah, though giving a premonition to a small group of gentle hobbits would cause the same reaction." I confirm, glancing down at my shackles as my info group gets larger "It also extends to touching; such as holding hands, hugs, and kisses."

"So why did you hug Thorin if it pains you so much?" Ori questions, taking out his book and jotting down what I say

"Because he needed me to more than I needed not to." I rub the back of my neck, at the grateful expressions "Even with my good intentions, the prolonged contact still got the better of me."

"And then ye fainted like Bilbo did when we told 'im about Smaug." Bofur joins with a laugh

"To be fair, a healthy fear of dragons is more reasonable than a fear of hugs." the hobbit huffs

"Hey!" I cry out in defense
"If what you say is true," Fili breaks in; both curious and skeptical "then why did you faint in Uncle's arms but not with the skinchanger?"

"That's a fluke; annnnd you guys don't know what a fluke is." I'm having a bit of tip-of-the-tongue syndrome "What's it called when you have a means of evasion in a contract?"

"A loophole?" Balin suggests

"Yes! Thanks Papa Bear. It's a loophole!" I send the snowy dwarf a thankful grin "Beorn can turn into a bear."

"And?" Fili asks impatiently

"My anxiety doesn't extend to interactions with inanimate objects, animals, or young children. Since Beorn is part bear, I guess he is exempt. Oh! I might be able to get along well with Tilda."

"Who's Wilma?" Oin hollers

"I said Tilda, Oin!" I wave off any questions about the girl "You'll all meet her eventually."

"I had not noticed you had such an aversion to... people." Fili murmurs deep in thought. He frowns as his pony tosses it's head before turning his attention back to me "You hide it well."

"Ohhhhh, I wasn't hiding it. I just wasn't screaming it from the rooftops." I shrug my shoulders "If you remember, I expressed my 'aversion' plenty of times. Though, I am proud to say that it isn't nearly as bad as it was back home."

We spend the morning listing instances in which I freaked out majorly in response to too much touching. Sometime during that, breakfast of cold sausage and bread was passed out. 'What I wouldn't do for a microwave.' I eat the food and drink lukewarm water from my water skin, wondering what animal the skin came from. I quickly banish the thought from my brain, hoping it wasn't a pig bladder or something of that ilk.

"How do you show affection between...l-l-l-l-" 

"Lovers." Bomber finishes for the stuttering scribe

"Oh you know. It varies. There is no one way, though simply telling them is easiest. You should really just get to know your partner's likes and dislikes. More meaningful than expensive gifts. Uh..."I wrack my brain for other examples. I've never seriously dated anyone so I'm severely limited "Make the food they like... The extra mile on the same stuff you do for anyone you care for except in those more... private... ways... that I'm not going to discuss."

"My turn!" Kill shouts suddenly, startling me at the intensity of his exclamation "What is your favorite food?"

"Pancakes." I answer immediately and I hear Bofur choke out a nervous laugh. He avoids my gaze as if I were Medusa and I feel sort of confused "What? What is it?"

"Um… Nothing!" the youngest Durin chuckles forcefully "Its just that... uh… pancakes are difficult to come by regularly. Yeah."

"….Uh…" He's trying to distract me but I'm more interested in why pancakes are some sort of delicacy "Why?"
"W-what do you mean? The ingredients?" I stare at the dwarf with a lifted brow. When he sees that I'm genuinely at a loss, he glances at his brother, as if asking for help "I apologize but… I do not understand what confuses you."

"Why are pancakes so hard to come by?" I ask plainly with a huff "Once you gather the ingredients its a really simple process."

"Gathering those ingredients can be difficult." Ori provides quietly. "It takes much trading to come by the necessary materials for baked goods. Do you… not barter in your home? Or are your people farmers? With so many people, you must all farm in order to sustain yourselves."

"Have you seen the lass's hands?" Gloin grumbles from behind us "Not a callous on 'em. There's no way she's ever done any labor of that sort."

"Gloin is right. My people aren't farmers. At least… most of them aren't." Not to mention most of our food doesn't come from your typical farm. Yay, mass production! Still, that's a topic that would take too much time to explain, mostly on account of myself not knowing all the ins and outs of the industry. Clearing my throat meaningfully, I stroke my steed's neck "It's difficult to explain but food isn't all that hard to come by. We have a large supply and variety. If you have the money to afford it, of course."

"Of course." Agrees Balin sagely. He has been nodding along quietly from the get go "Your king must be most capable to have such prosperity in his kingdom that his people do not even know from whence it comes."

"Oh… well yes. I mean he would… if we had a king."

"Yer Queen then." Dwalin drawls from beside Thorin

"Uh. We don't really have one of those either."

"You have no monarchy?" Ori squeaks in a voice that almost sounds like fear "To whom do you swear your allegiance to then?"

"The country itself, naturally."

"... Interesting."

"Surely you must have a ruler." Dori interrupts with a frown, clearly affronted by the notion of a free people "Without one there would anarchy!"

"We have a leader, not a ruler. We call that person the president. They are elected every 4 years and cannot serve more than 2 terms. There, of course, is a system we dubbed 'checks and balances' which keep different factions of the government from having too much power."

"I see…" But I know he doesn't. Dori doesn't seem to be the type to just 'see' from another point of view all of a sudden. His face of skepticism furthers this idea "Has your home always been this way?"

"No. Our forefathers were governed by a different nation but decided they wanted their independence. They declared their freedom, fought to keep it, and its been so ever since."

"So…" My mini history lesson is met with strained silence making Kili's questioning voice all the louder "You're from a land of… traitors?"
"What? No, we just…" Well, goodness. I'd never thought of it that way. A whole country of people just deciding that they were done must of felt like a kick in the pants to the British. Oops "Huh. I guess you… COULD say that. But that whole business was nearly 400 years ago; a long time in human years. We really only discuss it in history classes."

"History… class…" I grin at the sweater clad dwarrow as he flips through his notes. He skims the pages before coming up with an exclamation "Aha! Yes, here it is. When we first met you, you mentioned that you had some level of training."

"Yes." I won't mention that that conversation was between Gandalf, Thorin, and I meaning someone was eaves dropping "Twelve years of required education and any number of additional years of training in your chosen profession."

"Chosen profession?" For the first time since we set out, Nori speaks up. His comment is said with a scoff but I don't believe he means it in an insulting manner "Are you a midwife?"

"N-no."

"Then what need of you twelve years of trainin' to become a wife?" his gaze flickers to mine before darting away as he mumbles under his breath in what I'm going to ASSUME is a joke "Your skills must be extensive."

"…I wasn't training to be anyones wife."

"A daughter of men needs only to train for the job she will have. Wife and mother." I open my mouth to deny the statement but the thief isn't done "Dwarfdams of course can chose not to become either of those, though it is highly encouraged. Woman however are… unsuited for life outside those duties."

"Excuse me?" I hiss, trying to keep my voice level only because I know this is ignorance and not cruelty spewing from his mouth

"You are clearly unlike the women he has encountered so far." Thorin inserts before I can have a conniption "What areas of study were you educated in?"

"… Reading, math, science, and history were basic areas that progressively got more difficult as you aged. Later, more complex ideas such economics and statistics were added, as well as abstract lessons in art and physical education."

"The lads."

"-were given the same lessons." I finish Bofur's question before he can ask it. He bobs his head in acceptance, grinning softly "There are of course parenting classes… if you want to become a parent, that is."

"... You betray your king, fancy yourself above labor, and you disregard your natural born duty as a woman." Nori shakes his head in true disbelief "Our king can sure pick 'em."

"… I picked him, not the other way around."

"You-"

"Aw, Nori!" Bofur huffs in exasperation. He throws his arms in the air to stretch as he yawns into his shoulder "Jus be content with known' we've come across a stubbornly independent seer. How much MORE difficult-"
"Hey!"

"-would this trip 'ave been 'ad she been an empty headed waif, hm?"

"… I almost would prefer she be a wench, hellbent on becoming barefoot and pregnant." he snarks before smirking "Would have been easier to leave her behind."

"Well suck it up, buddy" I return, lifting my head proudly before kicking out my foot and patting my stomach "because I'm wearing shoes and my belly is empty."

"…Do you ever want to have children?" Bilbo asks timidly after the group has quieted down "Ever?"

"Oh yes." I nod vehemently before glaring at the relieved sighs of the macho males around me "As many as I can emotionally and financially support."

"Well…" Thorin huffs from up ahead "At least there's that."

Thus ends the conversation and I gaze around not really seeing much as the day progresses. When night approaches, we dismount and bed down for night; repeating the cycle for the next two days before we finally reach the gates of mordor. 'Alright, alright. Miiirkwood.' And it wears that name probably. The forest is dark and foreboding; no light shines with in and I'm seriously contemplating just jumping to the other side. Not that I know anything about the other side so I could end up in Rohan for all I know.

"The Elven Gate." Gandalf announces eerily "Here lies our path through Mirkwood."

"This place is spoo-oo-ky." I voice like Scooby doo to no one in particular, scanning the area "Murky indeed."

"No sign of the orcs." Dwalin says expectedly, scanning the horizon "We have luck on our side."

"This forest feels sick, as if a disease lies upon it." Bilbo walks over to my side, rubbing his arms as if cold "Is there no way around?"

"Not unless we go two hundred miles north" Gandalf starts before meeting my eyes "Or twice that distance south." I finish as the wizard suddenly goes into memory mode. I knew he would but he should have finished the statement first. The deviation worries me but I can't focus on it now "As much as I like you guys, I don't think I can 'jump' us all to the opposite end."

"For that I am thankful." Nori pipes up, coming towards me but stopping about two yards away "I did not enjoy it the last time."

"Haha." I say dryly "You're sooooooooo funny."

Dragging Bilbo a little ways off, I lean down and place my ring in the palm of his hand. He looks so utterly shocked that I think he may faint on me. He lifts his eyes to mine and I just shrug. I have no plans on allowing him the keep the cursed object of course but I know that now would be a great time to let things run their natural course. He needs to experience and learn on this adventure; things he will not do if I coddle him the whole way. Maybe I'll throw the darn thing into Mordor myself when its all said and done. 'Fellowship need not be.' From my bent position, I whisper into his pointed ear.

"Go to Gandalf and repeat what you told me at Beorn's house." he creases his brow in confusion
"My presence has changed a few things. I am only trying to keep the correct things on the straight and narrow.

"Not my horse" Gandalf's voice rings out, startling the hobbit and the rest of the group "I need it!"

"You're not leaving us?" Bilbo asks, tiptoeing over to the wizard

"I would not do it unless I had to." he looks down at the hobbit and then over at me. Offering him a small smile and nod, he returns the gesture "You've changed, Bilbo Baggins. You're not the same hobbit as the one who left the Shire."

"I was going to tell you. I already told Thia about it." the hobbit pauses and glances back at me before speaking again "I... I found something in the uh... Goblin... tunnels."

"Found... what?" the wizard asks, watching the hobbit fiddle with his pocket "What did you find?"

"...My courage."

The hobbit and wizard stare at each other before Gandalf's head snaps in my direction. I shake my head once in a firm jerking movement when he opens his mouth and raise both my hands to show him the lack of finger ornaments. Suspicions confirmed he turns his attention back to the hobbit and looks down at him sadly.

"Good. Well, that's good." he pats Bilbo's shoulder, knowing the darkness he carries "You'll need it."

The hobbit bobs his head before scurrying away from the wizard. I take his place, all too conscious of Fili's watchful eye. When I reach the old man I sigh deeply at the question in his eyes.

"Why did you give him the ring?" his voice lowers to a harsh whisper "You know of its corruptive power."

"Yes, I know of it's power quite clearly, thank you very much." I won't be lectured on this, not when its the only thing I'm sure about "He originally holds the ring for many years without succumbing to it's power. Although I will not give him the chance this time."

"Then why give him the ring at all?" he asks exasperated

"Because I can't fix everything." I growl, shocking the wizard "Bilbo is the hero of this story, not me. If he does not grow then when a time comes that I am unable to assist them, he will be useless. He is not weak, and I will not make him so."

"... What times approach that you fear so much?" he asks is a sullen voice

"Oh Gandalf." I say shaking my head "You know just as well as I. Leave the company to me while you go grave digging."

No more is said as Thorin comes over and interrupts our impromptu meeting. Fili comes along and guides me away; not feeling up to a fight, I allow him to do so. I catch bits and pieces of the distancing conversation as I rejoin the company.

"I'll be waiting-"

"-astray? What does-"

"-stay on the path, do not leave it. If."
"Fili. I think I might be able to help." I say tapping the young dwarf

"You help just by being here, Miss Thia," he replies softly "There is no need for you to stress yourself."

"Yeah, uh huh. That's nice." I ignore the way some of the nearby dwarves still look so awestruck by me. I'm not really the good omen they think me to be. "Gandalf's says the forest will lead you astray." at his hesitant nod I continue "One of my gifts came from Oromë. You know, the Lord of the forests."

"I remember you mentioning it back in Rivendell." Thorin voices, coming over having finished his conversation with Gandalf "His gift was safety from both forests and those who dwell within, correct?"

"Pretty much." I chirp, shifting on my feet "So the forest CAN'T lead me astray. That would be hurting me in the long run. So if I follow the trail, all you all have to do is not lose me or it. Lucky."

"Indeed." he agrees, peering deeply into the forest before turning those eyes to me "Mahal has truly blessed us."

"Well, not really. This is his gift." I say hotly and flicking the braid by my head in an attempt to distract myself from whatever his gaze keeps doing to my soul "I still don't know what strength exactly he gave me."

"Do not worry." Kili charges up next to me "You have the strength of thirteen dwarves on your side. That's plenty."

"You're... absolutely right Kili!" I say as it dawns on me

"I am?" he questions, before accepting it blindly "I mean, of course I am!"

"I can not believe it took me so long to figure it out." I bounce on my feet "It explains a lot actually."

"What have you found, my dear?" Balin asks

"The parameters of my last gift!"

"Oh?" he tilts his head in curiosity "What are they?"

"Strength! But not any old kind of strength."

"What are ye bouncing around for, lassie?" Dwalin asks, leaning on his battle ax

I bound over to him and attach my hand to his bare neck. Ignoring his protests, I then lift his ax as if i had been bench pressing logs all my life. The group offers gasps and Bofur even claps like I'm a sideshow. When Dwalin comes out of his stupor and steps away from my hand, disconnecting my touch, the ax increases in weight and plummets into the ground.

"What happened?" Thorin questions in amazement and confusion

"I gain the strength of the person I am touching." I shiver at the limits. My weakness is my strength. "It only works when I'm touching bare skin. It's why I was able to lift Dwalin's ax, but not a random table on my own... I tried."
"I see." Thorin's eyes darken to a dusky indigo after a moment "It is also why Azog could not pull you from his face the night on the cliff."

"Uh... yeah." I shift uncomfortably as he pierces me with an expectant expression. What does he want? An apology? I clear my throat with a shrug "So... yay us. I'm not helpless. Now can we move on? We are kind of on a time limit."

"Aye, that is true." Balin tries to get us moving "We should go."

"Come. We must reach the mountain before the sun sets on Durin's day." I open my mouth to tell him about that but he growls menacingly and shoots me a glare so I decide against it. No need to poke the tiger "Let us go, we've but one chance to find the hidden door."

Yodles. This chapter was written to the dark version of pop goes the weasel Don't ask me why, I haven't the slightest clue, It just happened. I for your reviews, I love them so much. So so so so so so so so so so so so so so so so very much. Keep it up. Until next time
DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 42

"I spy... with my dwarven eye something... brown."

"Is it the dirt? It's dirt is it not? Too easy, brother! My turn...ummmm... I spy with my little eye something... brown."

"You can't pick dirt! I JUST picked dirt."

"I am not... What? I'm NOT."

"... Tree bark?"

"Yes yes... I spy-"

"It is my turn!"

"I am older. I get two turns."

"But-"

"Would you two please shut up?" I drag my hand down my face in exasperation "The only thing around to spy is dirt and trees!"

"You taught us the game, Miss Thia." Kili snarks

"Only because no one could stand you guys trying to play leap frog anymore."

"You taught us that game too, Miss Thia." Fili betrays

"Enough of yer childish bickering!" Dwalin howls from the front of the group, seeming two seconds from wringing somebody's neck "If ye want to talk so much, get the lass to tell us how to get out of this blasted forest!"

"I'm a seer, not a compass." I shrug as the dwarf glares at me from his place "Trust me to stay on the path but that's all. My sense of direction is worse than Thorin's."

The group grumbles in agreement, remembering the numerous times I got lost walking back from a potty break. 'What am I, a miracle worker?' We have been in Mirkwood for a week and a half now and I still haven't figured out a way to break the bad news to the group. In both the book and movie, they get captured; theres no foreseeable way to avoid it since I don't know the way out of
this maze. Just going east will lead to death by forest or spider so... Regardless, we haven't gotten low enough on food to worry but it'll happen soon enough. There is nothing I can do about it besides preparing them for the worst.

"I want to say this while you guys are still in your right minds." I say loud enough for the group to hear

"Whatever do you mean, lassie?" Balin asks, barely even turning his head

"You already know that we are most likely going to be captured by elves. We'll spend roughly a month in their dungeons before we escape." The group collectively halts and stares at me like I've lost my mind for bringing up such a random memory "On a differing note, we packed all the food we could carry, I know that."

"Aye," Dori hums a confirmation lightly, rocking on his heels. He is in charge of the food portions and takes his job very seriously. It's nearly caused a feud between him and Bonnie "that we did. Carrying anymore would slow us down tremendously. So we are rationing it as well as we can. It'll last us until we depart these woods."

"... but before that we might, and I stress MIGHT... very nearly starve to death."

The sound that erupts from the males is truly terrifying. I cover my ears at the wailing, doing my best not to bend down and cower. When it suddenly drops to pathetic hiccups, I notice the noise isn't coming from the group as a whole, but only from Bombur. The round dwarf is noisily weeping into Bofur's hat, while his brother looks torn between consoling him and snatching his precious cap back. My attention is torn from the scene by hands spinning me around with enough speed to make me dizzy. Not roughly, but quickly and surprisingly.

"Explain." Thorin demands, to which I raise an eyebrow "Lady Malcolmson-"

"Hands."

"Excuse me?"

"We've been over this whole 'aggressively touching' thing, Thorin." I glare at his hands pointedly "A nice 'please' wouldn't hurt once in a while either."

"Explain" he repeats again, dropping his hands "PLEASE."

Since he asks so nicely, I do. I give him a broad understanding of the time leading up to our capture; both variations to be thorough. The river portion I go into as much detail as possible. It only takes a few minutes to lay it out for the dwarf but when I finish my riveting tale, he walks up to a tree and punches it. 'Again with the tree abuse.' He is grumbling out curses as I stomp over with a vengence. Pushing his hand away from the structure, I rub the spot he hit before snapping up his hand to examine the now red appendage. Finding it relatively unharmed, I drop it and put my hands on my hips.

"You really need an anger management class because you have some serious issues that need to be addressed and taken care of."

"I have a right to be angry after what you have foretold, my lady." I shift minutely at the possessive term but shake it off as I know it wasn't meant that way. Ignoring me for the moment, the king cranes his neck and yells to the company "Make camp! We need a plan before we continue."

"Look on the bright side." I respond with a smirk, as he walks away "When we get captured, they'll
"Can't you just... just 'jump' us all to the other side?" Bombur asks, still teary eyed. He grips my arms tightly, giving me a light shake "Your gift would be most useful now!"

"It would put too much strain on her." Fili intervenes, stepping beside me in a defensive manner and disentangling us "I'll not have you stressing Miss Thia, Bombur."

"What if you spaced it out?" Bilbo tries, not liking the idea of capture it hunger. I don't blame him "A few at a time. Would that help?"

"A lot at once or a lot spaced out is still the same lot." I explain, feeling a bit put out with my limits "I'm sorry, but these gifts aren't infinite."

"Then maybe you can go get us some food." the rotund dwarf pressures, face lighting up at the idea "Yes, Yes! You could just sneak into the elf kingdom and get us some food and-"

"Sneak into- Are you mad?" Fili yells in annoyance "Must you only think with your stomach?!"

"If I left you guys alone in the forest, I wouldn't be able to ensure that you stayed on the path." I pat Fili’s thick arm calmly but he doesn't seem to wish to relax anytime soon. Sighing with a shrug, I continue "I'm not risking leaving you guys if I can help it."

"But-"

"Enough!" Thorin's shout echoes through the already silent forest. It bounces off the dying trees; amplified but the lack of bodies to absorb the sound "Lady Malcolmson is not leaving. We will have to make use of our Mahal given legs and WALK out of this forest. Is that clear?"

No more objections are offered and camp making is resumed. I am close to telling Thorin that we won't be 'walking' out; more of a float/drown type thing but think better of it. That would be giving out too much bad information at once, so I hold my tongue. Walking over to Bilbo, I begin setting my gear down next to the hobbit to settle in for the evening. Quick as a whip Fili does the same, with Kili joining soon after. Thorin even suspiciously chooses a tree not to far from my head to lay down his own pack before pulling Balin and Dwalin into, you guessed it, a meeting.

'Talk about protective... and typical' Then again, you're only as strong as your weakest link. Thus, I suppose keeping a watchful eye on the sweet hobbit and one-trick-pony girl is protection for their own behinds. Suddenly, a tingling in my spidey senses alerts me that I'm being watched. I quickly swivel my head, and lean back with a gasp when I come nose to nose with Bifur.

"Um..." I scoot back a little but he only leans in further "H-hello there, Bifur."

"Greetings, Berch Kanaag." he reaches out his hand and gently ruffles my hair. Grasping my braid in his hand, he twirls the bead before greeting me with a smile "How are you feeling today?"

"Well I-"

"Miss Thia, teach us another game!" Kili grabs my hand and yanks me to my feet. I'm lucky Bifur released my braid or he'd of had a clump of my hair in his palm. Unaffected by the near miss, Kili pulls me across camp to Ori "How do you play that one with the colored circles on the floor?"

"Twister, Kili."
Glancing to where Fili and Bifur are adamantly talking, I frown deeply at not being able to understand. I guess talking is the wrong phrase, as they are signing in that secret language of their's. Not knowing sign language to begin with, I have no basis for translation and my gift doesn't extent past spoken or written words. Studying the scene for a bit longer I dismiss it as a hair thing and turn back to Kili.

Fili POV

"Bifur, A word." I sign in firm signals, eyeing my ward distantly to see if she comprehends what is transpiring "Now."

"What need have you of me, princeling?" The addled dwarrow returns in clipped signs, having enough sense to keep his face unexpressive. The young woman watches us closely for a moment but quickly grows bored, confirming a limit to her gifts. Once her attention is on my brother, Bifur's blank face turns explicitly annoyed "Well?"

"Do not touch her so freely." I command, even as his face crunches into anger "She is-"

"Free to accept any and all that she wants." It is an easy task to see his frustration in the way his words all but run together "Neither you nor your uncle can take her free will."

"... No... We can not." Stepping closer to the dwarrow I whisper lowly in common "But we can take yours."

"Is that a threat?" He verbally questions, bending into a defensive stance

"Just a warning." Walking towards my uncle, I throw back at the dwarf "May it be ill given."

The dwarf scoffs at my back as I make my way over to my king. Very little light filters in through the thick canopy of trees but it is enough to correctly discern the time as evening. Placing myself at his side, I relay the happenings between Miss Thia, Bifur, and myself. He listens silently, his only sound being a slight growl when I speak of Bifur touching the woman's hair.

"He does not appear to have any remorse for his actions." Sighing, I fold my arms over onto themselves heavily. My stomach aches for a hearty meal but I know we will be lucky to get a meager share of what is left after the young server's prediction "Knowing that she is your-"

"He can know nothing of the sort." Balin cuts in firmly. Gifting Thorin with a steady expression, the elder continues "Neither can you, Fili. Nor any of us unless you confirm it, your majesty."

I read the tense air between them, knowing Balin speaks the truth and yet finding it unnecessary. We are all aware of what is happening between the two, save for Miss Thia of course. His confirmation should only matter to her yet, it is true: Unless my uncle outwardly accepts her, anyone is free to show their interest. True or, I still find it distasteful. Still... it is her choice to accept proposal and perhaps that is what gives him pause.

"Can we do nothing?" I ask, keeping the helplessness from my voice. The still of situation is uncomfortable at best, though that is not to say that I want the girl to be rushed "Uncle, can you not-"

"You have completed your report." He interrupts smoothly. Raising a hand, he dismisses me effectively "Return to your post."
"But-"

"Return." he says in a firm voice; a voice that he only uses when giving a command. It brokers for no argument and I duck my head in acceptance

"...Yes, sire."

"Twister... We don't have any of the materials for that game." Imagining the swirl of colors and shapes brings a smile to my lips before it turns into a grimace "Not to mention..."

"Not to mention... what?" Ori asks curiously

How does one explain a game that has two different functions depending on the crowd? With children; its a fun game where you get your limbs tangled with your friends. With adults; it's a game where you accidentally grab a color when you were reaching for a person. *No children's game should be played by adults.* Not willing to explain it to the two, I settle for describing red rover instead. They don't seem too upset about the game change and even tell me about some dwarven games. One sounds like the Jewish 'dreidel dreidel' which I find oddly nostalgic, considering that I've never played. I'm still feeling a bit melancholic as Fili comes over with a grimace and sits beside his brother; the duo engaging in a silent conversation.

"You two having fun over there?" I ask, slightly miffed

"Awww, Miss Thia." Kili baby talks only to laugh when I swing at him "Do you want us to talk to you too?"

"Only if it includes why you guys are acting so funny."

"It doesn't." Fili murmurs under breath "There are many things we can discuss, however. For example-"

"You know I'll just find out on my own." they share a look but remain silent. I stare at them intently but they remain tight lipped "Fine then. Be that way."

"Lady Malcolmson." Thorin calls suddenly, pulling me from my blossoming pout "If you would be so kind as to come over here... please."

"Nothing more attractive than a guy with manners." I say, getting up and starting to walk over

"I have found that a woman with a quick wit but silent tongue is quite alluring." Fili replies, a little louder than necessary "You are half way there!"

"Oh Fili." I coo, returning to flick his mustache "My wit is too quick and my tongue too sharp for you ever to even think you have a chance."

"You'd chew him up and spit him out!" Kili howls from from his seat beside his brother "Just like your sister!"

"We aren't sisters for nothing, you know." I call back, walking to the king

"Enjoying yourself?" he asks with a small half smirk

"Yeah. I sometimes get a little..." I wave my hand in a rotating fashion, searching for a word "uh..."

"Coquettish"
"Kittenish?"

"Flirtatious?"

I glare at the three dwarves as they continue to list off an impressive array of words to describe my sudden philandering behavior. 'I may not be able to touch but I'm not a total prude.' I guess it's my own variation of look but don't touch. I suck my teeth prior to crossing my arms and finishing my pout. A thought suddenly crosses my mind, banishing the childish expression for a more giddy one; Bilbo's birthday is coming up! I'll have to get him something while we are-

"Lassie?" Dwalin asks waving a hand in my face "Ye still there?"

"Just planning a party." I smirk at their confusion

Greetings all! Anyone have any suggestions or requests? Tell me. To my lovely reviewers, thank you. So much. You all make it worth time. Until next time!
Chapter 43

Even though our small council debates for over an hour, we can not find a solution. With each failed suggestion, I can physically see the tension in Thorin's shoulders increase until the poor dwarf is as stiff as a board. We come to the conclusion that we will just have to continue on the path we are on, doing our best to avoid disturbing the elves and spiders. Hopefully, though I'm vigilantly doubtful, we will be able to miss out on the dungeon. It makes more work for me since I'll have to find a way to get the elves to join the battle some other way. 'Meh. We'll see how it plays out.' Plan set, I leave the dwarves to their devices and wander the makeshift camp. Feeling a crick in my spine, I stretch my arms up to crack my back.

"It is a very realistic mark." Bifur's voice startles me mid stretch

"Ah, yeah." I fix my shirt and glance around to make sure I haven't flashed anyone else "Thanks."

I make a mental note to obtain a longer one when I can. I would have thought that this shirt would be just fine; it reaches a little further than the waistband of my pants and was never a problem before. Even so, if someone is resting below me they can see slightly under the hem if I stretch, like Bifur has done. Usually it wouldn't bother me but lately I've had a need to be a tad bit more conscious of myself. 'Thieves. Killers. Rapist. The usual.' With another tug on the shirt I smile at the dwarf with a question on my lips.

"You should not hide it." he rises and circles me, returning my silent question with a strange look

"It should be displayed for all, not covered like a nasty secret."

"I can't go around flashing the world, Biffy." I roll my eyes and start to walk away "It's hardly proper."

"I would not mind in the least." he follows closely, his voice never rising above a whisper. He plays a very good perv when he wants to "The sight would be most welcomed."

"That's because you are a panty chaser." I laugh, trying to ignore his closeness

"I do not know the word you call me." he strokes his beard as if seriously contemplating the word, before grinning thinly "But I like it."

"That's because it fits you perfectly."

"What are these 'panties' that I am suppose to chase?"
Our conversation is cut short when I hear Thorin call out for Oin and Gloin to start a fire. It gets extremely dark at night and a fire has been needed to penetrate the inky blackness, if only by a little. It makes me nervous because the forest is more Tolkien then Jackson at night. The darkness is so pervasive that you can't see your hand in front of your face, let alone an enemy at swords length.

I prefer to sleep in total darkness, except of course when I can feel eyes on me. There are plenty; red, yellow, and green eyes blink at us from the shadows when we sleep like a kids movie. If we weren't so frightened of losing someone in the darkness, I'm sure a dwarf would have tried to scare the creatures away. Even more so, I am not looking forward to the moths that are attracted to the flames at night. The deeper we go, the bigger they get. Determining that it would probably be best to put the flames out or at least keep them low, I approach the king.

"Thorin, I think -"

My words are interrupted by something slamming into my ear. I shake my head immediately, trying to dislodge whatever it is but it has become trapped inside. I cry out and smack myself silly at the feeling of tiny legs and wings wiggling in my ear. 'Oh no, oh no, oh no!' Battling my hand harder against my ear, I stumble around blindly, ignoring the worried shouts of the company as I trip over them.

"What's wrong with her?"

"The elves! They've cursed her mad!"

"Stand still lassie!"

"Get it out! Get it out!" I cry, scratching at my ear canal to no avail "Ahhh! Its moving! Get it out!"

"What has happened to her!?"

"I don't know! She was talking to Bifur and -"

"What did I tell you!"

Hands grab me and I am forced to lay down on, much to my displeasure. I thrash wildly; whipping my head from side to side trying to eject the creature from my ear but it is settled deeply. I whine as tears slide from my eyes and into my free ear as the dwarves flip me onto my side. My head is held still and a small torch is brought forth for a better look.

"Gah! One of the blasted moths has lodged itself in the lass's ear." Oin, I think, concludes "Gloin! Get me small tweezers from the bag."

"Lady Malcolmson." I hear Thorin's distorted voice. It is muffled but distinct, as I could never mistake him for another "You must lie still or Oin may harm you."

"I. Can't!" I cry, feeling my stomach roll as the creature twitches in my head. My hysteria increases and my cries escalate to shrieks "It's moving. Oh God, get it out!"

"We will, Atamanel. We will. Please catch yours." he lays down at my side, placing his face beside mine. In my compromised state, I can only catch a vague understanding of the word, accepting that overall, it is meant to calm me "Just look at me. It will be alright."

"How can you be sure?" I whimper pathetically "It's... it's..."
"It is alright." he inserts, gripping my hand "I trust you. Now, you need to trust me."

"But I-" I close my eyes a grip his hand as Oin begins trying to remove the bug "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm scared."

"You need not apologize. There is no shame in being afraid. But know this; I will not allow any harm to befall you." he wipes my tears with his rough hand and I cling to the feeling of his calluses over the fluttering in my ear "I have been blind. Allow me to make it up to you now."

We lay together; Thorin whispering reassurances and me hiccuping responses. I have not forgotten about the insect in my ear; how could I with it moving to avoid Oin's tweezers? Still, I know the importance of not moving, so I focus on Thorin's voice and try to ignore the movement. I try not to shriek at the sound of dry trapped wings crackling much too close to my ear drum as Oin tears off pieces of the insect in the removal.

"Almost..." All of a sudden, the pressure in my ear is released as Oin tugs the whole moth out of my canal "Got ye, ye bugger!"

I leapt up and crash into Thorin in my haste to get away from the wiggling thing between the tweezers. How it's still alive is beyond me. The king wraps his arms around my shaking shoulders and holds me close to his chest, as he always does. I don't even think of pushing him away; merely burying myself into his warm and to try to stop trembling.

"Shhhh, It is alright now." he strokes my back gently "There is nothing to worry about now Lady Malcolmson."

"Screw it... I forgive you." I sniff out, not feeling angry at him in the least anymore "You can call me Thia again."

"My crimes against you have not lessened."

"No... but you were here for me when I needed you." I rub my eyes, trying not to fall asleep on the guy "You have proven to be a friend. A temperamental, angry, violent friend; but a friend none the less."

"As a friend..." he starts, eyes clouding over

"...you are allowed to use my given name." I feel my body betray me; my eyes drooping shut "As long as you behave yourself."

"I will." he continues to hold me, despite my dozing state "I will not act against you again, my beautiful one."

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**Thorin POV**

My seer falls into an exhausted slumber and I think to watch her now peaceful face for a spell. The moment however is quickly ruined by the snickering of the company as they also watch the scene, much to my chargin. Coin purses can be heard being flung around as well as groans and jeers. Curling my lip softly, I glare minutely at the group but they just smirk back at me.

"So have you finally admitted it to yourself, lad?" my advisors asks, having hinted on the subject with a battle ax numerous times "It took long enough for our Berch Kanaag to become your... Atamanel was it?."
"Aye, that it did and was." Bofur agrees kindly, padding his hat with his newly acquired coin "Though it won me a bet, so I don't mind in the least."

"I was sure ye wouldn't say anything until we reached Erebor." Dwalin groans, turning his empty pockets inside out "I was certain that if ye hadn't jumped her by now-"

"DWALIN." His brother seethes patiently "Enough."

"It doesn't count!" Kili whines, trying to hide his coins from his brother "She wasn't even awake to hear it!"

"But we were." Fili snatches the prize and drops it into his pack "That means he admitted it."

"You are all addled." I stand and easily carry Thia to her bedroll while the bickering continues. Gazing down at her, I know that I had not thought I would find my one when starting this quest. In fact, with alienated being so rare the thought that I might even have one had not crossed my heart, let alone mind, in many years. I had even given up on the need of a political marriage once Fili and Kili were born. Even when this blessing quite literally, and slightly painfully, landed in my lap, I thought it best to keep her at arms length but that is proving to be more of a distraction than I am willing to allow.

Had I claimed her properly when I first recognized the girl as mine, she would currently be safely waiting for me in Rivendell; well fed and prepared for her new duties. Instead, she is beside me; starving in this bloody forest and PRAYING that we are captured by elves. It will do me no good to think of what could have been when we have more serious tasks at hand. She is here. The elves are not. I will keep her here and keep them away. Nodding my head to her own aids in clearing my mind of such thoughts; strengthening my resolve. Tucking the woman in tightly, I turn back to group and give them all a piercing look.

"None of you shall repeat what I have said to Thia when she wakes. When I decide to officially court her, I will inform her myself."

"You act as if she would have you."

I turn towards Bifur, who is watching me with an expression of pure distain. I have long suspected he has feelings for the young woman but whether they extend past lust or not, I do not know. His shoulders shake with barely controlled rage as he rumbles over to me; snapping twigs under his boots with every step.

"Once Erebor is reclaimed, I will be able to provide her with all she could ever need. Every king needs a queen and as mine, she will want for nothing." It is only fitting that my one should be such a sure sign of my right to rule. Our life together has already begun, and I see no reason as to why it should not continue. Nodding to myself, I chuckle at the seething dwarrow's countenance "Why would she not have me?"

"You pompous- Because she is mine!" he snarls, clenching his fist until they look close to bursting "Atamanel you call her? My air is she, not yours! She can not take another when she already belongs to myself."

"Bifur..." his hatted cousin places a hand on his shoulder, trying to calm him "The lass is Thorin's one; you know this. We all know this. She can not belong to you."

"He does not deserve her! He does not KNOW her, not like I do." he shrugs off the hand
angrily, clearly distressed by the events. I would let his aggravation pass unaddressed, as usual, if not for the topic at hand "She is mine. Your one she may be, or perhaps she isn't, but she belongs to me!"

"That it not the way these dealings proceed. Her rightful place is by my side!" I return sternly and switch to Khuzdul, not fond of the closeness to treason the dwarf is treading "Even if she were not my own, she still would not be yours!"

"I would care for her better than you could ever hope, your majesty!" he mocks

"She is Uncle's one, Bifur!" Fili defends, trying to reason with the dwarf. The other members agree, which only serves to agitate him further "Do not make this difficult. You have no claim on her."

"She prefers my touch to any of yours." he hisses with misplaced pride, stepping towards me again until we are chest to chest. I wave Dwalin away, as he approaches swiftly to remove the offender "Rarely does she flinch from my touch as she does the rest of you."

"She prefers the touch of no one; she has told us as such." I sneer in return, baring my teeth. Our causes the dwarrow to relent a bit, as he backs away and begins pacing "She is just too kind to remove you from her side. I will see it as my duty to aid her in both areas."

"She is too kind to tell you to go screw yourself!" He flings back, spittle flying in his rage "After all you have done to her, you have no right to claim her as your one! None!"

"I have every right. The ONLY right!"

"U-uh, um... excuse me. I do not fully understand what's going on... as you are no longer speaking common..." the halfling speaks from his place beside the slumbering woman drawing my gaze to him "but I think Miss Thia should probably be awake to hear it... whatever it is.

"And she will be quite soon" Ori adds distantly "if you two do not stop yelling..."

We turn our attention to the lump in the bedroll that is twisting as if greatly disturbed. I feel an ache in my gut at having played a part in interrupted her much needed rest. Moving over to her side, I whisper to her soothingly until she stills and returns to her deep sleep. Still, I will not have my claim on the girl questioned or argued. Straightening to my full height, I stare down my nose at the defective dwarf. Clearing my face of emotion, I regard him with cold disinterest before addressing the group as a whole.

"Thia Malcolmson is my One. This can not be disputed. Mahal blessed our union not only by giving her the gifts she needs to insure my success, but also by placing my birthright as king of Erebor upon her skin." I peer into each face and find no expressions of denial, Bifur notwithstanding "As I have confirmed the connection, none may place a claim on her but me, or face the wrath of Mahal himself for disrupting destiny."

"She could deny you. Refuse your hand and take another."

"I will make sure that my one will never have a mind to take any other."

"You can not do this." Bifur snarls with a scowl

I meet his glare with one of my own. I will not be cowed, challenged, or denied in this. Not with
her. Not anymore. Noticing the pathetic fluttering of the dying moth from earlier, I take deliberate steps to place it under my boot. With a crisp crunch, the creature's life is ended and it's transgressions forgiven in death. Stepping forward to stand face to face with the ax headed dwarf I address him once more.

"Watch me."

*Atamanel-breath of all breaths

Hey guys! So, here's another chapter. As you can see, there's some heated tension between Thorin and Bifur. Neither of them are totally wrong but then again, neither is totally right. Poor Thia missed the whole thing. So what did you guys think? I really do love hearing any constructive criticism or comments you guys have. Lay it on me. Thank you for your reviews. Until next time!
It's warm. Not overly warm where you want to stick your foot out from under the covers or when the spot you are laying in is just seconds from becoming sticky with sweat. Nor is it the warm where your neck is burning up but your shoulders are chilly. No, it's the perfect kind of warm. That Monday morning comfortable bed feeling when you wake up from a really good dream ahead of your alarm and successfully fall back into it. When your bed is so perfect that you lay there and roll around in the sheets, understanding why people marry inanimate objects.

"Yeeees..."

Hissing into the perfection, I snuggle deeper into the warmth of my bedroll and sigh contently. I know I'll have to get up eventually but with the night I've had, I have every intention of enjoying this for as long as I can. I've almost succeeded in falling back asleep when a low rumble from beneath my head stops me in the middle of a pleasurably delirious moan. Immediately I know what is happening but I can't move because of the embarrassment of having snuggled, hissed, and moaned on who I know can only be Thorin freaking Oakenshield. 'MOANED. MOANED.' Feeling my horror, the dwarf-made-pillow strokes my back lightly; chuckling lowly the whole time. When I can can trust myself not to run away screaming, I slowly peel my face off the surface of his solid chest... How can stone be so hot? Forcing myself to lift my eyes from his pecs that show even through all those layers, I examine the source of the laughter. I turn my eyes into slits upon connecting retinas with the grinning monarch.

"You appeared to be very comfortable." he grins widely, showing a mouth full of perfect teeth. He doesn't even have a dentist and his teeth are better than mine. And they are perfect. Evenly spaced, bright, and just perfect all around. I blame the forest when my attention is dragged down to appreciate the fullness of his mouth. It's the forest that makes him look so... i don't know... 'Come and get me' I guess. It has to be the forest. Or the time of day. Either one. I suddenly become reaware of the stroking hands of the king just as he speaks again "Enjoying yourself?"

"Y-y-yeah well... Sorry. Er... Thanks." I quickly roll away from him and get into a sitting position; making sure there is no spit on my face. I'm not a drooler but this would be a heck of a time to start. I must have clung to our fearless leader last night after my moth incident and he was just too much of a gentleman to throw me off. Or perhaps he was just enough of a male to keep me close. Either way, I don't need to force my attentions on the guy. Wiping the sleep from my eyes, I try to think of something witty to say "You make a semi-decent pillow. You should put that on your resume."

"What is a 'resume'?"

"Mmmm, a list of accomplishments and skills. You can give it to potential employers."
"Can they not simply ask you?"

"If they don't like your resume, they don't need to bother."

He nods his understanding and gets up quickly to offer me his hand before going to begin waking the rest of the company. Deciding I haven't got anything better to do, I join in. Grabbing my phone and powering it on, I marvel at the little battery life left and start snapping pictures of each member, ignoring Thorin's confused expression when I take one of him... And later of his butt while he isn't looking. 'I'm such a creep but baby got back.'

Some ways away Dori is sleeping with one arm wrapped around Ori and a hand gripping one of Nori's hair points. Our looks content enough but the thief's face pinches into a frown every time his brother tugs too hard. Snapping a quick one, I gently shake the eldest awake and move on. As expected, Balin and Dwalin sleep side by side by side in a plain fashion. Still, Dwalin has one hand on his weapon while the other is placed gently over his brother's chest. 'Awwwwww.' I watch Thorin call to the pair from a distance at their feet, knowing not to touch either. Bilbo made that mistake last week and was almost sliced in half by both of them. After watching them start to wake, I move to the last sleeping dwarves on my watch.

"Oh my gosh." I giggle aloud

Bofur is sprawled under his brother's bulk, much like I'd been back at Beorn's house. I'd be worried if he wasn't muttering about some very... unsavory things. Snapping the photo, I wake the two with a nudge of my foot before turning around and finding Bifur staring straight into my camera. Nearly dropping the device in surprise, I have enough sense to lower the phone and power down before greeting the dwarf. I can always get more photos later.

"Morning."

"Yes. It is." he points to the phone as I slip it into my bag 'Is that the 'panty' that I am suppose to be chasing?'

"What?" I go to twirl my ring but remember I gave it to Bilbo. I reach up and fiddle with my bead instead "Ah, no."

"Where is it then?"

"... They. Panties are a single pair." his brow creases and I sigh at the direction we are going in. Scratching my head and glancing around, I find everyone is still half asleep. Thorin is even having a bit of trouble waking up the precious princes. Meh. What's the worst that could happen "A pair of panties, like pants -er... trousers, but the term is panty chaser."

"I see. Where are THEY then?" he crosses his arms over his chest, seeming very interested in starting his perceived task "I would like to begin chasing them."

"You only need to ask if you need aid, my lady. Surely there are more qualified to offer their assistance." Much to my dismay, Thorin joins in to the madness. Having decided to simply drag his nephews out of bed by their braids, he leads the clamoring duo to us in a flurry of squawked protests "Are these panties you lost something important to you?"

"Well... I... They are important but not-"

"Then you shall have them." to my horror, Thorin calls the company for an all out panty raid "Lady Thia has lost her panties. We will commence a search for them before moving out."
"Don't ya worry yer pretty lil head about it, lassie." Bofur claps me on the shoulder as I stand in frozen horror. My gaze shifts to him and my nervous smile must have showed some cracks because he rushingly assures me that everything will be alright "Don't worry. We'll find yer panties fer ya!"

"You don't even know what they are..." I whine, only to be ignored "Guuuuys..."

"She needs no help from the lot of you." Bifur announces, halting the group and standing proud "I am the only official panty chaser here. Your assistance is unneeded."

"Oh gosh. You guys. Guys?" The group remains distant to my pleadings as they simply exchange nervous glances with each other over how to proceed "Are you listening to me? This is really getting-"

"I... I want to be an official panty chaser too!" Kill demands loudly, dancing around my shoulders and I'm sure he's still half asleep "Yes. I DEFINITELY want to chase panties!"

"I don't know... you're more like a panty dropper where I come from." I mumble under my breath, pressing a hand on his forehead to stop his orbit of me. Huffing audibly, I speak to be heard "Come on, guys. This is hardly necessary. Let's just move out."

"How does one become a panty chaser?" Dori questions inquisitively and Ori takes out his book looking much too excited "Is there a special ceremony?"

"As I have asked you all to search for the panties, I would assume we are all now panty chasers." Thorn answers in boredom, allowing the group to resume their search "Quickly, now."

"Yay!" Kill cheers, clearly stuck in some happy dream state that I wish I could join

Instead, I throw my hands into the air and give up; walking over and plopping down next to Bilbo. The dead grass crinkles beneath me but I ignore it grumpily. The hobbit looks at me from the corner of his eye and a small smile starts to tug at his mouth.

"You know..."

"Hm?"

"In the Shire... 'panties' are another word for bloomers." he speaks lowly so only I can hear "Can you imagine?

"Yeah? Imagine that little coincidence... It's like that where I come from too." I reply with a smirk of my own "Look at us bonding."

"You do realize that you have 13 dwarves taking leave of an honorable quest to look for your underthings that I am almost sure you have not lost." he states, without even the lilt of a question in sight "That is some power you have."

"Ohhh no, don't blame this on me." I lift my hands in mock surrender "You saw! I tried to stop them. They did this all on their own."

The two of us are silent for a moment before we erupt into choked giggles. They crawl over our skin like tiny joyful spiders, an odd foreshadowing event, and throw us into their cobwebs of mirth. Bilbo's face turns so red I think he may pass out; all the while the dwarves continue their mini side quest. It gets so bad that Ori cups his hands over his mouth and starts calling out for the article of clothing while Fili makes light kissing noises to beckon a cat. I just about die inhaling a stick while I roll on the floor in a fit.
"Do they know that they are not a living thing?" Bilbo asks around chuckles

"They don't even know what they look like." we simultaneously quiet down and straighten up with the arrival of the king "G'morning Thorin."

"Master Baggins. Lady Thia." he greets us stiffly before looking slightly crestfallen. I actually have to catch myself from reaching out to smooth the creases of disappointment from his face. Stupid cursed forest "We have been unable to locate your panties and we need to begin moving..."

"Oh that's... Thorin, I was trying to tell you before that-"

"Rest assured that when Erebor is restored I will send the top pantry chasers to find your missing ones."

"THEY AREN'T MISSING." Bifur stresses from across the clearing, looking close to tearing out his hair "They simply need to be chased. By ME."

"Then I will send the best pantry chasers to chase your panties."

"Please dont do that." I plead while Bilbo clears his throat of a laugh

"I apologize." I think he is beginning to understand but nope "I will chase your panties myself!"

"You have enough on your plate." I try to dissuade both him and the warmth tickling my belly

"You have expressed the importance of your panties; even going so far as to dub Bifur an official 'Panty chaser' at some time while your guardian was distracted." the way he says Bifur's name is a little strange but he plows on so fast I barely catch it "I can not allow him to chase your panties alone. Not when you are my... ahem..."

He clears his throat all of a sudden and Bilbo joins in. The entire company then falls into a collective coughing fit and I'm sure that I heard someone cough out 'coward.' Watching the group wide eyed and unsure of what to do, I wait for them all to calm down from their mass hysteria. When the coughing finally starts to subside, I climb to my feet just quick enough to have a hunk of bread shoved into my mouth.

"Mmmffgh!"

Glaring at my 'guardian,' I chew the chunk quickly to clear my mouth. That down, I inhale sharply to reprimand him only to go slack jawed when Thorin bends to one knee before me. 'Oh dear Father in heaven! Again with the knee bending.' He reaches out and grasps my hand in his larger one and gazes up at me expectantly.

"Lady Thia. You have given so much to the company, allow me to give something in return." he hums out with so much bass, you'd think he was an instrument "Please. Allow me, to be your pantry chaser."

Not to be undone, Bifur joins the king before me and soon I have a gaggle of dwarves at my feet with a dying laughing hobbit in the background. Giving up for the second time today, my shoulders slump and I roll with it. I place a hand on each of their shoulders while Bilbo silently holds onto a tree catching his breath.

"From here on out, I dub each of you as an official pantry chaser." I bite my lip to keep from burst into a fit of giggles and hope that no one ever tells them what is really going on "May you find
"I shall chase your panties until I have caught them." the king promises with so much conviction, that I kind of want to believe him

"...You are welcome to try." I hold my serious face for a moment longer before it cracks into a smile "Now lets go. Don't we have a kingdom to reclaim or something like that?"

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So this was a total crazy chapter. It honestly wasn't supposed to be so... this. The panty scene was suppose to be MAYBE 3 or 4 lines of dialog but...yeah.

I hope this clears up some things: Bifur is meant to be a creep, its not just the forest. He has developed an obsession with Thia and is taking her obliviousness to him as a sure sign that they belong together. Also, Thorin is a bit arrogant but thats to be expected when you think about it. He has a mountain of gold waiting for him and his god just threw him his soulmate to help him when barely anyone else would. As far as he is concerned, the wedding is just a formality that they'll get out the way ASAP. Don't worry, he'll get set straight soon. As for Thorin's transgressions, they are 1)losing Thia's ring. 2)Kinda of hitting her on Corrock 3)Threatening her 4)Trying to break out of their contract 5)Being an overall butthead. I update every couple of days unless I can't, so the next chapter will be out Monday probably.
As the days progress, the nights get longer and more foul until the dog days just stop coming altogether. It doesn't look like it can get any worse when we run out of food until we come across the sleepy time river.

"We found the bridge!" Fill calls wearily from his place at the head of the group. Everyone has been taking turns manning first position as no one can trust their eyes for too long in this place "Well... we found what is left of it."

"Woah." I come up behind Bofur and silently mimic his interjection. The river is more like a swamp or a long forgotten sewage drain than a stream. Debris floats through the bubbling cauldron like liquid, making my stomach churn in disgust. The hatted dwarf huffs out a breath while looking at the broken ends of the once illustrious bridge. Turning back to me, he shrugs with a half smile "What do ye suggest?"

"See a boat?" I question

"Afraid not." he responds, peering into the soupy marsh again with a shudder "We can try and swim it."

"Definitely not." shaking my head, I physically back away from the body of water "I'd rather not swim in a cursed river. Thanks though."

"She is right." my backtrackering nearly has me running into the king. He places a hand on my shoulder to steady me, despite his own wobbly stance "Did you not hear what Gandalf said? A dark magic lies upon this forest. The waters of this stream are enchanted."

"..." Bofur's eyes flicker from the bridge, to the river, and then back to us with a look of disbelief "Doesn't look very enchanting to me."

"Trust me." I insist, not even giving the river another glance "It's not worth it."

"It has already been decided." Thorin steps forward in search of an alternate route. I quickly follow "We must find another way across."

"I could just-"

"No."
"Thorin, you don't even-"

"NO."

"But-"

"My lady." swinging to face me, the dwarf pins me with a firm look that clearly expresses his refusal of my help "I know you wish to aid us."

"Yes, so-"

"I would not refuse your aid, if needed, however" he holds up his hand when I open my mouth "I can not allow you to simply do FOR us when we can do for ourselves. There is a way past this obstacle. Allow us to at least make the attempt to find it."

"... Alight but-"

"Over here!" Kill calls and the king immediately gives his nephew his attention "These vines look strong enough."

"Kill!" the call of his uncle gives the prince pause as he attempts to scale the branches. There is a moment of silence as Thorin turns and eyes me up and down before doing the same to Bilbo. He lets out a small breath before turning back to the waiting group "We send the lightest first."

It occurs to me then, as everyone turns to look over myself and the hobbit, that Thorin was making sure the lightest person wasn't me before he made the suggestion. 'How sweet.' I'm sure I've got about 30 pounds, at least, on my friend but it makes me a bit happy that there was some debate on it.

Everyone seems to collectively decide who is packing the fewest donuts and stare at Bilbo expectantly. For his part, Bilbo has been staring out into the river completely in his own world and seems at a loss as to what is being asked of him for a moment or two. His face falls into an 'are you serious' stare before he starts across the vines.

"Great." When Bilbo is a third of the way across, I decide that I'm on the wrong side. Before anyone can deny me that right, I 'jump' over to the other bank and take a seat on a thick root "I'll wait over here."

"Thia!" Thorin snarls furiously, like I knew he would. I'm no fighter and if something goes wrong with Bilbo as my only protection then POOF! No more seer. From the way he begins clamoring across the trees after the hobbit, I can safely assume that he doesn't want me dead yet "Stay there! I will be over in a moment."

"Its alright... Can't see any proble- Ah!"

The snagging of branches saves our burglar from splashing into the water but not from the drowsiness of the forest itself. He lays hammocked between the vines for a moment, mumbling to himself and staring into the dirty water. He leans further and further until I think he may kiss the liquid, compelling me to call out to him. He snaps out of the trance and pulls himself together with just enough strength to make it across with a yelp.

"Mmm." he hums lightly as I look him over for any injuries. Finding none, I dodge his wagging finger as he continues his nonsensical mutterings before he stops and gapes at me. Taking in my face he begins to whisper in a strained voice "Something's not right. Its not right at all."

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"Well yes." I admit, patting his shoulder soothingly "You're absolutely correct but it's too late to turn back now."

"Hm, I must try. Stay where you are!" I sigh at his warning as everyone is already coming towards him. His arms slump and he turns to me with a dejected face "Oh... So it is."

"Indeed." watching him slap himself across the face a few times, I barely flinch as Thorin lands beside us. He stares down at me for a moment in quiet rage and I stare silently back. Noticing the bow on his back, I beat him in the 'thinking-of-something-to-say' game "Don't shoot it."

The monarch's face twitches in confusion before a sudden cracking snaps him into a defensive stance. My head swivels to greet the white stag as it bounds into the clearing. It's beautiful to say the least. It's coat catches what little light filters in through the thick leaves, making it all but glow. Even as he seems lost in the magic of the moment, Thorin's arm pulls back the arrow to the ready.

"Don't shoot it." crossing my arms across my chest, I exhale and repeat the warning; mentally preparing myself for the long road ahead "You'll miss."

"I won't."

"Don't say I didn't warn you..."

"I will NOT miss."

"What... are you doing?" Even through his muddled mind, Bilbo can spot a bad idea when he sees one. Thorin ignores us both and takes the shot. As I predicted, he aim is off and he only succeeds in scaring off the beast. I make a sound of regret, matched by the king's scoff of irritation "You shouldn't have done that. It's bad luck."

"I don't believe in luck." he says in disgust at the situation, hobbit, or perhaps the idea of fortune as a whole "We make our own luck."

"Then perhaps you just made your own bad luck?" just like that Bombur slips off his branch and into the river, snoring the whole way down. Thankfully the river isn't deep. In fact, his head doesn't even slip beneath the surface but he is still out like a light. Tapping the bow in the king's hand, I shrug lightly "Perhaps archery isn't your calling."

"... Wake him quickly." Thorin orders distantly. That's all he ever is now: distant. Not physically, mind you. Ever since the moth fiasco he has been the exact opposite of physically distant. I can't walk two steps away from any one of his nearest kin (Fili, Kili, Balin, and Dwalin to be exact) without someone tossing me over their shoulder and returning me to the spot. Literally in the literal sense. This forest has sent everyone into caveman mode and I don't have the abs to withstand anymore shoulders in my gut for much longer "We haven't time to waste."

"There is no point." I explain, tiredly walking a bit away from the shore to find an out of the way tree to slide down and sit on. The forest doesn't bother me as it does everyone else but the lack of Sun is throwing me off kilter. I need my sunny vitamins "You can't wake him."

"And why is that?"

"You KNOW why. It's a enchanted river. You guys were warned about it before we entered the forest. You warned YOURSELVES before you crossed." I gesture toward the portly dwarf with little interest "Sleeping beauty isn't waking up anytime soon."

"Try. Anyway."
After pulling the sopping wet dwarf out the water, his firm lack of consciousness alerts the company to their slumbering problem. Rolling my eyes at the stubbornness of dwarves I watch from my place as they make the attempt; only succeeding in reddening the dwarf's cheeks. Each slaps rings through the air until I have to turn away with a hiss.

"Can you stop?" I ask as they shake their poor friend silly; his head snapping this way and that "Please? It's not going to work."

"... Bofur." The dwarf picks up his head with effort at his name being called. Thorin points at Bombur with a thick finger and serious eyes "If we are slowed beyond reason by your brother's inability to NOT fall into enchanted rivers, we will leave him behind. Understood?"

"... Aye."

With little other choice, but a sense of fairness, the group takes turns carrying Bomber on a makeshift sleigh until they become so weak that even I have to join in. 'Starvation does that sometimes.' When it's my turn I 'jump' him short distances ahead of the company, trying to help keep their strength up but not willing to risk them getting lost if I go too far. It continues like this until those thrice damned lights appear out of no where and try to veer us off track. Before anyone can even think to chase them down, I destroy the idea.

"They are elves. You can run over there all you want but you won't catch them." I gesture to the path beneath our feet "Not to mention you will lose the path and you know... NEVER find it again."

"You ah... you said this... yesterday? No um... before... when...?" Nori rambles looking around, clearly negatively affected by the forest. He gazes down at his feet before turning his face to the canopy of trees. He stares for so long that I begin to turn away until he starts screaming bloody murder "Blimey, the path has disappeared!"

"What are you talking about?" I glare at the thief as he continues to look wide eyed at where the sky should be "It's clearly beneath our feet."

"What's... what's going on?" Ori cries in fear, clutching his arms and rocking slightly "Nori? Nori? Dori, what's going on?"

"We've lost the path!" Dori calls out in response, gathering his brothers to his chest in a protective manner "Confounded it, we've lost the path!"

"No, you haven't!" I step forward to try to calm them down "If you would just-"

"Find it!" Thorin ignores and interrupts me, though he grips my wrist tightly to keep me in place. If not for the shackles, it'd probably hurt "All of you!"

"Look for the path!" Dwalin relays, right in my ear "Ye heard yer king!"

"You don't need to look for the path." Stomping my foot on the solid stone earth, I attempt to get everyone's attention "ITS. RIGHT. HERE."

"I don't think they are listening." I turn to Bilbo, hoping to find a clear minded friend but he is just as wacked out as they are; he's talking to a tree "It is quite strange."

"I don't remember this place." Balin murmurs, scratching at a tree root before jumping away as the bark sheds off "None of it is familiar."
"That's because you've never been in this exact spot." I try to pull him away but he shrugs off my hand. Thorin's grip prevents me from following him but I do spot the eldest Ri trying to... Well... reverse bury his brothers "Dori, stop doing that with the dirt!"

"It's got to be here." he complains

"What's got to be where?"

"The time. The time!" he paws frantically at the floor with Ori's hand "I've lost it!"

"What hour is it?" Thorin intervenes, counting my fingers and seeming disturbed when he only comes up with ten. I'm beginning to think the elves had been smoking something funky at their party. Why else would everyone go bonkers all at once and to this extreme? Thorin jerks my arm forward, yanking me back into attention "What hour is it?!"

"I don't know!" Dwalin responds, sounding disturbingly close to tears "I don't even know what day it is. I have failed ye, my king!"

"Calm down. It's a Tuesday, Dwalin. But I doubt- Don't eat that, Fili!"

"This is taking too long..." Thorin growls at the sky that we can't see "Is there no end to this accursed forest!"

"Is there no end to your untimely bouts of anger?" I yell in return, though no one pays me any mind "We are on the right path and you guys are going coo coo for cocoa puffs! You haven't lost the path, just your minds! N-no! Bilbo don't-"

Of course this is when Bilbo goes and starts plucking at spider webs. 'Because what's an adventure without giant flesh eating arachnids?' He is close enough that I can stop him from plucking the string a second time but I'm pretty sure it won't make a difference. He starts twirling in a light hearted circle, even as I direct him back into the line. A groan sounds to my right and I find Bombur waking from his slumber. He sadly joins in the madness and begins attempting to knead his stomach like dough.

"This... This is why I don't have kids."

"You have no children" Bifur starts, puffing out his chest with gusto "because I haven't-"

"Look, a tobacco pouch." Dori gleefully shrieks, cutting off his hallucinating companion. Its a disturbing sound to say the least "There are Dwarves in these woods."

"I know a couple of dwarves lost in a wood quite close to here." I grumble, failing to keep Dwalin from throwing rocks into the distance. Deciding that I'll just have to wait until someone is lucid enough to help, I'm just going to have to keep everyone from dying on my own "Can you go crazy on a day that I'm not starving to death? Please?"

"Dwarves from the Blue Mountains, no less." or the green or silver or the purple mountains majesties "This is exactly the same as mine."

"Because it is yours, do you understand?" Bilbo grabs a tree and shakes it "We're going around in circles, we are lost!"

"No one is even MOVING, you know this right?"

"Miss Thia is right. We are not lost." In clear agreement, Thorin whacks me on the back so hard
that I fly to the floor, skinning the heels of my palms "We keep heading east."

"But which way is the east?" Dwalin nearly trods on my fingers. Spotting me on the ground, he picks me up and shoves me under his arm like a hand bag. I squirm as his biceps cut into my stomach and my legs drag the floor due his height "We've lost the sun!"

"Find it!" Thorin demands ruthlessly

"You can't lose the sun, dang it!" I growl before yelping in surprise as I'm dropped suddenly. Climbing to my feet and dusting off the dirt, I glare at the half bald dwarrow "That's it. I'm done. Bilbo! Climb that tree and go get some fresh air!"

"Huuuuh?" he drawls


"The sun. We have to find.. the sun."


That seems to do the trick, as the hobbit ascends the tree and disappears from sight. It isn't long before he thankfully begins shouting down words of encouragement and I know that I'm not alone anymore. I'm tempted to just take a little peek up there, just a little one, but Thorin goes and ruins it for me.

"Enough! Quiet! All of you!" His shouts are met with silence as the addled dwarves go into defense mode "We are being watched."

"Yes. Yes indeed we are." I offer without remorse. I'm over it just like I'm over this forest "By a brood of spiders... and possibly elves."

"Food!?" Bomber bellows like scooby doo, taking off like a rocket into the darkened woods

"Dang it, Bombur!"

It's too late though, as the dumpy dwarf is gone into the night. The lemmings that they are, the company takes off after him. I do my best to stop them; grabbing anyone I can and 'jumping' them back onto the path but it's mostly useless. With the restriction of two hands, I am only able to grab Dwalin and Kili. 'Apparently promises of protection aren't good between meals.' Them, along with tree Bilbo, make a very small group.

"I swear, you guys must be mentally defective!" I rant, waiting for sober Bilbo to descend the tree "I mean seriously? I warned you. Beorn warned you. Gandalf warned you. And what do you do? Exactly what we warned you NOT to do. You know they are all going to get eaten alive by mutant carnivorous spiders, right?!

"Lass, calm down." Dwalin instructs, surprisingly lucid "We need to make a plan."

"A plan besides losing your marbles in a CURSED FOREST?!" I yell, waving my arms above my head. I'm not calm. I'm not keeping calm. This is NOT ok "Because if thats what we are planning, I think its a bit late, dontcha think?"

"Don't worry Miss Thia." Kili soothes, leaning his head into my armpit creepily "Since Fili is not here, I will take over his duty of protecting you."
"You couldn't protect yourself from an newborn puppy right now." I say, tugging the dwarf from under my arm and folding myself down into a pretzel. Sighing I gesture for him to do the same and he leaps at the chance "But thanks anyway."

"What's happened?" Bilbo says when he finally drops onto the ground. We are all sitting on the floor, trying not to freak out. Taking his cue, he joins us quickly "Where has everyone gone?"

"They went out for dinner." I quip in annoyance

"And they left us here?!"

"Trust me, you don't want what they are serving."

"Alright enough of that now." Dwalin takes control again, over whatever high he'd been experiencing earlier "We need a plan."

"Well, I've got one." I groan, dragging my skinned hand down my face "But you aren't going to like it."

Thank you guys for the overwhelming support you gave me for the last chapter. Guess panties are a hot topic! I was so happy with all your reviews that I read them to my mom. She's happy too! So yaaaaay! This is the last chapter with an obviously joking undertone. The rest will of course have a few laughs but it'll be mostly drama. I just like to laugh. Until next time!
Chapter 46

"So your fool proof plan is... to get us... caught?"

"Yes Bilbo. That's the plan. Any questions?"

"I've got one, lassie."

"Go for it, big guy."

"How about, are ye addled?!"

"No, my mind is still justifiably sound."

"Then why do you want us to get caught Miss Thia?"

"Because Mister Kili," I sigh at the short sightedness of my companions "We are tired. We are hungry. And we are dead otherwise."

"But-"

"No ands, ifs, or buts about it! You guys will go help Bilbo-"

"Don't ye mean he'll be helping us?"

"-defeat the spiders." Pressing my lips into a thin line, I press my hand into my stomach as it rolls due to hunger. It's like a permanent ache; never getting better and never going away for too long "The elves show up pretty much immediately, which is strange because they don't help until all the fighting is done-"

"Typical." Dwalin snorts

"... You guys, myself included I guess, get 'caught' and we escape in a month."

"But WHY a month?" Kili whines

"Because that's the way it has to be." I conclude with an air a finality, rubbing my tired eyes "I didn't make the rules, ok? I just don't break 'em."

Granted, it doesn't HAVE to be a month but I won't be the one to get them out. This is Bilbo's time to shine and dag nab it, he is going to! 'Let it not be said that I hindered his growth in any way.' Still, I can't rightly tell anyone that. They'd demand instant freedom, toddlers that they are. So the
age old parent response of ‘because I said so’ will have to suffice for now. Clapping my hands together, I cringe at the awful clank my shackles make and nod firmly.

"Now! Who is ready to fight some spiders?" a grumble rises from the three that I take as resounding agreement "Great! Then lets go!"

"Lass." Dwalin stops me from grabbing them by stepping out of my reach "Ye stay out of this."

"Huh?"

"When we fight these... spiders, ye are to stay a safe distance away."

"But-"

"No." he says firmly, pointing a thick finger at me. It always gets me with how much bigger dwarves fingers are than everyone else's. I mean, his pinky is the size of my thumb and that is just plain odd "I'll not have Thorin taking my head if anything was to happen to ye."

"Why would he even CARE so long as I'm being useful?" I grab a fist full of my hair and tug at it in agitation "If I'm saving his butt, what is there to complain about?"

"Mister Dwalin is right, Miss Thia." Kili adds, pressing his head into my back, still a little loopy but still ignoring my question "Let us do the fighting. It'll make us feel better knowing you're safe."

"Ugh! We so don't have time for this." I stand there seething and waiting for someone to agree with me but no. Seeing as neither will budge on the subject and Bilbo looks two seconds from going ghost, I throw my hands into the air like I just do not care and agree "Fine fine whatever. I'll be the barbie doll side line watcher and stay out of trouble, now come on!"

Holding out my hands and grabbing the three, I 'jump' us to Fili's location. I don't know if Thorin will be around, so the prince is the next best bet. Not that I HAVE to always go running to Thorin. It's not like I like him or anything. I mean, I like him but not like like him. Even if I did, which I DON'T... there is no way he would like me. With the world's sex ratio being 10:1 with the bigger number being male, it's no secret why everyone is nice me, including the king. So... It's unlikely that he likes me anymore than the next pretty girl even if I did like him, WHICH I DON'T... I mean... I don't like like him or anything... I just... appreciate his mouth watering... personality... 'Shut up Brain!'

Four individuals landing on the dwarf heir is too much for the demon spider's thread to hold and quickly gives us a lesson in physics. It tears and drops us the not so short distance to the ground leaving me to question why I haven't died yet with all the falling. Thankfully, I land on top of the pile. Unfortunately, I land specifically on the hard mass of Dwalin aka STONE. I honestly would have prefered the ground, as it would have been more forgiving. Groaning, I barely register the bald dwarf picking me up and nearly tossing me behind a tree.

"Stay." he commands

"You're soooooo lucky I promised!" I hiss back

From my place I watch as Bilbo and Kili scale the trees to the rest of the group, while Dwalin stays on the ground to help wake Fili and catch anyone who falls. There is a tickling in my ears; like a persistent clicking that reminds me too much of the moth incident. Rubbing my ear self consciously, I try to figure out the noise. Slowly, like wading through honey, I begin to register the chattering as the words of the spiders. My rapt attention to the sounds and scene however, is interrupted when I feel a cold blade at the side of my neck. Freezing, I am unsure of what to do.
'Jump?' Turn? Scream? 'Jumping' is my best bet but the presence of the sword makes my mind stop short from any course of action. Before I can do much, I am lifted to my feet and turned to face the owner of the sword.

"What are you doing here?" the familiar elf asks

"Uh... Have we met?"

"...You are the molester of the king."

"Ohhhh, you're that elf that caught me when I tripped... and I didn't molest anyone!"

"What have you found?" the elf prince questions on arrival. Looking me up and down, he frowns deeply "A wayward child?"

"The daughter of man who appeared in the kingdom a few months back."

"Yeah, I can understand you both." they look at me curiously and I return the favor as more and more elves pop up out of no where. The just step out from behind the trees as if it's normal "Not to state the obvious or anything but... are we all just going to ignore the battle going on behind me, or what?"

"They appear to doing just fine." Legolas sneers while watching the group fight for their lives in a drug induced haze, before plucking up my braid from the side of my head. He turns it over as I stand there awkwardly "I have never come across the crest on this bead. However, I take it that you are acquainted with the dwarf scum?"

"I'm not required to answer any of your questions, Legolas." I rebuke then flinch as I let the name slip, hoping he didn't catch it

"How came you to know my name?" he hisses, so I guess he caught it

I reward him with silence that is probably interpreted to be insolence. In reality, it's me watching Bilbo stab a spider to death in cold blood. His face is contorted with pure rage; much like when I demanded my ring back at Beorn's house. "I'm so glad he didn't have his sword on him back then.' He grabs the ring and bares his teeth at the pile of spider chunks before becoming aware of his actions. He peers down at the ring in confusion before looking up and spotting me. Opening his mouth to call out, I shake my head once and look plainly at the ring. He gets the picture and immediately disappears. Well, mostly. Just as before, I can still see his shaky outline but at least the elves are none the wiser. I look back at Legolas, who has grown impatient with my silence, and offer a beaming smile.

"If that is the way you wish to be then." he gestures to the handsy elf "Do not let go of her. She is exceptionally skilled at disappearing."

The elf nods and grips my arms firmly, but not painfully. While he can't hurt me, he can still restrict my movements. I frown as the elves disperse, clearly getting ready for their big entrance. The disoriented dwarves cheer when the last spider falls, having missed the whole elf arrival. Dwalin looks over to my spot with a grin, only to have it fall upon seeing my precarious position. I smile pathetically, hoping he won't be too vexed with me. Thorin, who is here apparently, begins to rush to my aid only to halted by an arrow pointed at his head.

"Do not think I won't kill you, Dwarf." The Prince huffs in annoyance, which is probably my fault. His blond hair falls into his face like pretty ribbons but he doesn't flip them over his shoulder like I'd expect. Despite his girlish features, it's clear that he is anything but "It would be my pleasure."
"Help!" Kili cries out because apparently the elves don't know how to keep their soon to be prisoners from being eaten alive "Spider!"

"Kili!" Fili shouts in response, eyeing the elves furiously "Help him!"

"Throw me a dagger!" the brunet Durin begs the she-elf "Quick!"

"If you think I'm giving you a weapon, Dwarf, you are mistaken."

Of course she wouldn't because... you know... Girl power. Slaying the beast, she rescues her prince and I can just see the dwelfings now. At least I hope so. I watch the pair intently, hoping Tauriel with pick him up bridal style, but I've no such luck. They do however share a moment of mutual admiration. I am almost inclined to 'aw' but I don't want to ruin it. Then, with little left to kill, comes the dwarven road up.

"~Search them!~" the prince orders "~Be quick, the night grows closer!~"

"Touch me and you WILL regret it." I threaten the handsy elf who seems inclined to follow Legolas's command. There is no way this stranger is going to be feeling me up "You don't want to know what of your that I'll make disappear."

Yeah so I can't actually do that, but he doesn't know it. And yeaaaah it's a vague threat that could mean anything from phallic devices to candy bars, but he doesn't know that either. And that's what's important, children. Handsy seems to agree, as he clears his throat and directs his attention away from me. 'Safe elf is a smart elf.' I direct my own attention back to the scene, trying to keep my feet under me as well as ignore Thorin's piercing gaze and the ache in my gut.

"Who is this?" Legolas asks Gloin, peering into his locket with a frown. I have a strong feeling that he's being mean on purpose and that ticks me off "Your brother?"

"That is my wife!" he responds affronted

"And what is this horrid creature? A Goblin Mutant?"

"That's my wee lad, Gimli!"

"Don't be a jerk! Ignorance is a bad look on you." I hiss at the prince tiredly, careful not to use his name this time "Would your mother be proud to see you behaving this way?"

"You tell 'im lass!" Bofur encourages while being pushed into place

The prince looks at me angrily and I know I've struck a nerve. He looks to want to behead me but directs his attention to Tauriel instead. During their quiet whispering I am brought to the group, but Handsy is smart enough not to let me go. I am set to stand a few feet away from the dwarf king, making it a tad bit harder to ignore his glare. I peek up through my lashes and find the brunt of his anger directed at Handsy.

"Release her, elf." he demands

"I do not take orders from you, dwarf."

"Can't we all just get along?" I whine, not caring that I sound like a brat "This racism thing is getting so old."

"This is an ancient Elvish blade. Forged by my kin." Leggy saves me from a receiving a response
by waving Orcrist in our faces. I make a mental note to be sure not to forget the sword in our escape "Where did you get this?"

"It was given to me." the monarch responds coldly

"Not just a thief," he points the edge of the blade to... MY throat. Ok, this is new "but a liar as well."

"You will not harm her!" Thorin struggles against the bonds the elves have placed on him but they hold fast. I'm more worried that he'll hurt himself than I am for my own safety "Unhand her this instant!"

"Who is she to you?" he twirls the blade dangerously close to my neck but I know he can't truly do me any harm. Still... It's sharp "Who is she?"

"Enough of this..." I groan, finding it hard to stand with the adrenalin wearing on and off and on again. Not to mention the week or so of starvation setting in again "I'm reaaaally tired. And even more hungry so... if you could STOP talking... that'd be great."

The last bit is said as my knees buckle beneath me and Handsy becomes responsible for holding me up. Its horribly embarrassing, having to be carried by your prison guard because you aren't strong enough to walk on your own. Even worse, he carries me the way wanted Tauriel to carry Kili: bridal style. I would have demanded he carry me like a sack of grain but then I'd be faced with the dwarves and from their growling, I don't think I'd like to see their faces. So I settle for allowing him to cradle me to his chest at the head of the group. It takes a while but I realize that the growls also cover up words in Khuzdul. It isn't until they reach the front that I remember they are still in the dark, so Bofur's question is clearly logical.

"Where is Bilbo?"

I wrote this chapter while listening to the Minecraft background music. I also wrote it by the light of a lantern, strangely enough. But then again, I'm not the most grounded person out there. Did I mention it was 230AM? Screw it, whatever. Chapters are wonderful. So how'd you enjoy it? Any requests? I accept requests, or at least I will try. Thanks for all the lovely reviews. Until next time!
Chapter 47

"Are we there yet?"

"No."

"How about now?"

"No."

"Are we there NOW?"

"You will know we have arrived at our destination when you are standing before his majesty and not a moment sooner." Handsy all but growls. His face remains cleared of emotion but his hands are tense "Now cease you infernal questions of our whereabouts."

"Somebody is a little grumpy." I mutter crossing my arms as we walk. He walks. I don't know if I should be worried or not by the fact that he isn't even out of breath from carrying me all this way "Can I get down now? I almost promise not to run."

"Almost?"

"A girl's gotta have options."

"We do not have fear of you escaping." Legolas joins the conversation, though reluctantly "An arrow would find your back before you got too far."

"No it wouldn't." I argue over the grumbling threats of the company

"You doubt my aim?"

"I doubt your ability to do me any harm."

"Why is that?"

"Well." I shrug my shoulders, debating on how much I should reveal. Secrets are my best friends right now, as the more useful I appear the greater my value "I already told your dad on my last... visit. Ask him if you really want to know."

"Hn." he sounds almost like he's been taking 'hn'ing lessons from Gandalf "You may keep your secrets for now, man."
"Man? Are you blind?" I ask a little upset, and a lot offended, at having been called a guy "I would like hope that I'm clearly a woman."

"Oh, you are." Bifur offers. I can always count on him to make jokes "Perhaps the elf is a lass too."

"... I refer to your race, not your sex."

"Well... could you... I don't know. Not? Being called a man is a little rude."

"You are daughter of men."

"Yes but-"

"Then you are a man."

"NO."

"Is this really such an upsetting topic?" The question is rhetorical but I nod enthusiastically anyway "You showed no such reservations when I addressed your dwarves by their race."

"They are dwarves though." I insist, ignoring the possessive term. I'm more interested in not being called a man for the next month "Both in race and sex. Is it kind of sort of horribly rude to call someone by their race? Where I'm from 100%. Yeah, it's rude here too but at least it's accurate."

"And where are you from?"

"New York City."

"I've never heard-"

"I know. That's why told you."

"... You are a strange woman."

"So I've been told."

Legolas takes this as his cue to drop back and resume his silent watch of the company, leaving me with Handsy once more. Our group of mostly all the intelligent beings on middle earth trudges through the forest at an agonizingly slow pace. If we had a baby orcling, the odd precession would be complete.

"I bet baby orcs are either unbearably cute or horribly ugly."

"Do you often wonder about orc spawn?"

"Huh? Oh, did I say that aloud?" A nod from Handsy confirms my bad habit "Sorry. I'll work on that. But no, it's just a thought. Like; does Legolas look more like his mom or his dad?"

"I see. However" his brow creases and his voice drops to a whisper "It would be best if you could keep your thoughts of the late queen to yourself. The prince let your comment go unchecked earlier because... Do not expect that continued leniency on the subject."

"Yes yes, Handsy." I wave off his warning but still commit it to memory. No need to step on any toes before I need to. It doesn't slip past me that he didn't actually tell me why Legolas didn't punish me before. Everyone is entitled to a secret or six "I'll keep that in mind."
"Handsy?" the question floats almost silently from the elf. Like when you repeat a word over and over because you can't remember how to spell it but then you say it too much and it doesn't sound like a real word any more "What does 'handsy' mean?"

"It's the name I've given you since you aren't polite enough to give me your real name." I bite out curtly, but not offensively. How can I when I'm guilty of the same thing "It means you can't keep your hands to yourself. Whenever we meet, they're all over me."

"Whenever we meet, I am ordered to touch you." He corrects

"Ye'd best be keepin' yer hands to yerself there, laddie." looking over his shoulder, I find Bofur glaring at the back of Handsy's head; his usual smirk is no where in sight. In fact he looks down right dangerous; his accent thick with defensive anger "Or ye'll be findin' yerself without hands to speak of."

"Are you threatening me, dwarf?" he asks without turning his head

"They aren't much for threats." I cut in before the wrong kind of sparks fly "They are fighters though; down to the last one." I wink back at the Durin babies, with their mouths hung open. I wasn't there to hear the proclamation but seer to the rescue "I haven't seen them back down from, or loss for that matter, a fight yet. My friend is just looking out for your well being. Isn't that right, Master dwarf?"

"Oh aye, lass." he agrees, his usual smirk appearing though I see the glint of trouble hiding in his eyes "Aye. We wouldn't want the little elfling to get hurt, now would we?"

Handsy responds but literally sticking his nose in the air with a sniff of superiority. I'm honestly impressed by this display; in a comical sort of way but there is little time to laugh. Quite returns amongst the group as we enter the borders of the kingdom. You can tell, even without walls, because the very air changes from sickly to... livable. Although I've been here before, I didn't get to walk through the front door and they are impressive. Even so, I can immediately see the differences between these elvish halls and Rivendell. It's like walking through a medieval castle; a real one, not the movie versions of them. The walls are a rough and uneven mixture of trees and stone; the hallways drafty and narrow; the lighting dim. Strangely enough, the ceilings are high and smooth and the floors...

"Is that marble?"

"Indeed. Most can not identify the medium straight away." Handsy shifts me in his arms "You have a good eye."

"I've got two great eyes." I gesture around the path "Why are all the walls so poorly done in comparison to the ceiling and floor?"

"Elves aren't the best builders, lassie." Gloin mocks from the middle of the line "Its obviously been left incomplete for ages."

"You'd better watch your head, Berch Kannag." Bifur adds, sounding disgusted as he gazes around with a judgemental glare "These tunnels don't look well dug out."

The insults continue to fly and I roll my eyes in annoyance. 'I'm really curious...' Since the elves don't seem too inclined to correct the dwarves, I can only guess that they don't want to talk about it, which only increases my curiosity. I reach out and drag my hand across the rough wall before hissing in pain and snatching it away. Peering at my palm, I groan in annoyance when I see the
blood. My skinned palms from earlier reopened thanks to my wall pat down. 'Atleast no one noticed.' I ignore it, noticing the throne room approaching. I immediately start to struggle, causing us to drop to the back of the line, despite the dwarves struggling as well.

"Let me down, Handsy."

"We have been over this already." he fights to keep me in place and remain calm but a rogue elbow to the chin has him losing his cool "Cease your movement, child!"

"No! I will not be carried in there like some invalid!" it's one thing to be carried through the forest, a whole nother to be carried like an infant into a throne room "Put. Me. DOWN."

My demands are ignored but my erratic arm flailing causes Handsy to lose his grip on me and I tumble to the floor. It isn't a long drop but its the third time today that I've been up close and personal with the ground and it's quite as painful as it is annoying. As I rub my sore bottom I make a mental note: While forest dwellers can't allow me to be hurt purposely, accidents can happen.

"Please refrain from such childish actions." Handsy scolds, as he lifts me to my feet hurriedly "It is most unbecoming."

"I'll do my best."

He doesn't lift me back into his arms, though he places a firm hand on my shoulder. I feel like a child; barely standing a few inches above his elbow. With swift strides, we catch up to the group right before we enter the throne room. Thranduil sits at the top of the spiral staircase on his throne once more, crown and all. His platinum blonde hair flows fluidly across his shoulders like tiny little rivers of gold. Strange, since his eyebrows are black. 'I wonder if they dye their hair here.' It's not important as the Elvinking stands to greet us.

"Welcome back to my kingdom, young seer." he greets, peering down at my wrists in boredom "I see you still wear my gifts."

"I haven't much of a choice."

"Mmmm, you must be tired." he snaps his fingers, ignoring the dwarves for now. Six silent elleths appear at my sides and take charge of me in Handsy's place "Take her to the bathing chambers. Dress her properly and return her here."

I'm not happy about this. The company isn't happy about this. The elves seem a little inconvenienced by this. But of course, none of that matters because King black brows has spoken. Hence I am dragged from the room. I don't really start struggling until the ladies try to strip me. I haven't let anyone see me naked since I could take baths with the door closed and I'm not going down without a fight. Its an unfair game of tug-a-war and I lose so once again, what I want doesn't matter. My clothes are removed and I'm dumped in the pool of water that is thankfully not too hot. The room is filled with so much splashing and hissing that you'd think I was a cat.

"Let go!" I growl loudly, yanking my arms out of their grasps to cover my nakedness "I can do it myself!"

And they do. Let go, that is. I know they haven't come to their senses all of a sudden so I turn my attention to their focal point. Of course. It's my back. More importantly, the pretty little arkenstone. 'My dad told me not to get a tattoo. He TOLD me and did I listen? No.' Throwing my hands in the air, I commence growling as most of the gals go back to scrubbing me raw. It doesn't slip my notice that one runs out the room, leaving wet footprints in her wake. Probably on her way to make
A half hour later, I am stuffed into a fitted dress, that blossoms wide around the waist. Typical Middle earthian garb. All except for the fact that it's backless. 'Because asking that one person not have an interest in my back fat is too much to ask.' I remember when I would have had to pay people to give me this much attention. I allow the guards to physically guide me back to the throne room, too tired from... everything... to fight anymore.

"I'm not going anywhere." I sigh with a tired voice only for the ignoring game to continue. Guard aren't chatty here "All my friends are up ahead. I'm not leaving without them if it makes you feel any better."

Everyone is in nearly the same position as I left them, except with much angrier faces. Except for Thranduil. That guy looks happier than a student on a Friday. Meaning, this is gonna be bad. I am led to stand directly in front of the throne to wait. I glance back at the dwarves but none look at me, save for Bifur. He gazes at my back with the strangest look on his face. The rest of them... it's almost as if they are ignoring me. I frown at the blood on Thorin's neck but before I am able to address it, Thranduil swoops in.

"Ah, little seer! Much better. You look lovely." he opens his arms wide, totally milking his illusion of happiness. Its almost scary when he walks down the steps from his throne and wraps his arms around me in a hug. I stand stone still, not sure what to do. The guards step back to their positions, so I guess I'm stuck with Thranduil "I was so worried when you disappeared. I'm so relieved that your... friends... have brought you back."

"Um... Are you alright?" I'm pretty sure he must have lost his fruit loops while I was gone and I'm genuinely worried "You're acting a little strange... rrerrrr than usual."

"Oh?" he asks is mock confusion, holding me at arms length "Should I not show affection to my son's future bride?"

I blink once, twice, three times before my head catches on to his meaning. My brain runs through countless scenarios on how this would benefit the elvinking enough for him to sell his first born son up the river. *The dwarves.* Thanks brain! The dwarves won't look at me, so they knew this was coming but why? What does Thranduil gain from this sham of a union? Rather, is the threat enough to get the dwarves to do what he wants? Deciding I've been silent for too long, I ask the obvious question.

"Why do you want me to marry Legolas?"

"You already know his name?" he smiles broadly, blatantly ignoring my question "Wonderful! The wedding is at the end of the month."

Well, damn.

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**THORIN POV**

The she elves lead Thia away and I can do nothing to stop them. Weeks without proper food or rest have left us all so weak that we can even be felled by elves. *If it were not for our circumstances, there would be no way they could keep her from me.* After the women have left the room, the betrayer of my people turns his attention to my group. His façade of cheer is dropped and he coldly
"So you are the 'king' my little seer spoke of." He huffs out a delicate breath so airily that it could have been faked. Looking down at me from his thin nose, the elf silent judges us "I will have to teach her the meaning of the word."

"She is nothing to you. Your lessons are not needed." Balin speaks, quickly rather than letting me say what I would have. There is a reason his is my advisor "Why do you detain us? We are only merchants passing through."

"Aye. We are going to see a few inbred cousin of ours." Bofur adds, as he did in Goblin town "We were on the road... Well it's actually not so much a road as a path. But it's not even that come to think of it. It's more of-

"Do you think me so foolish as to believe that story?"

"But it's true this time!"

"I know that you are the company of Thorin Oakenshield, so spare me your theatrics."

"You have no right to keep us here." I rumble, growing both impatient and annoyed at the conversation. There is no point in trying to outtalk the snake when he already has it in his mind that he is correct. The fact of the matter notwithstanding "Return MY seer and release my company at once."

"You can take your dwarves and leave after we have come to an agreement concerning my gems."

"I-"

"However, the little seer shall not be accompanying you any longer." Tilting his head in thought, the scum nods at his own thoughts. Peering at us through his lashes, he waves a hand in the distance "I can think of many uses for her here."

"Keep your filthy hands away from my One!" I bark out roughly before I can stop myself

The knowledge of my proclamation does not escape the coward's attention. The air in the room shifts to follow his movements in what can only be described as elven magic. Anything as old as him is bound to have a trick or two up their sleeve but I will not fall for it. He lifts a brow and a ghost of a smile tugs at his vile mouth at my glare.

"She is your 'One,' is she? I always found it so... pitiful to have an entire race governed by the need to find their other half that may or may not exist. Yet, here you are... having found your heart in a human child who will die long before you do. I believe that somewhere in your short sightedness that you even consider yourself lucky. Most interesting."

He circles the group predatorily and we shuffle closer to close ranks. Whatever he meant to say further is interrupted by one of the she elves from earlier rushing in, squawking about Thia's birthmark. I grit my teeth as his lips curl in a disgusting display of amusement. He instructs the girl away and she scurries off before he redirects his cold eyes to us.

"Most interesting indeed. Did you decide she was your fabled One before or after you found that her body holds the image of your coveted Arkenstone?"

The company shifts at my back at the accusation. While no self-respecting dwarf would lie about their One, it is true that I did not openly claim her until after I knew what mark she carried upon her
flesh. The question is unspoken yet palpable from the group behind me. Even so, none would be so bold as to question me at the moment. Still, the seed of doubt has been planted in their minds and for that I offer the deserter a heated glare.

"What I do with my One is none of your concern, elf."

"Is she even aware of her status?" my silence only prompts him further "You haven't told her, yet you claim to have some hold over the poor girl. She is not yours and can therefore be claimed by any who see fit to have her."

"None shall claim her but me!"

"If she means so much to you" the swine begins circling us once more "then stop your quest. Marry her now and I will allow you to return to the hole from whence you crawled out from."

I look up at the elf in disgust. He would have me forfeit the safety, home, and peace of mind of my people for my own happiness. Even if I could bring myself to be so callous, surely I would lose all favor in Thia's eyes. The thought of her regarding me with cold disinterest is enough to bring an ache into my chest. No, I could not do what he is asking. I clench my fist and curl my lip at the poor excuse of a king.

"I cannot-"

"Good. Then you have no grounds for intervention as my son marries her instead." His abrupt change catches me off guard as he turns to address one of our earlier kidnappers "Legolas. You shall bring prosperity and good fortune to our kingdom through this union. I am proud."

"But- Wha- I-" the blond elf protests with scattered thoughts "Father-"

"A king must make every sacrifice for his people, as is his duty." He cuts his eyes to glance at me "Isn't the right, dwarf?" I offer no response other than to bear my teeth once more

"Yes Father." The spineless whelp agrees

"You can not do this!" Kili shouts, bursting from behind me; unable to keep himself quiet anymore "She is.""

"No longer your concern. Thorin Oakenshield has denied taking the seer's hand in marriage; as such she can now marry my son." The elf scum glares down at Kili, silencing the lad "She will remain and serve my kingdom, safe from the dragon you will surely awaken. This is the offered deal and this is the deal you shall agree to."

"She holds no value to you." Dori attempts to use his bartering skills "You would sacrifice your own son-"

"She holds value to the lot of YOU and that is what matters." standing before us with an ugly smirk across his face, the blighter inclines his head in a delicate shrug "Just as you will outlive her, surely he will as well. Once she has passed on, he'll be free to choose another bride."

"King Thranduil" Balin tries to add some reason into the situation "You cannot force us-"

"And if you do not agree to my terms, I will chain her like an animal and rest assured that someone will always be available to physically detain her departure. Her services will be paid for with food, shelter, and the safety of the woodland realm; much better than you can provide, don't you agree? My kingdom is free of a dragon after all. The little seer will serve me, one way or another. It is
simply your choice under which conditions."

I lunge for the elf; fully intending to tearing his head from his body. He cares not for Thia. He cares not for his son. His sole purpose in this endeavor is to bring me sorrow and that is something I cannot abide. I only move two steps forward before I am forced to the floor by his guards. They place their knees in my back and their swords at my neck, awaiting further instructions. The very idea of having this filth lay a finger on Thia's skin is enough to make my blood boil and bile rise in my throat. I struggle under the weight holding me down but I cannot get to the smirking ball of dung.

"You are not agreeable to this venue? Well, there are always other options. I would rather not have the young seer live as a bed warmer but I am not against this method either..." He is toying with me, I know, but the acknowledgement of this game does nothing to stop me from fighting my captors. The blade bites into my neck, sending rivulets of blood down my collar but still I fight. I want to rip his contemplative face off with my teeth and shove it down his throat as he bends by my prone body "What is her name?"

"I would not have it pass you disgusting lips, elf trash!" I call out from my place on the floor. I hear my kin offer their own insults as well as the other elves groan in annoyance "When I get-"

"It matters not. I will find out on my own." He stands from his bend position and walks back to his throne "You will do well not to allow her privy to our agreement. Such a delicate flower, I doubt she'd understand."

"We have no agreement!"

"Oh? Bedwarmer it is-"

"Wait!" Balin shouts, turning to me with imploring eyes that beg me to take this deal. His eyes promise a temporary loss... one that shall not allow those vile words to come to completion "Thorin..."

"..." Like insects crawling up from my gut to rob me of breath and bite my tongue of words, the confirmation is painful and slow coming "A... marriage then..."

"I knew you would see reason. We shall speak of it no more then."

I am lifted from the floor and shoved back into the group of my kin as we wait for Thia to return. When she does, my anger dissipates almost immediately. She looks clean and healthy, but also nonplussed. 'Most likely from having to wear that elvin dress.' She makes whatever she wears look beautiful however. It fits her torso perfectly, as if she grew a second skin made a cloth. Delicate shoulders peek out alluringly from a long neck. Her breasts stand out proudly due to the side tied corset that thins her already trim waist. I quickly lower my gaze as I see her turning her attention to me; not able to meet her gaze after the deal just struck at her expense.

"Ah, little seer! Much better. You look lovely." The betrayer compliments and dares to embrace her "I was worried when you disappeared. I'm so relieved that your... friends... have brought you back."

For once I agree with him. I raise my eyes for another daring look and immediately suppress a groan. All conversation is filtered out by the mouthwatering display. Her back is bared before me by the dress. While the top is fitted to her body, the skirts flare; complimenting her already bountiful hips. Just looking at the dip of her bared spine and the image at the base brings about a plethora of fantasies pertaining to more than platonic activities.
What she will taste like? What sounds will she make while sprawled out across my bed? How will she breathlessly call out my name? What will it feel like to have her legs upon my shoulders, buried fully in her. *Shiver* *You are a king; calm yourself. You are no dwarfing fantasizing about his first woman.*' No. Not my first, but my last. My One. The woman perfectly made to fit me in mind. Soul... Body. *Focus!* I avert my eyes once more as my trousers become uncomfortably tight. Shifting my hands, I cover the evidence of my arousal and find deep seated rage when I catch Bifur doing the same. My anger only grows with a mention of a wedding. Like hell I will let that happen.

Thia is tired. She can't even be fazed by possible dwarf betrayal or sudden marriage plans. Thorn is hangry. Or rather, horngrly. That's the best way to describe it. Its been a long month of walking. Thorin's POV was originally a side chapter but I wanted to make sure everyone knew WHY this was happening since Thia doesn't know too much about the circumstances surrounding it. Sorry if it's too long, especially after posting a chapter just yesterday. Until next time!
CHAPTER 48

All the 'wait's and 'hold on's in the world don't seem to phase the elfinking as he goes over the wedding plans. He calls in an elleth that walks to and fro before us, listing off things that we will need in order to prepare. After 'and new sheets for after the wedding night' I just tune it all out because... no. I have more important things to think about. 'Like what the heck is going on.' First things first; Thranduil knows I have some type of sight of the future as well as other abilities, making me a useful person to have around. Second; he knows I am friends with the company, meaning I can be used against them.

He probably threatened them with something or another, which is why they are acting so strange. 'Points to me for not jumping to the worst conclusion!' The proposal did not come until after those busybodies saw my tattoo, meaning the events probably have something in common. Thranduil has no interest in the arkenstone, so this is most likely aimed at Thorin. Still... he didn't have to make Legolas marry me for that; he could have just kept me here. How does me marrying Legolas affect Thorin in any significant way? I file the question away for future thought when the wedding chick starts poking at me.

"Can I... help... you?"

"Hmmm." A poke here, a jab there and I'm ready to elbow this elf in the throat. I refrain from such actions but it wouldn't have bothered me one bit "A thin waist but well developed hips; perfect for childbearing."

"Woah there, lady." I lift my hands and back up. She places her hands on her thin hips and clucks at me disapprovingly "I doubt there will be any childbearing happening anytime soon."

"Oh?" Thranduil questions, though he is looking at Thorin. I don't get it. Why would he care? I guess kids put a damper on fortune telling "Do you not wish to bear my son's children?"

"I want to eat." Should I deny any and all future plans of marriage and pregnancy? Yeah. Still, I doubt anything I can say at the moment will change much. If things get too crazy I can always just leave "If I don't eat soon, you'll be planning a funeral instead of a wedding."

The room, though silent before, is now deafeningly so before Thranduil waves an elegant hand and the bustle begins.

"My future daughter desires nourishment." as if they couldn't figure it out from my previous statement "Prepare the dining hall." he then walks over to me and beckons Handsy over "Show my son's intended to her bedchambers. Stay with her until you are summoned. Their are too many
riffraff in the kingdom to leave her unprotected."

Handsy bows deeply in acknowledgement of his orders and places a hand on my back to guide me forward. The collective growl that erupts from the group of dwarves is as startling as when it is immediately silenced. I peek over my shoulder but the group is once again in avoid-all-eye-contact-with-Thia mode. Even though I know they must have a good reason for it, I can't help but feel a little hurt by their treatment of me. I'm almost tempted to call out to them but I'm not sure what I'd do if they ignored a direct confrontation. So I allow myself to be led back into the cold halls.

Due to my engagement status, I get to sleep in a better 'room' than the dwarves. Its not bad; a large bed with the bedset is included. I've also got my own bathroom, so I can leave my room as little as possible. There is even a sitting area with a bookshelf and couch-like thingies so the guests that I can't have can sit. As inviting as the soft sheets look, I'm more hungry than tired and more sad than hungry. Still, as upset as I am about the earlier meeting, I know I could be even sadder. They made a deal with Thranduil that involves me getting married, and they didn't even consult me about it. NOW they want to hang their heads and act like I've joined the elf club. That should make anyone angry; but I'm sad, not angry. I'm making my own fair share of secret choices, so how can I be too upset with them for doing the same? 'Not that I'll let myself be kept in the dark for long.' I look around the room once more and hope that the food will be ready soon. While Handsy explained quickly that Thranduil would allow me to walk certain areas without someone hanging on to me, I am still bound by my lovely, chaf free (thanks to Ori's gloves which I refused to give up) shackles. In addition to that, I apparently have a roommate.

"Is the room to your liking, my lady?" Handsy asks from his place by the door. He was silent and unmoving as I explored my surroundings "The night approaches and after supper, it would be best if you slept."

"I'm not a baby Handsy. I know how to put myself to bed." I sigh as my stomach rolls in protest of the lack of food. It has long since stopped its begging growls and has upgraded to sucker punching itself every now and again. Just in case I forget the situation at hand "By the way, the name 'Handsy' is going to stick if you don't tell me your real name."

"Would it please you, my lady, if I were to offer my name?"

"It would please her ladyship greatly." I reply in third person, just for the heck of it

"As you wish." he bows gracefully in a way that would have me toppling over onto my head if I attempted it "My name is Adasser, my lady."

"...Lover of mortal men." I translate slowly, with a smile "How ironic."

"You are indeed correct." he lifts his head, and even though it's small, I can see his smile. I'm just good like that. He turns his head slightly toward the door before straightening "Your intended has arrived."

"Oh goody." the door is knocked on once before swinging open to reveal none other than the lemon sucking Legolas. What would ha have done if I were in the buff "Evening Legs."

"... Good evening... my lady," he hesitates, from either from the nick name or the situation, I don't know "Are you ready to go?"

"Mhmm. More than ready." I walk out the room and try to ignore Adasser's following footsteps
Legolas holds out his arm and I thank my lucky stars for all those princess movies that taught me how to respond. Still, it's awkward and silent; the only sound are our footsteps as we make our way to the dining hall. Light music trickles out from the doors but my attention is only on the delicious and well missed smell of food. 'Don't eat too much. Overeating after starvation leads to death at worst or becoming violently ill at best.' The next few minutes are a blur. I know we enter the room. Thranduil greets us. Legolas holds out my chair like a gent. I fight my instincts to kill myself by pigging out.

"Is the food to your liking... darling?" the prince asks after a pointed look from his father, that they think I don't notice

"It's the best I can remember having." I reply honestly, throwing the guy a bone. He looks like he's sitting on a rusty nail but doesn't want to upset anyone "Though that may have to do with the whole starvation thing."

"I am inclined to agree." I shift my gaze from the uncomfortable son to the scheming father "Though one does wonder why you were with such a group at all."

"My reasons are my own." I counter, throwing more shade than a willow tree. No one will call me a tattle tale "Not that you don't already know why we are here already."

"Mmmmm. So true, little seer." I frown at the pet name but he merely tilts his head in return. What is up with everyone calling me little? I'm taller than all the dwarves, yet Bifur insisted on calling me 'little one.' I finally broke him out of it but now he calls me that word I can't understand. Now this? I shake my mental head "How far does your sight reach, I wonder."

"From beginning to end but I learn something new everyday." I vaguely respond. The beginning of what? The end of what? The world my never know "Lets keep some secrets between us though. I hear it keeps the relationship alive." and Legolas chokes on his wine. "I didn't mean it that way, you perv. Get your mind out the gutter."

"Speaking of relationships." Dang it old man! Stop forcing this issue "What is your relationship with the de-throned dwarf king?"

"Technically he was never seated on the throne, so he was never de-throned."

"So 'technically,' as you put it, he is not a king." Legolas adds

"You know, the Goblin king said the same thing. Then Gandalf killed him." I sip my water, before answering the original question "He leads our group. He says things. I listen. Most of the time."

"I am not asking of your professional relationship, my little seer." ugh. Again with the possessive wording "I'm asking of your personal relationship."

"Oh. Well. Um." This is unexpected. How do you explain to a king that you kind of sort of like a rival king-to-be, whom he just so happens to have hanging out in his dungeon, when the odds of said king-under-the-mountain-to-be ever liking you in return are so miniscule that you couldn't see them with a microscope? Easy! You don't "We're just friends. Nothing more."

"I see." I honestly don't know what he's seeing, but I think it may be different than what I'm seeing and I don't like that one bit "How sad."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Nothing, my dear."
"... why do you..." It took me long enough to realize it. Not that it was totally obvious to begin with, in my defense "You... don't know my name do you?"

"Your friends were dwarvishly tightlipped on the subject." Legolas bites out, much to the annoyance of his father. No one likes admitting that they don't know something but for a guy who is probably pushing over 1000 years old, Legolas still has a big mouth "I-"

"You decided I'd marry your only son" raising my hand to silence the princeling, I straighten my back and give my rapt attention to the king "without even knowing my name..."

"To the dwarf king, your presence here is important with or without the knowledge of your name." Thranduil explains but I'm done listening after his confirmation

"You don't know my name." I smile softly, more than a little warmed by my companions loyalty. Or forgetfulness. Or simple need to annoy the elf. Whatever the reason, a plan begins to form in the back of my mind "They did not tell you my name."

Oh my goodness. You guys are so wonderful! I'm so happy about the reviews. So happy that I wrote a Oneshot for Dis. It's sad. Really sad. But it's short, less than 1000 words. If you have a moment it's called The Price of A Promise. Pop on by if you'd like to get a little teary eyed. Until next time!
WARNING! Some stuff might be happening in the next chapter thats a graphic 'T' not quite 'M' rating if you catch my drift.
Chapter 49

CHAPTER 49

Dinner progresses like a smooth roller coaster ride from hell. I'm not afraid of falling to my death but just when I think I've got the swing of things, I'm thrown for a fiery loop. One minute its just Thranduil talking about utter nonsense and the next, Legolas is trying to haphazardly discuss children names. He's so awkward that I can't even be my normal socially awkward self because I'm just too embarrassed for him. 'I can't wait for him to grow up because this is just... pathetic.' The whole thing is too comical to be upsetting. It is most likely to keep me guessing of what their actual motive is but things get a little too creepy after Thranduil runs his fingers through my hair and Legolas places a trembling hand on my thigh.

"Alright, now you guys just need to calm down." If I weren't boxed in I'd leap up to avoid their hands. As they seem so touchy, even 'jumping' would do me no good. It would probably make Legolas all too happy to get away from me though "I'm not into threesomes, or twosomes to be honest, so I'm going to need you guys to take a step back."

"My apologies, young seer." Thranduil purrs in my ear while continuing his assault, making me want to crawl inside myself and hide. He draws out the moment, before dropping his hand with the flash of what I think might be regret... nah. It's my imagination, a trick of my eyes, or a trick of his own "You must be exhausted. Return to your chambers to seek your rest... while you can."

"Yes, rest. That's it!" I jump up as soon as I am able and rush towards the door before remembering my manners. I turn and dip into a lopsided curtsy quickly "Thank you for the meal."

Practically running down the halls, I make it to my room in record time. Addaser doesn't even seem fazed and silently takes up his post, this time outside the room. Closing the door behind me, I sink to the floor to catch my breath as I undo the numerous strings, clasps, and buttons. That done within the minute, I tiredly crawl to the bed, shedding my clothes like a snake. I pluck up the light night gown I placed on the bed early and slip it over my head absently. Its smoothness against my skin is both welcome and strange. After the evening I've had, I just want to dissappear. I also feel horribly naked due to my lack of under clothing.

I couldn't wear a bra with the dress and the underwear seem more like pants than panties. At the reminder of my underthings, I chuckle softly. 'Those pretty bastards stole my panties. I might really need my official pantie chasers to help find them.' I of course couldn't roam about the woodland realm comando after my bath but neither can I wear the provided bulking cloth comfortably to bed. Stripping them off with ease I climb into the soft bed, slip under the fluffy blankets, and allow myself to drift into a much needed sleep.

I dream of standing in a field of sunny flowers. Surprising as I'm a city girl so I've never actually
I am awakened by an arm constricting around my waist and a heated source at my back. I stare at the pale limb and blow blonde hair out of my mouth, trying to wake myself enough to grasp the situation. The drowsiness is wiped out my mind when I realize that I'm being clumsily spooned and feel a very male kind of male rigidly pressed against my not so defended back. My lips tremble slightly as tears spring to my eyes and a siren like screech/snarl escapes my throat. This of course causes the mystery visitor to bolt upright in the bed, grab my arm, and pull me into a protective embrace. 'Not helping!' I thrash in his arms causing him to tighten his hold on me.

"Be still woman!" the body huffs out "There is no attacker here."

"The attacker is you!" Deciding I could use some help, I 'jump' to the one guy I know can take on anyone "Thorin!"

"What is going-" I continue struggling against my would be attacker as Thorin jumps into the fray "What are you doing?! How dare you attempt to force yourself on her!"

"What did you just accuse me of, dwarf!?"

Thorin grabs my arm and yanks me away from my night guest. The cell is small and leaves little room to navigate or escape. I fall onto the provided cot and curl my legs to my chest. I wrap my arms around them, trying to make myself as small as possible to give the two males the room they need. I look on in frozen horror at the happenings until I hear a wet thumping noise. The sight is more frightening than I would like to admit. There, under Thorin's repeatedly descending fist, is the pulpy mass of what I think used to be Legolas's face. I stare wide eyed before I leap into action, hoping that Thorin hasn't killed the misguided prince.

"W-wait! Thorin, stop!"

I grab his arm and try to stop him but he doesn't even register me as he continues to pound the unresponsive elf's face in. The strength of action dwarf never amazed me as much as it does now. Even half starved with a full grown human hanging on his arm, the king finds little difficulty in carrying out his onslaught. My whole body is rocked with the force of each blow he delivers on to the elf until I let go and begin yanking the king back by his hair in a hope to deter him.

"Please. Thorin? Don't kill him! Please!"

"What say you?!"

"I-"

"He would take your honor and you wish for me to spare his life?!" Thorin rages, as I immediately drop his hair in surprise. He finally turns away from the bloody elf and advances on me "I will not allow it!"

He crowds me against the wall and slams his fists on either side of my head, effectively trapping me in place. I look upon his blazing eyes and blood splattered face and feel, for the first time, real fear of the dwarf before me. In his rage he could snap my neck if he wanted. Snap my SPINE
without any effort really. I tremble visibly and lower my gaze, hoping my submission will be enough to cool his temper.

The furious dwarf pushes further until we are as close to nose to nose as we can get. His breath comes out in heaving pants on my face and I close my eyes as my only line of defense. 'Curse my human nature for believing that what I can't see can't hurt me.' He's so close that I can feel his warmth radiating from his skin; contrasting greatly with the cool stone wall beneath my hands.

It isn't fear for myself though, I realize, but fear for him. Fear of what Thranduil will surely do when he finds out of Thorin's actions. Yes, Thorin could break every bone in my body but he won't. Somewhere deep down I know the infuriated being before me doesn't want to hurt me. The elf king however might not be so lenient with his dwarven counterpart.

How could I have screwed this up so badly? It just never works out the way I want it. I can only stand here quietly, sniffing as fat tears threaten to cascade down my cheeks. I feel the dwarf lean into me, using his entire body to press mine into the wall and the tears do fall then. My face scrunches in confusion as the wetness on my cheeks is removed immediately with chaste kisses. I distantly register the shouts from the company but I am too frazzled to understand them. Cracking open my eyes, I try once more to bring the dwarrow back to sanity.

"Thorin please-"

"None shall touch you but me." he thickly whispers before closing the distance between us and sealing my lips with his own.

A million thoughts race through my mind. 'Wh... what? Why? Do I stop him? D-do I close my eyes? Should I breathe or do I hold my breath until its over?' As I have never been kissed, this experience is quite new. I guess my confusion annoys the dwarf, as he growls low in his throat and bites my lip. I gasp in surprise and he takes the opportunity to slip his tongue passed my lips. I make a muffled squeak, totally lost in the experience, as his arms lower from beside my head and wrap around my waist.

Even in the midst of my confusion, and odd enjoyment, I still have a clear enough mind to know that this is not typical company dynamics. I don't know what it is, but it's time to stop. I fight, I think, his tongue in an attempt to remove it from my mouth before using my brain cells and finding it easier to just turn my head. Our lips separated with an embarrassingly wet 'pop' that has my face heating.

"Thorin you-" I quickly bring a hand up to cover my mouth after a low moan escapes.

Being unable to gain access to my mouth, the dwarf drops his attentions my neck. The vulnerable spot is much more sensitive than I ever thought it to be and sends shivers to places I didn't know I had. With the taste of him fresh in my mind, I grip the king's shoulder to keep myself steady as stars dance behind my eyes. I dont know how long we stand there but I feel like it is much too long and not nearly long enough. My stomach tightens with each pass of his tongue along my skin until I just don't know anything anymore. He laps at the junction where my shoulder and neck meet before sufficiently sinking his teeth into the tender flesh.

Zombies flash through my mind causing my eyes fly open as I hiss in discomfort and aim to scold him but my gaze lands on the still form of Legolas. 'Here I am indulging in the desires of the flesh while a man (elf) could very well be dying at my feet.' The reality that whatever just happened was most likely based more in a territorial display than for my benefit drops my stomach like a rock. The bubble of pleasure pops and leaves me feeling used and like a sorry excuse for a human being. Cupping Thorin's cheek, I use his strength to gently but firmly remove him from my neck. He
lunges forward again but I keep him at arms length.

"Woman." he huffs heavily from his place, dropping his hands from... under my dress apparently. When did that happen?! The gown has been bloodied during the fiasco, though I know it's not mine. I blink rapidly at the red blotches on my thighs before the dress falls back into place as he places his hands on my wrists. It turns my stomach that even covered in blood, the idea of HIS hands on me sends a rush of heat down my spine. I'm better than this. I have to be "What is so important that you are stopping me?"

"Our location. My morals. The fact that we aren't in an established relationship." I touch my chin faintly, gathering my wit to cover my embarrassment "Oh! And the near dead elf prince behind you!"

This actually seems to cause the dwarf some confusion. His brows furrow in thought before he turns slightly to eye the unconscious male. After only a moment, he turns back to me and shrugs his shoulders in boredom.

"Oh yes. I had forgotten about him. Regardless, my earlier statement still stands; none shall touch you, least of all an elf." he then steps back into my personal space, circling me in his arms "Does this displease you?"

"Thorin..."

The better part of me keeps me from giving into the rising warm feeling behind my belly button. As enticing as carnal pleasure is, it is no match for a guilty conscience... or wounded pride. Maybe if it was ME for ME the king was interested in and not causing the elf king trouble, then I'd definitely consider... something. But it's not me for me, because it can't be. As fantastical as this adventure has been, I doubt I'd be so lucky as to snag Thorin's true interest. Even if I could, I'd never forgive myself if anything happened to Legolas because I wanted to throw away my promise to God and do the do with a dwarf in a dirty cell. 'Alliteration people!' I wiggle out of the dwarf's arms and scoot around him to kneel beside the wounded fellow.

"I... I don't know what just happened but we can discuss that later. How do you forget about a guy you beat half to death mere minutes ago?"

"If your reaction is anythin' to go by" a voice from outside the cell calls "you forgot him too."

"Oh gee thanks, Nori!" I call back in annoyance as the rest of the dwarves hoot out cat calls "We are both horrible people."

Dropping my attention back to my patient, I let out a relieved sigh when I find that the elf is still breathing and most of the blood is from a long gash in his hair line. Even if it leaves a scar, it'll be easy enough to cover with all that golden hair. My relief however, is short lived when I take in the rest of his face. His left eye is badly swollen; to the point where he looks like he has been stung by about a dozen killer wasps. I'm not sure if his nose is broken but its turned a sickly dark purple in comparison to his otherwise pristine pale skin. No amount of makeup or hair styling will cover this up.

"Thranduil is NOT going to like this one bit." Shaking my head as the fear of retribution grows, I check the prince's pulse again "Nope nope nope. Not one bit."

"I care not what that prissy footed elf likes or dislikes." Thorin snorts out viciously. I'd roll my eyes If his short sightedness didn't have a standing record of getting him murdered "He is lucky I did not kill his son for the crime he attempted to commit."
"He's misguided... but he's still an adult..." I know Thranduil more than likely put Legolas up to this, however the guy should know not to go climbing into someone's bed in the middle of the night. One runs the risk of opening a can whoopass that they can't handle "I am not an unbiased party in this but even I know we can't just leave him like... this until someone notices. I have to take him to the infirmary to get some help."

Thorin glares down at the bloody prince and I'm almost sure I'll have to fight to get Legolas out of this cell. And I will, if I have to. This is my fault and I'm not gonna damage the future just because Legolas hasn't stepped out of daddy's shadow yet. I'm about to simply 'jump' when Thorin lets out an exasperated sigh and I immediately know he won't stop me. I offer him a half smile, hoping it conveys my thanks for him overriding his need to cause Thranduil more trouble.

"Alright. Take the elf to the healers." he seats himself on the cot and pins me with a sharp look "Tell them the truth when asked; do not try to defend me. If at any moment you feel like you are in danger, leave immediately."

"... I understand."

With a nod from the dwarf, I place a hand on Legolas's chest, careful not to move his head in case of some injury I missed, and 'jump' back to my bed. Once we land, I run to the door and throw it open, surprising the four guards stationed there. Addaser is no where to be found so I address the group as a whole.

"Your prince snuck into my bed and got his butt kicked."

**THORIN POV**

"I will not allow it!"

I follow the girl backwards and place my hands on either side of her head with restraint. I watch her tremble and my anger shifts slightly into confusion. 'Is she cold?' I take in her entire being and realize how very little she is wearing. In my earlier rage I had not noticed that under her gown she is clearly wearing nothing. The silken garment rests on her soft curves in a most inviting fashion that is difficult to draw my attention from. I have seen few women built as perfectly as she, but then again I am undoubtedly biased in her favor.

I find myself leaning into the woman's space but pause upon seeing her fearful expression and tears. 'Not cold; frightened.' For all her fire, she is still so untried to violence; something I wish could remain. I would calm her if I could but my hands are covered in elf blood and I am unable to wipe it away fully. Instead, I kiss her tears from her face in an attempt to soothe the frightened girl. Her eyes flutter open slowly and she begs me in a shaky voice. Oh the things I would like her to beg for.

"Thorin please-" she whispers and who am I to deny her "None shall touch you but me." To prove myself true, I lean forward once more and capture her quivering lips

Her trembling halts promptly as I drag my tongue over her soft lips with a near desperate groan before nipping at the soft flesh. She gasps in surprise and I take full advantage of her open mouth, diving my tongue in the warm cavern. I stroke her tongue gently, careful to go slow enough as not to startle the innocent creature. Even as this kiss stills her, it does not have the same effect in my trousers. The loose fitting clothing is now unbearably tight, making me deepen the kiss in an
attempt to bury my tongue in her mouth rather than... other more pleasure locations.

She whimpers while arching against me and I can't help but to mold my body against her delicate form; forcing myself not to thrust up against her belly. She is soft all over, so unlike a dwarfdam yet perfect, and I fully intend to enjoy the difference. I trace my hands over her curves, slowly settling them on her waist, and lifting her gown slowly as not to draw her attention from our kiss. She doesn't seem to notice as she innocently fights my tongue for dominance before she sharply turns her face away while gasping for air.

My tongue slips from her mouth audibly, causing me to suppress the need to dominate my One immediately. Having not tasted enough of her, I almost follow her face but in turning her head, she bares her throat to me. I'm she knows that to predators, baring ones throat is only a sign of submission. Whether she made the connection matters little but it is the same to dwarves, especially when done in war or amongst lovers. 'Very similar in ferocity.' I'm more than happy to accept the offered gift.

"Thorin you-" the moan that floats from her sweet mouth nearly causes me to come undone

She brings one hand to cover her mouth and the other clutches at my arm as she tries to muffle her delighted sounds. Her nails bite into my arm and I grin against her neck in pride that I am the one to cause such a sultry noise to escape her. I shift my weight, slowly slipping a knee between her parted legs to rest below her in the event that she loses her bearings as I raise my hands to caress the spot on her back where I know my birthright lies. I softly caress the skin there, memorizing the feel of her.

That the girl is so far gone that she doesn't know how close she is to losing her innocence means I have done something very right. 'I shall not take her in a dirty cell, however...' I suckle at the curve of her neck, being sure to leave a deep purple bruise before pulling the flesh fully into my mouth and swiftly imprinting my teeth into the skin there. I lick away the blood that wells from bite as she hisses in pain and I know the spell has been broken. I admire my mark as she attempts to push me away. Twice.

"Woman." I pant, reluctantly pulling my hands from her skin and settling them on her cuffed wrists. The surprise on her face is clear, confirming once more that I successfully distracted her. I'm tempted to raise my knee the half inch it would take to meet her core simply to see her reaction but think better of it. As much as I would love to bring her to completion, this is close enough for now. I drop my leg from the wall and finish my thought "What is so important that you are stopping me?"

"Our location. My morals. The fact that we aren't in an established relationship." she touches her chin in mock thought "Oh! And the near dead elf prince behind you!"

I had honestly forgotten about the scrawny molester. If I had not just thoroughly enjoyed the last couple of minutes, I'm not sure I would be able to stop myself from finishing off the elf. I held myself back earlier but he still looks terrible. 'Pathetic. In no way is he a match for my seer.' I return my attention to the girl and keep my eyes firmly on her face, as not to draw her attention to the delectable sight she makes: Lips swollen; breathing heavy; clouded eyes; clothes in disarray. And my mark firmly in place upon her skin.

"Oh yes. I had forgotten about him. Regardless, my earlier statement still stands; none shall touch you, least of all an elf." I slip my arms around her warm body, relishing in the feel of her breasts pressed against my chest "Does this displease you?"

"Thorin..." She falters for a moment but I know she will not give in. She already stopped me once...
twice. All the kisses in the world could not sway her from wanting to help the snot nosed brat. Her heart is too caring for her to allow such a thing to occur. She proves my assessment correct, and I allow her to slip from my embrace "I... I don't know what just happened but we can discuss that later. How do you forget about a guy you beat half to death mere minutes ago?"

"If your reaction is anythin' to go by" Nori calls from a few cells over, meaning we were louder than I thought "you forgot him too."

"Oh gee thanks, Nori!" she shouts in return as the rest of my kin embarrass her further "We are both horrible people."

I chuckle at her pout and peer out the bars as she checks on the felled elf. My attention is captured by a twinkling, and I grin with pride. Across the passage is the one dwarf I am glad bore witness of the encounter. Dwarves are possessive by nature and usually the knowledge that such an intimate act had been viewed would cause uncontrollable rage.

While the emotion is present, it is nothing compared to the satisfaction of knowing that Bifur watched me claim the woman. His unhealthy obsession with her was driving me mad and its about time I returned the favor. At every turn he would speak to her, gaze upon her, even touch her. But he has not touched her in the way I have tonight, no one has. The fury is his eyes is as clear as the warning in my own as I sign in Iglishmêk so she will not hear. "MINE."

...So? How'd you like it? And this is a question. A real one. Too much? Too little? Just right? I couldn't pick a POV to write this in so I did both. To clear a few things, Thorin is just as big a pervert as the next dwarf but he has standards. He had no intention of getting fully down and dirty with Thia is tight cell with a body 3 feet away. My characters are still developing and learning, even the ancient as heck elves, as they go along so please excuse Legolas's idiocy, Thorin's cockiness, and Thia's oblivious ignorance and denial to everything sexual. There is nothing I can do about Thranduil; he just does what he wants.

Thank you for the reviews!

Until next time!
Chapter 50

"Would you care to explain why my son, the Prince of the Woodland Realm, is lying unconscious in the infirmary, girl?"

Thranduil stares down at me coldly and I'm reminded that he did try to hit me that one time. Now he looks like he wants to strangle someone. 'I knew he was going to be angry.' At least he seems angry about the situation itself, and not just primarily me. Still, it's his own fault. Did he really think I would just fall head over heels into Legolas' arms like some One Direction fangirl? I haven't even seen Lord of the Rings. I didn't want to see the Hobbit either, but my friend dragged me into it. Then she fell asleep and I fell in love. 'So glad we saw it instead of Texas Chainsaw Massacre.'

"Would you like to explain why your son, heir to the throne, was lying unconscious in my bed, boy?" two can play at the name game

"I am no child, girl." he swiftly stands; his robe billowing around him like an angry cloud "I am over-"

"6000 years old." I cut off as he glares curiously down at me for the interruption "I know how old you are. It doesn't seem to stop you from acting like a child though."

"How dare you!"

"How dare YOU?! You sent that boy to sneak into my bed for whatever reason and now he's paying the price for your stupidity."

"You think to scold me?!" he roars, losing some of his composure "You are neither my guardian nor my wife to speak so plainly!"

"Thank GOD for that. I'd cry if I were either." Crossing my arms and rolling my eyes in a clear display of dismissal, I continue with the bad choices I'm known for "But someone has to to tell you when you're in the wrong, your majesty!"

"I will not be lectured by some ragged dwarf's plaything, regardless of the influence you possess!"

"I am not."

"I suppose the mark on your neck was forced upon you by my son then?" he replies rhetorically. However, his face stills as he watches me reach up and touch the bite. I quickly snatch my hand away with quiet hiss. I didn't know he bit me hard enough to leave a mark. I miss the cruel smile that flits across the king's face before it smooths away "No. It did not come from my son."
"Oh course it didn't." I hastily agree with a frown "What do you take me for- Oh, never mind."

"Anyone would be frightened to wake up with a near stranger in their bed."

"Yes, they would... Why are you being so understanding all of a sudden?"

"Because I understand the situation perfectly now, Ballineth."

He walks forward after giving me the new name. Its a little tougher to decipher than names I heard previously. 'Girl of divine or powerful sight.' I fits, I guess. Though I'm more of young woman than a girl. But it turns out that I AM a seer which is just funny that a semi-lie became an odd truth. I should play their lotto when I get home. The king places his hands on my shoulders, ignoring the guards at my sides, just as I have up until now.

"You have nothing to fear."

"... You can't name me like some pet." I huff quietly, setting my confusion aside for caution
"Besides, I'm an adult, not a girl. Your name is inaccurate."

"It fits you perfectly, and all shall know you by it. As you have neglected to give me your birth name, I have given you a new one." I frown deeper at that, feeling a great sense of loss at the replacement of my name "In your fright, you found yourself at the dwarf king's side, correct?"

"...Yes."

"And then they fought" I nod along until a sad smile plasters itself on the king's face "because the dwarf tried to force himself on you."

"What?"

"He cowardly attacked my son as he defended you, causing Legolas to be overtaken." he warms to his delusional story raising his voice to echo in the hall "And after my son was unable to assist in your defense, the dwarf scoundrel turned his rage on you." he ignores my protests and addresses the elves present "The leader of the dwarves has attacked my son and his intended, Lady Ballineth. I will not allow such heinous crimes to go unpunished. Prepare the deepest dungeon and bring the dwarf scum before me."

"Thranduil, you can't do this!" I grip the front of his robes as the guards attempt to pull me away. The king gives a vague gesture and they release me, quickly leaving the room "It's not true. It's not! Thorin wouldn't do something like that!"

"Did you go to the dwarf with the intent to do my son harm?"

"No!"

"Did you intend for the dwarf to mark you?"

"Thranduil no, I-"

"Then you should fear not, Ballineth." he smiles gently, and pats my head as the guards enter the room once more "The dwarf will pay for his crimes. In the mean time... you should rest."

A hand shoots out and covers my mouth and nose with a wet cloth. My head immediately begins to fog and I think that this must be the middle earth version of chloroform. Not knowing what will happen after I go under, I let go of Thranduil and try to break free of the hands. I waited too long
however, and my movements are slow and weak. The last thing I see is Thranduil leaning down and uncuffing my wrists.

"Hush, child. Just relax." His face blurs as my sight quickly darkens "I have a new pair of bracelets for you, Ballineth."

I'm beginning to lose track of how often I wake from an unplanned slumber. It's never exciting; it's always scary and confusing. This time is no different, save for the booming head ache from the botched drug induced sleep. I bring my right hand up to rub my eyes but it snags. 'Darn cuffs are always getting caught.' I tug it harder and a pained groan sounds from beside me.

"Please do not do that again."

I turn in resignated surprise and am greeted by a grim faced Legolas. And by grim, I mean one foot in the grave. His face is swollen in some places and perfect in others, making him look like he's going through some serious genetic modifications right before my eyes. His nose has swelled to twice it's original size, causing his eyes to become just a tad blocked. Bringing up his hand, the battered elf rubs his bruised jaw in pain as it creaks. I try to spare him half an ounce of pity but it's hard.

"I would like to avoid anymore pain due to your influence."

"And I would like to avoid waking up next to you but its happened TWICE already." Yanking my arm for good measure, I glare at the Prince connected to me by the new chain. I jerk it again weakly "I would have thought you'd be smart enough to avoid me."

"Neither time was because of my desires."

"Oh? So you're a spineless invertebrate that does whatever daddy tells you?"

"I have a spine! My father is king and-"

"My father is king and if he says jump into bed with random women I have to do it."

I whine, imitating the prince in a voice that is nothing like his own. I'm more annoyed at the fact that he won't take responsibility, than the act itself. I mean seriously, isn't he supposed to amazing or something? What's up with all this whining and crying? I did not expect this whimpering baby when we were captured. Thranduil's shadow must be really heavy because ever since we entered the kingdom, Legolas has become a six year old begging for attention. It's ticking me off.

"Do not mock me!" he huffs angrily in return, reminding me of my brother. How annoying "There is nothing wrong with following the orders of my king."

"Of course not." I agree and pause allowing him to nod slowly "Even if it makes you a cretin on the level of Azog."

"I will not allow you to compare me to the defiler." he growls lowly, to which I ignore

"You won't allow me?" Looking at him with a bored expression, I roll my eyes with a scoff "What are you going to do? Cry?"

"You! I do not know of what family you must come from to express such levels of insolence, however you should best learn to hold you tongue!" Before my eyes his face turns red beneath the layers of healing yellows. I begin to wonder if he's going to pass out "Obidience is a key factor in
loyalty, I'll have you know."

"You'd better be real careful on how far you're willing to go in the name of obedience to your king. It might get you killed."

We glare at each other a moment longer before comically snubbing each other with a turn of our heads. 'How dare HE be upset after what he did?!' He probably didn't think it'd be this bad but that's not MY fault. I peek out of the corner of my eye at our joined hands, careful not to touch him. My former shackles have been replaced with platinum, diamond plated ones. Instead of binding my hands to each other, this time I'm shackled to the prince. 'Thranduil either has no regard for his son or REALLY doesn't want me going anywhere.' I briefly wonder why the king has a pair of diamond encrusted handcuffs lying around. Taking into account the soft pelt beneath each cuff, they are probably something you buy at an S&M store for bedroom play. I sure hope they were washed properly.

My examination of my wrists draws my attention to my bound hands. They have been treated and wrapped gently in a light cloth that doesn't agitate the injuries. I'd honestly forgotten about the scrapes on my palms in the madness of the night. Accepting the bit of kindness from the unnamed healer, I try to look at the bright side of things. My hands don't hurt, I have one less shackle, and Legolas isn't likely to try anything funny anytime soon. I don't know what I'm going to do about the tag-a-long elf in the long run though. My eyes begin to grow heavy again and I know my body still craves sleep due to the drug and hour. Snuggling down, I ignore the grunt from the elf as I snatch the blanket we are forced to share.

"Stay on your side and we won't have a problem."

"It was never my intention to do more than sleep beside you and I shall do nothing more than that now... I am not akin to Azog the defiler." he whispers this to both himself me and I almost feel bad. Almost

"I know you're not." I allow him the small bit of peace along with a warning "But at the rate you're going, you will be."

"What do you mean, seer?"

"I mean it's about time for you to grow up, blondie." I sigh deeply "Now shut up and go to sleep."

Hello everybody! Its a short chapter today. Mostly because I got tired of typing. It's the typing and editing that gets me; I write notes for every chapter by hand before typing it in. Then I edit it on my broken kindle that sometimes deletes my saved work. So yeah, sometimes the transfer is tiring. But you know what that means? I'll just have to update tomorrow too! Yay! I'm so glad you guys liked the last chapter, I worked REALLY hard on it. Thank you for your reviews. I didn't actually think anyone would like my version of Thorin but hey, you guys do. Thranduil has named Thia so I guess he's planning on keeping her long term. Uh oh... Until next time!
CHAPTER 51

BILBO POV

I was so frightened that Thranduil saw me, despite the ring, that I fled the throne room before he finished his conversation with the she-elf. 'I must find Miss Thia.' The poor dear has been through so much today. Forced into an engagement, attacked in her bed, and Thorin... I silently fume over his actions as I trot through the winding halls. To do such a thing to an unwed young woman is hardly proper. It's downright criminal! Taking advantage of her surprise to... to... Oh! If I hadn't been frozen in shock, I would have given him a piece of my mind!

Miss Thia is such a sweet lass; I imagine that she could only think to do anything that would quell the dwarf's rage. The child is probably distraught by now; she barely knew what was happening at all. I stop my angered thoughts when my nose catches the scent of disinfectant. 'I must be near the infirmary where Miss Thia took the prince.' I rush into the open room but pause when I see the elf prince leaning over the sleeping girl. I start to race over but slow when I realize he isn't moving.

"She looks like her." I know he hasn't seen or heard me, so I search the room and find an elf nearly hidden in a dark corner "They look nothing a like and yet... I cannot describe it any other way." "Like who, my Lord?" the elf who carried Miss Thia quietly asks "You know who, Addaser." he replies, not taking his good eye off the girl. Thorin really let him have it "My mother."

"She does seem to bare similar characteristics to the late queen. Her tongue being the most apparent." I cover my mouth and smother the gasp. What could this mean? The young woman, while exotic, harbors no elvish qualities. Still, the gentle expression on the Prince's face makes it apparent that he sees some connection. Without knowing his mother however, it is impossible to confirm or deny "It may be why your father wishes for her to stay."

"If that is true, then why force me to marry her? Why not take her for himself and be done with this dwarven charade?!"

The girl shifts in her sleep due to the noise and the prince immediately quiets. Tentatively, he reaches out his free hand and swipes a stray strand of hair from her face. The other elf, Addaser, watches the interaction with keen eye. I turn back and watch the young elf treat Miss Thia as gently as he would a child. He fusses over her blanket and fluffs her pillow as best he can without disturbing her. After she has settled back into a deep sleep, the two elves continue their
conversation.

"... You bandaged her hands."

"I... I wanted to make up for... My father's command."

"A command you followed."

"I had to! A prince-"

"The act is most likely to keep the young miss close but still at arms length. He can not allow himself to claim her; neither can he allow her to leave him again just yet."

"Just yet?"

"She is not who you believe and if once her soul was, it is no longer. King Thranduil knows this and will not keep her longer than he needs to."

"But the wedding-"

"Will occur for the sole purpose of infuriating the dwarf king. Anger makes people reveal their weaknesses."

"I can not marry my mother, Addaser." the lad sighs and looks at the older elf with pleading eyes "You have known my father longer than I. Can you not dissuade him from this... incestuous relationship?"

"She is not your mother, Legolas. " Addaser points out heavily

"No. She merely shares her a soul."

"You do not know this."

"Her face then... and her personality. They are too alike for this to happen." the prince snorts before frowning sadly again "She's been gone so long but... How can I... How can he expect me to..."

"You will do as your father orders because he commands it as your king."

"... She likened me to Azog..." he jerks his head up swiftly "But I had no intention of touching her! I told her. I would have only slept beside her, I swear it!"

"... You have the rest of her life to prove you mean her no harm." Addaser comments solemnly before grinning at the prince "Once the ceremony is over, you may call her 'mother' if it suits your fancy."

The two share a low laugh and I retreat from the room. I will be unable to talk to Miss Thia as it is, so I should spend my time on other things. 'Miss Thia trusts that I will save us this time and I will not let her down.' I need to find a way out of this place, stop a wedding, inform the dwarves of Miss Thia's position, and find a safe place to sleep. My stomach growls angrily. And find some food.

FILI POV

"So... You and that red haired elf?"
I watch my younger brother groan at my question. Though I would have prefered being closer to him, I was able to watch his interaction from my position. If I had been closer, I wouldn't have had such a clear view of his attempt to get the elf to search his trousers. OR his subsequent failure.

"Fee, do not start." he whines

"At least it was a lass this time." Dwalin jeers from across the way

"Five gold says ye'll fail in that attempt." Bofur bets

"He'd have better luck trying to steal a kiss from Miss Thia while Uncle watches." I tease relentlessly

"Oi, you just wait till Uncle finds out both of you stole one from her back in Rivendell, after Nori poisoned her."

"That wasn't my fault!" the thief denies violently

"You'd better not mention it or you'll end up as crowned prince." I drawl to cover the shiver that runs up my spine. I hope Uncle NEVER hears about it

"We wouldn't want that." Bofur muses before snickering "I'm sure plenty of lil heirs will be runnin' around Erebor soon enough if last night is anything to go on."

I chuckle along with the rest of the company but feel a little guilty. There is no doubt in our minds that Miss Thia is Uncle's One. It's a clear as the sun in sky. However, we all know that she is not ready for a serious relationship and that Uncle is moving things fairly quickly with her. I've watched her and most things of the... sexual nature go right over her head. There's no doubt that something happened last night, but how the lass will feel about it in the morning is anyone's guess.

"And I'm supposed to be her guardian."

Not only did I abandon her in the forest but I failed to protect her once we arrived in the elvin realm. I can't even protect her against the members the company. Not only Uncle, but Bifur as well. Though our cells are side by side, I can not see into his mini prison. Judging by the noises I heard coming from his cell, I am relieved that Miss Thia is not here.

The steady slapping of flesh left little doubt in my mind as to what he had been doing in his cell. Repeatedly. Since Uncle was dragged from from his own cell yesters eve, I have counted six separate occasions in which I was traumatically subjected to listening to the dwarf reach completion. Thankfully, only I am close enough to hear. The way the elves situated us, there is an empty cell left on the other side of Bifur. I will have to report this to Uncle when he returns. He has been gone for hours now...

"Where is Thorin?" Bilbo suddenly asks my silent wondering aloud, appearing from around the corner like magic "They should have returned him by now."

"Bilbo!" Bofur cries, leaping to the bars "Where have ye been lad? We've been so worried!"

"Hurried?" Oin questions, cupping his ear "If he'd hurried, what took so long?"

"WORRIED, Oin. He said WORRIED!" Gloin yells to his brother

"Aye. We were worried." he agrees
"Have you seen Thorin or Miss Thia?" I can't see him, but the timid voice assures me that the speaker is Ori

"I haven't seen Thorin since he spoke with Thranduil." the hobbit informs "Miss Thia is resting safely in the infirmary-"

"Why?" Dori asks angrily "If they so much as harmed a hair on her head-"

"No, no, no. She's fine. It's the elf prince, whom Thorin throttled, who is in the infirmary." he pauses here and it only serves to worry me further "She is unharmed however..."

"What is it, lad?" Balin gently presses

"Her shackles have been removed."

"Why is that a thing to be nervous about?"

"Because they have been replaced with stronger ones that bind her to the elf prince."

"... Well then." Dwalin cracks his knuckles threateningly "I guess we'll just have to cut off the little prince's hand."

A resounding agreement rises from the group and I offer no objections. No matter how fast I think Uncle is forcing Miss Thia to accept him, she is still his and no one else can lay a hand on her. The prince is fortunate Miss Thia was there to distract our king or he would not have escaped with his life for his actions.

"I do not think it will come to that." the hobbit shifts nervously on his large feet "Legolas, the prince, does not seem to want to marry Miss Thia."

"Does he think he's better than her?" Bombur asks in confusion "He would be hard pressed to find a lass as fine as Miss Thia."

"That's not it." Bilbo denies shaking his head "I heard him talking to another elf and it would seem that Miss Thia has a lot in common with his mother and he finds the union... distasteful."

"His mother?" Nori asks with a snort "Why then, would Thranduil not marry the girl himself."

"Because" Balin strokes his beard, deep in thought "He would not wish to weaken himself by developing feelings for the lass. Good job bringing this information to us, Master Baggins."

"Thank you." he dips his head "Now where is Thorin?"

"We haven't seen him since the guards took him to see Thranduil." I answer through the bars "Why are you looking for Uncle?"

"I wished to tell him this aswell."

"No." Balin announces

"No?"

"No. Thorin does not need to hear of this right now. It will only serve as fodder for him to further antagonize the elf king." he tilts his head in a grandfatherly expression "We do not need that."

"The girl is his One." Dori argues "As this pertains to her, should he not hear of it?"
"He is pushing her to the limit already." I say, speaking up again "If he continues to do so, she will break... or leave."

"Aye, is true." I nod to Bofur when he agrees "The little lass has had enough excitement for now."

"Then it is settled." Balin decides, to which I agree "We will keep this information from Thorin UNTIL we exit the kingdom."

"I hope this does not anger him too much." Bilbo says

"I am sure that it will." I whisper in return

Two days in a row, as promised. Thank you for your quick reviews. Hope you guys enjoyed the chapter. Until next time
Chapter 52

Thorin POV

In the silence of solitude my mind drifts back to the earlier moment of shared bliss with my delicate partner. It was not the first time I held the girl; I have done so many times before. From the moment I first met her, Thia and I have been more attached to each other than either of us was willing to admit. Multiple times in Rivendell I found her in my arms; On the road; Even at the skin changer's home... I allow the memory to brush against my consciousness lightly as I drift.

"... Do not miss."

I warn the skin changer silently of what may befall him should he harm the girl in his endeavor but I know it is unnecessary. He will not miss. Gazing down at the shivering seer, I quickly make a decision for my next course of action. Lowering myself to the ground behind her, I wrap my arms round her petite body; folding it proactively within my own form. She could very well reject my touch but I must offer it nonetheless, if only for my own peace of mind. Holding her arms gently, I ensure that she will not pull away and cause herself harm. Breathing deeply, I take note of her scent as her soft hair tickles my nose. It is a clean presence but not of the false floral scent that the race of men prefer to douse themselves in.

As I memorize the smell that is uniquely her, Thia surprisingly buries her head beneath my chin; caressing my beard with the whole of her face. Pleasure courses through me as she presses herself deeper into my body. Despite my best efforts, my cheeks grow hot at the public display of such a private form of affection. It would have been only a touch more forward of the seer to simply shove her hand into my trousers and demand that I claim her before all present. Not that she is aware of this.’ Ignoring the blushes of my company members, I allow the naive creature to remain in her chosen spot. Let them stare.

"A-alright." she stutters out, reminding us all that this moment is not comical in the least for her "Let's do this."

Beorn lifts the ax with a light huff and Thia whimpers quietly at the sound. Instinctively, I tighten my arms around her in a protective embrace as though I could shield her from the trauma. Yet she still shrieks when the ax comes down over the chain and my heart shudders at the sound of her distress. Never have I heard her cry out with anything other than obscure nonsense, such that this form upsets me more than it should. Though not his fault, I offer the skinchanger a sneer before thinking better of it and tossing him a tense nod as his weapon settles into the wood. The man watches us both with a knowing look that is partially concealed by his worry for my charge.
The young woman does not move for long moments and I give her the time she needs, remaining as still as I can. Slowly, like a frightened kitten after a storm of hounds, she comes out of her hiding place. She makes no move to extricate herself from my arms, even as the bearman tears off the remaining chains, and I do not encourage her to do so either. It is completely improper and I will surely hear of it from Balin later but for now we remain as we are. Despite the circumstance, I enjoy holding her.

"Thank you." she mumbles half heartedly, for which she can not be blamed

"Do not thank me. I have cursed you to the same fate as I. There are no thanks for that."

"There are worse things that could have happened."

Her mind seems to search for instances to make her statement true but upon finding none, she leans heavier on my person. I doubt she is aware of her actions but it is only natural for her to seek comfort in my embrace and I offer it as best I can. Men do not have such connections as ours, thus she is most likely unaware of the pull between us regardless of her actions. Yet... instinct is a powerful force and I am relieved that she does not fight it in this instance. I hear the feigned cheer in her voice but do not comment on it as she is entitled to her privacy.

"Tonight is our last night here before we head off. Let's have a party to celebrate our friendship!"

"A celebration?"

"Friendship?" I whisper beside her ear, suppressing a grin as the shells light with a flush

"A great idea!" Bofur chortles from his place "A lovely plan, lass."

"Well, there has to be ale." Gloin adds

"And food." the rotund dwarrow would not have been the only one to suggest a meal. He is simply the first one "Don't forget the food."

"Will there be any chips?"

"Yes, yes, yes." Lowering my hands in a more relaxed position that frames her hips, I know she laughs heartily and true. The muscles unclench slowly beneath my palms as her sour mood slowly dissipates and I nod to my kin minutely in thanks for their aid. They return the nod with grins that could be mistaken for the joy at the prospect of food "I will specifically make some chips for you, Ori."

"The proposal is acceptable." Beorn announces as he walks away. A good thing, though his denial would not be enough to stop our group from having a small festival "I will gather the mead."

"Do not forget music, little one."

At Bifur's voice I turn my head just as Thia does. She nods at his suggestion while I order him away with a quick jerk of my hand. He frowns deeply but does not outright refuse; slowly edging away from myself and the girl. With that done, I relax as much as I am able as we watch the company in silence. Thia shifts slightly; unknowingly fitting herself perfectly into my chest causing my heart to stutter again. 'Can I do this? Is it alright for me to have... this?' Not her exactly but the promises she carries. I'd given up on finding anything more than a temporary distraction in my night companions when Erebor fell; leaving the near fantasy of perfect love for dwarves without an entire people to look after. I accepted and contented myself to the fact that my nephews would be the closest things to children of my own that I would ever have.
Then this woman... appeared. From the sky itself, like a godsend, she descended into my life. This woman who frustrates and contradicts and challenges me for the better at every turn... could give me everything I'd accepted that I could never have. To have such a gift to literally fall into one's lap is... frightening. How can I be granted happiness with such a ways to go? I have nothing to offer but a barely sustainable kingdom and a dream of a dragon infested larger one. She will leave me or her life will be taken or any number of other possibilities but it is not possible for this blessing to come without a curse. And yet... the bigger part of me wants this to be it. Imagining myself frightened of actually being happy causes a sigh to escape my lips.

A soft gasp answers my own as the girl brings up a hand to cover her reddening ears. She struggles to stand and though regretful, I begin to aid her until she suddenly collapses back into my embrace. Confused, I peer around her to see the woman gazing down with a frown at the shackles. Anger flares in my chest over the elf's actions. That he would dare, knowingly or unknowingly, touch my One is unacceptable. The silent acknowledgement brings my mind to a halt. 'Thia... she is my... One.' Of course I have known this since the moment I laid eyes on her. It frustrated me to no end that it had to be NOW that she appeared. Known, always; but this is my first time not only accepting it, but welcoming it. It would be wrong of me not to share this with her, considering the implications on both sides. She could be my future. The future I never allowed myself to even wish for. Splaying my hands against her belly lightly, I grimace at how badly I want- need this. Her. Breathing her in again, I steady myself.

"There is... something I need to tell you. You... I..."

My words catch in my throat in a way they have not done since I was knee high on my father's leg. It is horribly embarrassing, though she does not appear to notice or care as she cocks her head curiously. The cascade of whispers from all around are swiftly and aggravatingly connected to the murmuring company. They watch us like vultures and I know bets have been exchanged; the concentration of every ear is proof enough that they are personally invested. Though I have never backed away from a battle, Thia's eyes are so big and innocent that I cannot bare to burden her with such an announcement under the watchful gaze of the company. At least, that is the reason I give myself as I pull her to her feet without spilling the truth. Coward.

"Ahem." I clear my throat meaningfully, ignoring the company once more "Once Erebor is restored I will have a key created to unlock these bonds."

A lock turning on itself jolts me awake as the guards come at sunrise, or what my body tells me is sunrise, to drag me from my thought turned dream and lonely prison. Due to the meager rations of stale bread and watery broth, a harsh shove is all it takes and I am forced to kneel before the elf king; my shackles attached to the floor. Our captors had separated me from the rest of my company days ago; locking me in a larger cell, but adding chains to restrict my movement. I'd waited for some form of torture, but I was left alone except for the two meals that were brought daily. 'If one could call the tasteless sludge and dirty water a meal.' The night Thia came to me, I expected the elves to retrieve me immediately and had begun to worry when they did not. I had no idea what the elf rat could be doing to her while she was beyond my reach. My kin felt the same, as they had attempted to break down the cell doors the moment she departed.

"Argh..." Gloin yells after a particularly harsh slam "Again!"

"Leave it! There is no way out. This is no orc dungeon." Balin reasons, halting them before they can harm themselves. I do however wonder when he found himself in an orc dungeon. It is surely a story I would have heard "No one leaves, but by the king's consent."

"Balin is right. Save your strength." Settling myself on the pallet with my back against the stone
wall, I breathed deeply. Her scent still lingers on my clothes, despite the stench of elf-blood "You will need it in due time."

*My kin grumble in frustration but accept my word as true. The brawn of a dwarf may be impressive but the steel of these cages are not to be trifled with either.*

That was when the guards came and hauled me from my cell amongst my company and chained me like an animal in a deeper dungeon. For hours I shouted curses and threats but not one was answered. I was only informed hours later that the fiend would see to me when he was able; as if I was beneath his notice. However now, as I am forced into a submissive pose, I kneel before the source of my displeasure with impatience.

"What was to be spoke of no more, must once again be brought to light."

"..."

"Some, like my young seer Ballineth, may imagine that a noble quest is at hand. A quest to reclaim a homeland and slay a dragon... She is naive; a fact that you have, no doubt, attempted to take advantage of."

"I know of no one by that name." I sniff, tossing my head

"Yet you do not deny taking advantage of her naivety." I force myself to remain silent despite his accusations and renaming of my One "You may know her by another designation, but her true name is now Ballineth."

"I know of no one by that name." I repeat stoically

"So you have claimed. I myself, suspect a more... prosaic motive in this quest of yours." Taking out a parchment, the elf eyes it with a bored sigh. Dragging a thin finger down the page, he taps what appears to be a list lightly "Trespassing... Attempted burglary... Forcing yourself on a young lady... amongst other exploitations of that ilk."

"You know nothing!" growling lowly in my chest, I place a sneering grin on my face "I did not lay a finger on her that she did not find pleasure in. She enjoyed it more than the touch of your son."

"Your slander misses its mark. That aside, pure as she is she has reached her sexual maturity. The poor girl had a mere physical reaction to your... pawing. I have taken measures to ensure that it will not happen again." he leans down into my face with a sneer of his own before tilting the corners of his mouth skyward "You have found a way into the dragon's mountain."

"It belongs to Durin's folk, not a wyrm!"

"Yet he resides there and you do not."

"While holding his gaze, I feel an intense need to drop my own and nearly do so before I recognize the elvish magic for what it is. Snarling in outrage, I gnash my teeth at the swine's smirk "You seek that which would bestow upon you the right to rule. A King's jewel. The Arkenstone."

"I do not know what you are."

"It is why you cling so desperately to my Ballineth." He calls her that name again that has fire licking at my belly, fanning the flames of my temper. He has renamed her as if she were a pet that he adopted from the streets and not my future Queen "They are both precious to you beyond measure, I understand that. There are gems in the mountain that I too desire. White gems of pure starlight. For them, I offer you my help."
Even if he weren't a back stabbing, tree humping, dress wearing, leaf eating snake, I would be skeptical of his change. To go from addressing me as dirt to speaking as if we were my equals, which we most assuredly are not, is questionable at the very least. After all that has occurred, there is no way the elf would help us now. 'How much worth has he placed on those white gems?' I recall vaguely when he asked for them to be commissioned many years ago, before the fall. The purpose of them eludes me however if he is willing to strike a bargain with me, they must mean a lot to him... and I will enjoy destroying his hope. I smile with as much venom as possible from my place on the floor.

"I am listening."

"Your transgressions against my own will be forgiven and I will let you go, if you but return what is mine." he pauses, returning my poisonous smile with one of his own "I will even allow Ballineth to complete her part in your quest."

"You will grant her her freedom?"

"After the wedding of course."

"... A favor for a favor."

"You have my word. One King to another."

"Is that so?"

"Of course."

"I would not trust, Thranduil, the great King, to only his word. Till the end of all days be upon us!" I finally allow myself to spew all the malice I have held for the elf since the fall of Erebor. In turn, he stares at me in shock or disbelief; I do not know or care. He would attempt to force this deal on me while waving the fact that he would still hold my heart in his hands? I should think not "You lack all honor! I have seen how you treat your friends! I have seen have you treat your kin!"

"You-"

"We came to you once, starving, homeless; seeking your help. But you turned your back! You turned away from the suffering of my people and the inferno that destroyed us! Now you wish to subject me to watch you give away she who is rightfully mine?! I can not, I will not, and I would see death on you and yours before I do!" No words in common describe how violently I wish for the king suffer "May you die in dragon fire!"

"Do not talk to me of dragon fire! I know its wrath and ruin. I have faced the great serpents of the North."

I reel back violently in disgust as the elf's face melts before my eyes, revealing charred muscle and tissue; evidence of the flesh once being burnt beyond the ability to heal. A flicker of pity flashes across my mind before I remember who it is that I am pitying. He steps away then, his face returning to its smooth unearthly perfection granted by magic and he turns to once more sit on his throne.

"I warned your grandfather of what his greed would summon, but he would not listen. You are just like him and you will fall just the same." Casting his gaze upon me as if he expects me to turn into a drake before his eyes, the elf shake his head decisively "My seer can not tell you what you already know. You should be glad I am here to protect her from you."
"... I am not my grandfather."

"I remember his wife... Your grandmother."

"... What?"

"She was a gentle creature as well... for a dwarf."

"You know nothing of my kin."

"I know she perished in that mountain. Along with your mother if I recall, which I do, while your king, her ONE, greedily filled his pockets with flaming coin-"

"Enough."

"Do you think she called for him in her final moments or was she a cloud of ash before-"

"I said enough!" clenching my fists until my nails bite into my palms is not sufficient. My teeth creak in protest, threatening to give out under the pressure of my straining jaw. The chains hold true even as my wrists and shoulders pull to near dislocation as I attempt to reach my enemy. His lies bare too much truth for me to listen any longer "I will keep her safe above all. I AM NOT MY GRANDFATHER!"

"Oh... but aren't you?" his cold eyes do nothing to cool my temper as I jerk against my chains "Make the covenant, dwarf. You can not protect her from yourself."

I say nothing to this for what can I say? It is in my blood; this sickness that could drive even the strongest dwarf to madness. Thia herself warned me in Rivendell that I would fall to it; that death would come because of it. Even so... Even with the evidence of it all staring into my face I can not let her go. I would rather burn in molten gold than to give up the treasure of her without even a fight. Thus, I shake my head firmly in denial. Only once but it is enough for the elf.

"Stay here, if you will then, and rot." With that he summons the guards. They unhook my restraints from the floor and forcibly lift me from my strained position "A hundred years is a mere blink in a life of an Elf and only a portion for a dwarf. Though, the same can not be said about mortal men."

"You leave her out of this!" I shout, struggling against the dragging hands

"Ballineth will stay here, safe, and will marry my son. Maybe she will grow attached to him. Maybe he will even grow attached to her. She will tell him the secrets she carries and will use her gifts to protect the bond they share. Through this, she will defend my kingdom as a whole and it will protect her in return."

"She is mine!" I yell at him as I am pulled beyond the doors "All she ever was; All she is; All she ever will be. Mine! Her children will be mine. Her gifts. Her mind, body, soul. All are mine!"

"She is now a ward of the woodland realm. She will be molded to fit the needs of my kingdom; a feat that I will have no trouble completing. Despite her stubbornness, I am patient. I can wait for my little seer to learn her place behind these walls. It is where she belongs."

"She will never be yours!"

The doors slam shut and I am left with a sense of dread. The guards drag me slowly down the hall before low laughter can be heard from behind the closed structures. I peer over my shoulder and I know that if the wooden blockades were open once more, Thranduil and my eyes would meet.
"Do you not know, Thorin Oakenshield?" his voice drifts lightly through the doors "She is already mine."

In all honesty, I thought I'd be done with the story by now back when I started. It has gotten so much more in-depth. I can't say that I'm mad though. I like the story. That being said, I didn't plan on there being any relationships. Guess that fell through too. I didn't even plan on Thranduil taking a personal interest in Thia. Its turned into a whole bunch of drama. I'll explain the connection between Mrs Thranduil and Thia one of these days, just not TODAY. The flashback is from chapter 33 if anyone is wondering. Yay me! Thank you for the awesome comments! I get less and less each chapter but I am determined! Until next time!
Chapter 53

"This is the song that doesn't end. It just goes on and on my friend. Some people started singing it not knowing what it was, and they'll continue singing it forever just because this is the song that doesn't end. It just goes on and on my friend. Some people started singing it not knowing what it was, and they'll continue singing it forever just because this is the song that doesn't end. It just goes on and on my friend. Some people started singing it not knowing what it was, and they'll continue singing it forever just because this is-

"STOP!" Legolas growls out in what I can guess to be tortured misery. He lifts his hands, and one of mine by default, to cover his ears "I can not listen to that insufferable song for another moment!

"Are you sure? I mean... It is the song the doesn't end. As in... NEVER. As Taylor Swift would say, like ever."

"Be the first to END IT."

"Well gee wiz Mr. Kill Joy, whats crawled into your butt and died?"

The elf just shakes his head and continues dragging me down the long hallway. Its been this way for days; he does his thing until I get tired and start doing little things to tick him off. Today's choice of tick-offery is in memory of lamb chop. 'I loved that little puppet.' Legolas ignored it for a while but after an hour... I'm just happy he gave in before I did.

I thought it would be harder being chained up hand to hand 24/7 to another person. I'm not saying it isn't difficult, you know with all the bathroom breaks, baths, and clothe changing. Its not too bad though. One person sings (or talks in Legolas's case) with their eyes closed while the other person gets what they need done. As for clothe changing, I have been tasked with wearing sleeveless dresses topped with a cloak. It covers everything without the need to remove the shackles. Goody.

The worst part is the... um... chastity belt. Apparently, Thranduil wasn't taking any chances with me avoiding Thorin. The idea of it is more uncomfortable than actual device. It's way more uncomfortable knowing that Thranduil is the only one with the key.

"You vulgar little nymph. I have long given up trying to understand your strange manner of speech, Ballineth." he responds as we make our way to the dining hall "I do wish you would communicate in a more formal fashion."

"Oh but Leggy" I pout maniacally. It drives him mad with desire... the desire to be as far away from me as possible but whatever "If I did that, I wouldn't be me. And if I'm not me, then who would I be?"
"Someone who does not sing songs that have no ending."

"Don't hate. You know you loved it."

He gives me a sideways look of 'really?' before rolling his eyes. In just a week, we have become friends. Its hard not to when you spend every second next to a person. We aren't best friends or anything but I'd say we are close enough to know when the other person is joking or not. Legolas' version of 'I'm not really mad but I'll act like it' is an eyeroll. Its horribly unprincely, which makes me really enjoy when he does it.

We enter the dining hall and take our designated seats across from Thranduil, though his place is empty. Legolas swiftly rests his hand on the table, making it easier for me to use my right hand to eat. We've come up with a long list of ways to get through this as easily as possible. The first dinner of our connection I ended up with a lap full of soup. A sigh from the the prince has me guessing that something is the matter.

"Not that I find you faulty in anyway but..." the elf sighs again and shifts his head towards my own "Do you think there is any way to avoid this marriage?"

"...I was wondering when you would grow a pair and ask me that." I grin at his surprised face. "It's so totally obvious that you don't like me like that. I'm sure you know I don't like you like that either."

"These fading bruises are a testament to that." he agrees, lightly touching his eye

"I've been trying my best to find a way out but all I've come up with is leave-"

"That is NOT an option-"

"-or fake it."

"Fake it?"

"Yeah, you know." I wave my left hand in lazy circles as I swallow a bit of water while we wait "Your father wants this union to work, so we act like it does until we don't have to anymore."

"He will know." taking a sip of his wine, he starts eating before remembering that we are waiting for his father "There is no way we can trick him into thinking we have suddenly developed feelings for one another."

"Silly silly Leggy." I taunt, grinning once more "We aren't pretending to like each other. Only that we have accepted that there is nothing we can do to stop the marriage."

"Which we can not."

"Which will make it easier to make him believe. His goal isn't the marriage but the after effects. So we play his game and when he is satisfied, we bow out. We'll only be 'married' for a little while. It's not like I have anybody dying to marry me right now anyway."

We can not further discuss our plans of imitation acceptance because in walks the star of our problems. Legolas stands and bows in respect, twitching slightly when I do the same for the first time.

"Welcome to dinner, your majesty." I say without a hint of a smile. Don't want to over do it "I hope that your day was lacking in stress."
"Indeed?" he purrs, taking his place and gesturing for us to resume our own "From the way you have been ignoring me the past week, I would have thought you would wish horrible things on my daily routine."

"Then you know nothing about me." I snap and straighten my shoulders "My parents taught me to never wish ill on others."

"A very good lesson to teach." he nods in acknowledgement, but without apology "May you teach it to your own children."

"If or when I have them, I will."

"Father." Legolas joins the conversation. He lightly pinches my leg in a warning and I pinch his in return. It becomes a hidden hitting match that only we, and the guards behind us, are privy to "How are the wedding plans progressing?"

"Hn. Ahead of schedule." the king eyes his son quietly before swinging them back to me "Though a few items have repeatedly gone missing."

"Wasn't me." I raise our linked hands "I've been with this guy the whole time. Tell him, Legs."

"... Uh... yes?"

Despite Legolas' lack luster voucher, or maybe because of it, Thranduil eyes me suspiciously. I of course know who it was. Good old Billy Bo. He had come to me a few days ago in the middle of the night. Legs and I were both asleep, after a rough evening of setting ground rules for conduct. A shuffling noise woke me but when I opened my eyes, the room was spinning. After a few seconds I figured out that it wasn't spinning, it was wiggling. Just like it does when Bilbo wears the ring.

It was the most awkward moment of my life. I sleep on my stomach, so I slept on the left side of the bed of course. Sadly, Legolas sleeps on his back. So in the end, we faced either sleeping with my arm thrown over his chest or his arm under mine. We chose the former for some semblance of propriety. Bilbo, being the wonderful guy he is, grasped the situation immediately and skipped the embarrassing part of me telling him what happened. He told me of his plan and while I doubted that it would work, the little hobbit seemed desperate to do something.

"I see. And how have you taken to your role as the intended of a prince?"

"To be honest, not very well." I hang my head and roll with my plan, pinching Legolas' leg and hanging on to let him know something is up "I never expected to fall in love and marry the man of my dreams but neither did I think I'd be forced into a marriage with a prince."

"Do I make you so unhappy?" he pinches me in return, alerting me that the message was recieved "It was never my intention to bring you sorrow."

"It isn't so much that as..."

"As what, Ballineth?" Thranduil asks

"Well it's just... Legolas is nice and all but... I can't forget that night with..."

"The dwarf king, Thorin Oakenshield." the king states coldly

"I-I-I know its wrong but..." I bow my head in embarrassment. Just because its part of my plan doesn't mean its any less true or mortifying to admit "I felt something. And I'm not sure what it
was. I was excited and scared and confused and-

"You are so innocent my dear."

Thranduil smiles gently at me and my face heats in shame from deciding to enact this plan at a dinner table. I immediately duck my head to free myself from his gaze. 'It's necessary. Just... it's necessary. Keep it together.' I stroke my arms, feeling a sudden chill despite my heated face. Legolas, ever the gentleman/elf, assists me by tightening my cloak around my shoulders. I thank him lowly and he responds with kind response. Breathing deep I give Thranduil, who watched the interaction with a keen eye, my best look of undivided attention.

"I should hope so." I murmur

"Your body simply responded to the stimulation the dwarf forced on you." he begins to fork up pieces of his own meal, indicating that we should follow his example "There is nothing to be ashamed about. Fear not, I have taken the initiative to ensure your innocence remains intact haven't I?"

"Well... yeah. I'm not ashamed, I'm just..." I pause, thinking of a word to properly express my feelings "...Embarrassed."

"Ah, I see." we are silent as the king thinks over the new information before coming to a conclusion. He frowns deeply and I wonder what his thoughts hold "If you are so embarrassed over the whole incident, Legolas could cover the memory with a more... enticing one."

"No!" we both call out before snapping our heads to each other and then back to the king

"Why not?" the question is so simple but his face throws me for a loop. Relief is not what I expected. I have got a genuine answer but I don't know what Legs is going to say. Giving him time to think, I answer first

"I don't want to do anything of that nature before I marry." I answer sighing deeply "Thorin shouldn't have... he shouldn't have done that without my permission."

"Would you have said yes if he had asked?" Legolas asks, curiously

"No, I... I'd like to think not."

I answer truthfully, as it works best. I fully intended to leave EVERYTHING for my wedding night, but that night with Thorin was like a sucker punch to my dark side. A little self control never killed anyone and I'm kind of peeved that he took that choice away from me but another part of me is even more angry with myself. If he'd asked, I'm afraid I might have had the audacity to actually give in to the dark arousal he irritatingly awoke within me.

"It would have been nice of him to ask first though. It would have... meant more."

"I agree." Legolas piggybacks on my answer like a high school bff "I know first hand what you will do to protect your virtue and I wish to honor your wishes in this endeavor."

"Really?"

"Really."

"I am glad to see that you two getting along so well." Thranduil remarks from over an empty plate. Where his food went, I don't know "It will make your transition from the company of dwarves to
elves easier."

"Speaking of dwarves..." licking my lips nervously, I twirl the bead behind my ear "Do you think I could... you know... see them?"

"... As long as you do not visit the dwarf king."

"Really?!" he raises an eyebrow at my outburst and I sit back in my chair trying to look cool and nonchalant. Just channeling my inner elf "I mean uh... ahem... really?"

"Indeed." he responds, raising from his chair "You could have forced my son to go and visit them with your gift, yet you ask my permission. That is remarkably sound on your part."

"Oh... Thank you." The thought had occurred to me but I didn't want to risk Legs getting his butt handed to him again. I slowly rise and mimic Legs' bow as the king exits the room "Have a good night."

"Remember, Ballineth. Legolas." he does not turn as he addresses us "Do not approach the dwarf king."

After he has left, we slump back into our seats; my slump a little slumpier than Leggys'. I have no intention of visiting Thorin right now. Not attached to Legolas. Not when I don't know how I feel. Definitely not when I wake in the stupid night from dreaming about his stupid perfection and wet with more than just sweat. 'I'm so glad that Legolas is a heavy sleeper.' Whatever happened between us has my mind running on repeat trying to find some clue that it meant something... something more. I always come up empty and edgy and foolishly wanting for someone I can't have. Finishing the meal quickly, Legolas and I stand to head back to our shared room to talk of our next course of action.

"Why do you wish to speak with the dwarves?" he asks once the doors are closed behind us

"Because they are my friends and I need to start convincing one of them to be a little more open to the idea of you."

"Why would I want a dwarf to be more 'open' with me?" he frowns in distaste

"Because if he isn't, if it comes down to him cutting our chains" I pause and pat the male on his chest "he might just take your hand with it."

Thanks for your feedback! It helped design this chapter. Legolas and Thia are becoming good friends but there will be NO romantic relationship felt between the two. Can't have everyone falling for her, now can we? That'd be boring. Just wondering but does anyone have any requests? Whether or not I incorporate it, I'm sure the suggestion will give me a few ideas of my own. Until next time!
"What did ye just say, lass?"

I'd expected that Tauriel would have wanted to lead us down into the underbelly but apparently (or secretly) she and Kili had a spat and aren't talking to each other for the moment. As such Legolas reluctantly guided me down into the dungeon by himself, despite his hesitation to actually let Dwalin separate our hands if or when the time comes. I'd be a little skeptical too; Thorin did beat him senseless last time he was down here. The dwarves, while happy to see me, are not pleased in the least to see Legolas or our new position. Still, they aren't as surprised as I expected them to be. It's probably because Bilbo warned them. They just silently glared at him until I mentioned chain cutting.

"If push comes to shove, I want you to cut the chain between us like Beorn did the first time WITHOUT harming our friend, Legolas." Dwalin stares at me like he caught me drunkenly making out with a flying monkey "... please?"

"So my ears don't deceive me." he grumbles, crossing his arms. He settles into a physical representation of refusal "Ye have made friends with the enemy."

"Alright, wait a minute." I glare at the caged dwarf "Legolas was never my enemy, he just wasn't my friend."

"Isn't that the same thing?" Oin asks loudly and I can hear the annoyance in his voice as the dwarves agree. They are all such... ugh "Friend or foe. It is one or the other."

"It isn't either or; you can have people who stand on neutral ground."

"As a woman yer place is justly on neutral ground, excluding passive loyalty. It is not for ye to fight the wars of yer father, brother, or husband. Yet they know that if others aren't with ye, they are against ye." Dwalin insists while sneering at Legolas. So intent on his sneer is he, that he misses that twitchy twitch in my eye. I try to calm my temper with reminder that he is my friend. Ignorant yes, but my friend "The elves clearly aren't with us."

"That's why this world has some many problems. They could really be avoided by not wasting energy on hate, stereotypes, and sexism!"

"S-sexism?!"

"Oh it's a lot worse than it sounds." I grumble out at Dori's exaggerated gasp. Do they even have
that word yet? Well... they are going to learn it today "I know there are apparently like 50 women in the whole world so you have to protect them but give a girl more credit than to be an accessory."

"There are more than-"

"Sarcastic understatement! Regardless, if you guys weren't so hung up about things being black or white, you'd be able to see the rainbow. Your whole world would be better off if everyone stops thinking the world is only filled with people who wish them harm."

"We have good reason to avoid the company of elves." Fili calls from his place in the cell closest to me "You do not know the betrayal they served us."

"I know more than you. You weren't even born!" I bite out, causing him to step back reflexively. He flounders for a moment but settles on a silent annoyance "Most of your hate is completely unjustified and I mean that for both elves and dwarves. You base your judgements of the world not on your own thoughts, feelings, and emotions but from the words of others."

"Lass." Balin calmly calls to me but I'm feeling everything BUT calm. His voice is that of a tired parent addressing a child who continuously asks why something obvious is the way it is "What you say may be true but-"

"If it's true, then there is no problem." I locate Ori and immediately approach his cell, dragging Legolas behind me. The idea that Dwalin might actually cut off his hand has the elf giving his cell a wide arch of space "Ori. Before Rivendell, how many elves had you met?"

"Oh...Um.." he averts his gaze hoping to escape my question but I duck and bob to keep him in my sights. With no other choice he glances up at me and murmurs lowly "None..."

"None. You had not met a single elf but you already decided that they were your enemy and could not be trusted because of something someone told you DESPITE the fact that they were helping us. What if I ran around telling everyone that Nori was a backstabbing good for nothing whore?"

"I might be-"

"Why would you-"

"Because he said something horrible to me and instead of forgiving him, I decided to hate him." I grit my teeth at absurdity of it all. And it is absurd. I just want a backup plan to get these chains cut but I'm stuck having this conversation! I am not blind to the problems of the world but I can't tolerate them being blind to a solution "Then, I extend that hate to dwarves as a whole and despise the lot of you. Is that fair?"

"... No."

"And you Legolas." I turn roughly and jab a finger into his arm. My rag tag group laughs at his expense but I ignore them "You're old enough to know right from wrong, what is your excuse besides being a follower of incorrect thought processes?"

"My lady, I-"

"Dwarves and elves have always been enemies!" Dwalin growls gripping his bars tightly "Ye mean well but it is for naught. It has been engraved in our very beings to challenge each other and no pretty words from ye will change that!"

"Your ignorance is no rival to my 'pretty words' Dwalin. One can avoid or fear loud noises and the
dark because they are accompanied with things that can hurt you." I respond calmly, looking
directly into his blazing eyes "Fear is natural. Hate is taught. Whatever you think has been
engraved in your very being, is simply the result of generations of recycled hate."

"They left us to die!" he shouts rattling the bars in rage. If he were out, whose neck would he want
to wring first, I wonder "They came and watched us burn!"

"...But we came..." Legolas whispers darkly from my side “We came to help. But we could not...
the damage was already done."

"So you just leave us to starve?" Balin whispers harshly in return. As cool and collected as he
usually is, my adoptive father is indeed a dwarf and they are a passionate people "To wander the
earth homeless?"

"We came to help." he repeats again, a little louder "However, your people would not accept the
aid. When we offered our services to your king, he refused saying that if we were not offering
soldiers to retake the mountain then he did not need our assistance."

"...What?"

"My father would not risk the lives of our kin against the wrath of a dragon. We would have lost
too many lives, both elf and dwarf." And tingling behind my eyes gives me a quick spec of
knowledge that supports Legolas' claim. Thranduil would not have wanted to admit that his good
will was turned down, so he did not correct anyone when they assumed he never offered it. The
stubbornness of dwarves is matched only by the pride of elves "We could not give our arms but we
offered other services. King Thror would not hear of it."

"Lies!" Fili roars, startling me enough to jolt my heart. I take it as retribution for my earlier
comment "Great Grandfather would never-"

"Fili. Once again, you weren't born. You never even met the guy. Your great grandfather was
willing to take on Smaug with his bare hands to retrieve the arkenstone." I watch the young dwarf
crease his brow in confusion but stubbornly press his lips into a thin line "He was so lost in his
madness that Thorin had to drag him from the treasury; swinging a near useless sword, when you
think of how sharp a dragon's teeth are."

"You slander my great grandfather?"

"... The truth is not slander, lad." Balin says this with a sad smile because Fili's own question
almost seemed like a plea; begging me too be a liar rather than shaking his world "The king... He...
He fell."

"Thror never regained a clear mind." I gaze at my companions, hoping my face expresses
compassion and not pity "One can not say what he would 'never' do because there is a great chance
he could."

The dungeon is silent and I use the time to reflect on the situation. I can not stand racism in any
form. It's like children fighting over crayons while wielding weapons; killing over which is better.
'Who cares and why does it matter?' I doubt any dwarf had ever asked an elf what happened that
day and I doubt any elf felt inclined to offer an explanation. Both parties are at fault here and it
turns my stomach knowing of all those who have suffered under this faulty system.

"Do ye plan on changing the collective thoughts of two races, lass?" Gloin asks. I smile secretly,
knowing his son will assist in blending the races "The world is a big place."
"I've seen bigger."

"Where would you even start?" Bofur skeptically wonders aloud "Dunland? The blue mountains? Erebor, mayhaps?"

"Closer than those, especially when I haven't the power to reach them all. I'd start right here. I have a bunch of dwarves and an elf. Not to mention two kings hiding somewhere behind these walls," he grins and I take it as a positive sign "Imagine the possibilities."

"This isn't your problem." Nori wonderfully informs me "Why do you care?"

"Well... A couple of years ago, there was a young girl who was dying. I didn't know her personally, I'd never even met her. But she was dying."

"From what?" Ori asks softly

"Kidney failure. I have never experienced it myself personally but from what I hear, it's pretty awful."

"Aye." Oin nods, lazily wrapping his arms around his bars "It's not the best way to go. When did she pass?"

"She didn't."

"She could not have lived without her kidneys, lass." Balin soothes, thinking I might be in denial "Most likely-"

"My sister gave her one of hers." the silence is instantaneous. I'm pretty sure organ transplants aren't too popular around here "Where I come from, you can give your organs to other people as long as it won't result directly in your death."

"But... how... Did your sister know her?"

"Nope."

"Then... what... You didn't even know her." Kili sputters out "To give one of your organs... what if something happens and she needs it?"

"Then I'll give my sister one of mine but something did happen to that and she needed it then." It was a painful recovery but Leah, my beautiful sister, was happy to do it. One can't always think only of themselves and then wonder why the world is so cold "Her problem wasn't my sister's problem but she made herself part of the solution."

"But why?" Nori begs, near death with curiosity "Why get involved then? Why do it now?"

"How could I not, when just a little bit of care could potentially save a life? We have the same problems you have here where I come from, but it's much worse."

I bite my lip, thinking of all the racism in my world and and where it spawned from. More importantly, what spawned from it. How sad would it be to allow something so horrible to recreate itself here without trying to stop it? Right now it's bows and arrows but can you imagine an orc with an ak-47? I can't allow it to happen without a word of caution and still call myself a decent human being.

"I refuse to let that happen here. Especially not with you all. If I can help, I will. Its how I came on
this mission in the first place. I love you guys too much to let you wallow in hate."

"Well..." Balin clears his throat while brushing his eyes quickly "If it would help the situation, I am willing to try."

"Try for the sake of bettering the world, not the situation." I scold lightly but with care. A little goes a long way "That way no matter where you go, you will find peace."

"Is that even possible?" Dori voices from his cell "The world is not so open to change, regardless of promises of peace."

"Was Erebor not taken by a dragon? Has this forest not been touched by evil?" I frown at their stubbornness "The world IS changing. You all are just so hooked on the past that you can't see that your world is falling apart by your inability to band together."

"Let's say that we accept your 'view' on life, lassie" Bofur speculates. They haven't used my name since I walked in. Good job guys "Would we have to now be friends with the elves?"

"I'm not your mother. I can't tell you who to be friends with." I roll my eyes "I can only tell you that the option is there if you're willing to acknowledge the possibility."

"I like this idea..." Kili speaks up, face red. Oh yeah sure, agree because you girlfriend is an elf "I think it would be, you know, good to try it."

"Are ye addled, lad?" Dwalin inquires "Yer uncle-"

"I'll talk to Thorin." I cut in, silencing the argument I feel coming "He and I have to have a talk anyway. Now back to the original topic: Dwalin, can you cut these chains without harming Legolas?"

"...Aye. I can do it without hurting the little princess." he agrees, going to sit further in his cell "So long as you have that talk with Thorin."

Taking that as the end of the conversation, I say goodbye to my friends and leave the dungeons. Legolas is silent; not even glancing my way and I'm unsure of whether he is angry with me or not. Furthermore, instead of going to our rooms, he guides me to the library. As much as I love to read, I'd rather be sleeping at the moment. I don't want to watch the letters wiggle into a form that I can understand; its so tedious.

"Father forbade you from seeing the dwarf king."

"I know. I'm tired. I'll figure it out tomorrow."

"You will forget, as you always do with important things, and I will not remind you."

"Legolas-"

"We did try. With the dwarves. They were just so sure that we were traitors that they refused our help."

"Legol-"

"If you think they will accept me as a friend, you are mistaken."

"Leg-"
"They are dwarves-

"Shut up for a minute so I can get a word in!" His eyes widen as I yawn openly "You are an elf and I am human but we are friends. So who cares if they are dwarves?"

"Men are different."

"Yeah, I guess. To dwarves they, we, are more like dwarves than elves. Just as to elves we are more like elves than dwarves." He stares at me in confusion and I blame it on the lateness of the hour "You don't understand and I don't blame you."

"... The bald one was right." he sighs and we sit at a table in the back of the room. He tanks a book from the shelf, pouring over the text "Do you know the story of how elves and dwarves were created?"

"Yes. The dwarves weren't meant to be created and are seen by elves as striking dissonance is the song of the world."

"... Yes and-"

"Do you believe that?"

"It is true." he confirms without lifting his gaze "Everyone-

"I didn't ask if it was true or what everyone else feels. What do YOU think." I roll my eyes and lean back on the legs of the chair "I swear, by the time we separate I'm going to make you a think-for-yourselfer."

"I am not sure what I believe anymore." He clenched his fist in thought but never quitting from his studies. At least once a day we must come here for him to memorize some passage or another that Thranduil makes him recite at dinner each night "I know the stories but I am unsure. Always so unsure."

"... I believe that God created the world and everything in between here and forever. He knows all and nothing is accidental."

"Which God is that?"

"There is only one God, Legolas. he skeptically cuts his eyes at me before returning them to the page 'I've met your 'gods' and they described themselves more as guardians.'"

"... Is this true?"

"Did you really think anyone as strange as me could actually be this reckless and live without some divine aid?"

"... Not really."

"Ha, funny. I've no reason to lie either, to answer your question. Racism to religion, I am on a roll today. Next stop, democra- Oh! Did that already "Still, if I had to use an example, I think God most closely resembles Eru."

"The supreme being." he whispers while nodding his understanding "And your God... do you think he created the Vala?"

"I honestly don't know what's going on with those guys. They don't fall into the categories of my
previous knowledge but then again" I shrug my shoulders, reaching back and pulling a book of the shelf "I didn't really count on including dwarves, elves, or hobbits in the grand scheme of things. Don't even get me started on orcs. God... His power is limitless and if He wanted to make a few guardians, I don't see why He couldn't."

"I think I understand. I have never heard of this God of yours. Where... where do you hail from?" he asks distantly as a hard shove from invisible hands causes my head to smack against the book "Are you alright?"

"Um... yes. I'm just... really tired." I wave my hand dismissively "I seem to have given you a lot data to ponder."

"This is true. I have acquired from you a vast amount of information to process." he tilts his head toward the doors while closing his tome "Shall we go to bed then?"

"Only if you promise to process that information with your own brain." I smile widely, ignoring the insistent tug from Invisi-bo on my cloak

"I give you my word, Lady Ballineth."

We head to our rooms and bed down for the night. True to his word, Legolas tries to think on his own but it wears him out and he is asleep within minutes. 'Past the baby's bedtime.' Bilbo waits only a few seconds after we are sure the prince is asleep before he comes flying into my sight.

"Miss Thia! Oh Thia!" he wails quietly, near tears "It's horrible."

"Calm down Bilbo, and tell me what's the matter." I whisper urgently

"It's Thranduil!"

"Isn't it always?" I roll my eyes but the hobbit just trembles further "What is it?"

"Well he..."

"Yes...?.."

"He..."

"Yes, Bilbo." I sigh at his nervousness "Thranduil is a he. At least I'm pretty sure he is. He could probably pull off being a she but he would be one flat chested girl."

"What?" he questions, scrunching his face in confusion "No, he... he moved the wedding date."

"Moved it... back?" I ask hopefully

"No... up."

"How far up?" I ask desperate for information

"...Next week."

Taking racism and religion on the middle earth frontier! I can't say I've read a fan fiction where they do either, so I figured 'Why not bring it up?' Anyway, it appears that Thia is going to get married. Seriously. Oops. Still, no ones feelings will change about anything. It'll just add drama. Thank you for the lovely reviews . Until next time
CHAPTER 55

Sleep does not come easy to me. How can it when my future husband is evidently laying next to me? What am I supposed to do? What will Legolas do when he wakes? What will the company do? Do they already know? Does this mean I can't go home when its all said and done? I don't know if I can handle that long of a distance relationship...

Surprisingly enough, I'm not all that worried about actually being married to Legolas, just what it will mean in the long run. Marriage is a joining and as long as I can get along with the person really well, it's not a big deal to me. 'Like, a friendship by another title.' I don't WANT to marry him, but I can think of worse things. Still... marriage. It gets kind of iffy for me when I think of having to... bump uglies with the guy. I can't just do that with anyone. And Thorin... 'Oh Thorin.' I don't even know how he feels about me or if he even has feelings for me... I like him, I know that.

Do I love him? How would I know! I can't. Even if I do, I can't. I'm not a masochist and that is asking for a world of hurt. But good Lord almighty he is always on my mind. He's like a song that plays in your head over and over again until you want to scream. Sweet lyrical whispers that promise all sorts of naughty things that I refused to let myself even think about until now. And even now it's all but useless as the closest I'll probably ever get to the king will be in a dream.

I don't know how I feel about any of that but I'd at least like the option to date him or tell him to get lost with good reason. If I marry Legolas, whether by force or not, he is my husband and I will be as faithful to him as I can. Big deal or not, marriage is sacred. Whether or not I can ever be intimate with him is a whole other story. 'Hold off on those grand babies, Thranduil.' Legolas will only have to put up with me for what, 60 more years? Thats generous since health care isn't really existent here.

"You are thinking too loud, Ballineth." a muffled voice rises from beside me

"Sorry, Legs. Go back to sleep."

"Mmmm."

The elf grumbles sleepily into his pillow before falling back into a deep rest. I sigh just as deeply, trying to think quieter thoughts. Legolas is a prince. If his dad ever dies... or fades... or is killed... he'll be king. Making me queen. However if my being here doesn't change Thranduil's lifespan, I'll die before he does. So that'll hopefully never happen. If Thorin is interested in me more than a one night cell stand, and we date and it gets serious, the same will happen. Only I'll be queen nearly instantaneously which is frightening.

My thoughts turn comical as my mind begins to weave between sleep and worry. I could have a fling with Elrond and die in childbirth... If I married Bifur or Bofur, I'd have plenty of toys... and coal. I groan softly. I could just ditch everyone and become a vagabond. 'Or beg Bilbo or maybe Beorn to let me live with one of them, rent free.' I know I could never just abandon my friends but knowing that I have options, no matter how unlikely, makes me feel a little better.

I settle down beneath the covers and try to sleep. Who knows, maybe a meteorite will fall and snap our chains while we are napping. Or I could kidnap him... but I need the elves on my side... I look into the sleeping prince's face and wonder how often I will be falling asleep and waking up to it. While the thought doesn't sadden me, neither does it lift my spirits. I turn and stare into the
darkness of the opposite direction, sighing into my pillow.

"What am I going to do?"

"Your wedding day is approaching my dear." Thranduil informs, not that I needed him to "I have moved the date up since you and my son have been getting along so well."

"What is the new date?" Legolas asks, with just a touch of nervousness wavering his voice

"Next week." I answer solemnly before the king can. He raises a brow as a smile touches his lips "What can I say, its my job to know things."

"Indeed. I have a proposition for you." tilting my head in confusion, I turn my palms upright to signal for him to continue "If you go through the ceremony calmly, I will allow you to accompany the dwarves on their mission. I will even forgive the dwarf for his transgressions and spare his life. However, you must return with my gems, I'm sure you know which ones, once the mountain is reclaimed."

"But father!" Legolas speaks up, surprising both myself and the king "She could be harmed on the dwarves mad venture. I can not allow her to leave on such a dangerous mission alone."

"She will not, for you shall go with her." he rests his hands delicately on the breakfast table and watches us with a bored expression "You will ensure the return of both your wife and the jewels."

"Why?" I ask suspiciously. I have no intention of taking Legolas to the mountain just yet; he has to go see the spot his mother died and all that traumatic stuff. I lay my fork on my plate, not feeling up to the meal after a night nearly devoid of sleep "Why would you do this? Offer me this?"

"I offered the dwarf king the same deal, yet he scoffed at my attempts of kindness." I bite my tongue to suppress how I feel about his kindness "I offer the same deal to you. Do not be as foolish as he was."

"And if I am?" I test, clenching my jaw at my limited options "If I decide to be stubborn and refuse your proposition?"

"Then I will enact within my rights and have the foolish boy punished. The dwarf who attempted to murder my son and his intended, as well as placing a threat on my own life, shall be executed for his crimes." he shrugs his shoulders as if he could go either way happily "Then you will still remain in the kingdom once the execution is over."

"You can't do that!" I cry out, slamming my hands flat against the table and rising to my feet "He didn't try to kill us or you!"

"Ballineth, calm down." Legolas stands and forces me back into my seat "You need to be still."

"How can I when he is uttering such lies!?"

"I speak no lies, rest assured." the bane of my existence croons softly. I glare darkly as he continues "The dwarf king assaulted both you and my son. If you had not sought out help, surely Legolas would have been gravely wounded, if not killed. You yourself were covered in blood."

"But that is not a threat to-" I suddenly remember the meeting the two kings had in the movie. I pinch the bridge of my nose and hiss in annoyance "He wished for you to burn to death in dragon's fire..."
"Twice in one meal?" Legolas nudges me softly "Your gift grows stronger."

"To be sure." The monarch continues stoically "A death wish. A wish that I have taken very much as a threat since a dragon lurks quite clearly in the mountain that he wishes to enter."

"He didn't mean it like that." I try to explain, furious at being punished for Thorin's big mouth "He only meant-"

"I will not be swayed on this." he interrupts with a wave of his hand "You will accept this proposal and reap the benefits or you shall weep from the repercussions of denying me."

Inhaling shakily I growl low in my chest. Whether I accept this or not, marriage seems to be dead set on shoving itself down my throat. I accept. Marriage. I don't accept. Marriage. I 'jump' away: Charged with kidnapping, abandonment, and either resulting in death or MARRIAGE. I begin shaking my leg; bouncing it in a furious manner that I haven't done since I arrived in this God forsaken universe.

"This isn't fair."

"Perhaps not but it shall be done one way or another."

I already know what I'm going to answer but it doesn't make it any easier to pry open my jaw and verbally say it. The consequences are too costly to ignore but the benefits aren't all that beneficial to me either. Why can't I be a kick butt now, worry about the consequences never type of girl!? Once the mission is over, I'll still be married and my elf hating buddies will be just as angry with me. That's if they can survive without an army of elves to assist them, since the elves won't have a reason to chase them down. I nearly cry at how much I care for the dwarves. Even with nothing going my way, I still find ways to help them.

"One condition." I state slowly

"What is it?" the king curiously asks

"You bring your army to retrieve us when the dragon is dead. Give me a month to find the white gems." I wipe my hand down my face in exasperation "I doubt my friends will just let me leave and I'm not going to just disappear on them."

"You would bring an army to your 'friends' doorstep?" Legolas questions, rubbing soothing circles into my back. At least he's considerate "That is a bit excessive."

"They can handle it." I laugh without mirth; the situation is drowning my happiness worse than hobbits in the Brandywine. Ouch. My gallows humor is showing "They will have an army by then too."

"... That is within reason." I let out a breath and bite my inner cheek to not scream at the question I know is coming "Legolas. Proceed."

"...Ballineth." the young elf, if you can accept the oxymoron, turns to me with pure pity in his gaze. I know he wishes for this union about as much as I do but he will do as asked. He hasn't grown enough to fully rebel against his father and I pity him much more than he does me. Grasping my hand he straightens his shoulders and asks the dreaded question "Will you allow me to have your hand in marriage?"

"... For however long it may last," I breathe deeply again but refuse to let the king see my tears. Blinking them away I steel my face in the prince. Coerced or not, this is my choice. It has to be.
Still... I cross my fingers in a half hearted rebellion "you may."

"Wonderful!" Thranduil claps his hands in a way that has me wanting to punch him in the throat. Just one good time. Sliding my hands from Legolas', I quietly set about finishing my food to keep myself busy. It tastes like ashes on my tongue but I swallow it anyway "After you complete your meal, Legolas, the two of you are to go to the seamstress. She shall fit you for the wedding clothes."

"Yes father."

"It shall take place on the 22nd, so make haste." Thran-forcer of marriages-duil leaves the room in a flurry of cloth

"Bilbo's birthday..." I whisper

"Who?" Legolas asks softly, trying not to upset me further

"My friend. His birthday... it's the 22nd." I lay down my fork again and rub my eyes vigorously. They burn but not from an oncoming vision "I said... I said I'd give him a party. How am I suppose to plan a party with all this?!!"

"Ballineth... do not cry... please."

"I'm not! I just..." I growl out a low screech and shake my head to clear it of all thoughts of tears. The choice was mine. I made this choice and I won't cry about it. I'm always crying about something and I'm tired of it. I need something to clear my mind "I want to bake a cake. I have- I need to bake a cake. Can you help me?"

"... Father told us to go-"

"Help me make a cake." I order, clearly expressing that this is not negotiable "I need to do this more than I need a stupid dress."

"... Whatever you need, Ballineth." the strokes my head gently and I'm glad he won't fight me on this "Whatever you need."

______________________________________________________________

*Intermission*

You need to read the side chapter to understand the plan they cooked up.

I'll make a reference to it eventually.

Trust me though, you WANT to read it.

It's more of a bonus chapter than a side chapter.

If you hate this chapter ending. go read the bonus, seriously.

It is, however, possible to continue reading without it.

*Intermission End*

______________________________________________________________

I'm sitting at my wedding table alone as Legolas mingles with the few elves present. It was a relatively under attended event. I don't know anyone here and I'm honestly not in the mood to get to
know them. I'm just ready to crawl behind this thick beyond all reason veil and cry. Thranduil removed the bangles (The chastity belt was removed days ago) the moment the ceremony was complete but there is no point in 'jumping' away now. 'Married.' The thought repeats itself over and over again in my mind like a broken record of a bad song. It still feels so... unreal.

I barely remember the ceremony. It was all flowery and delicate and so un-me. There were barely any recognizable faces and I felt none of the new bride joy. It was similar enough to the weddings back home, even including a kiss, that I knew what to expect for the most part. Yuck though It was like kissing your brother. An emotionless, chaste, and down right creepy kiss that pales severely in comparison to my only other example.

I pinch my arm for thinking of the dwarf in such a way; trying to rid my body of the heat that immediately scorches through me. It's not like I have the option of pursuing that venue anymore, if I ever had it at all. I sigh and start at a light pat on my knee. I am still alone so that must mean...

"Bilbo..." I whisper, trying to keep my voice steady

"Oh Thia." he whimper, lying his hands on my knee "I'm so sorry. I tried but-

"Happy Birthday, Bilbo." pulling the piece of the wedding cake forward, I place it before the hobbit. It's not the cake I made earlier this week but it'll have to do "I know you tried. I tried too. I'm not angry at you."

"... You're so calm about all this." he sighs and tries to eat the cake for my benefit "Are you alright?"

"No. I'm not alright in the least." honestly, how could I be? I had a good long not-cry fest about it the night we made the deal. I sat on the bed and glared daggers at the wall, sniffing like crazy, but refusing to shed a tear. Now I'm just trying to deal and not make Legolas feel like a horrible person "I'm not a trainwreck though."

"Train... wreck?"

"Ah... a total mess." I smile brightly as a group of elves pass, not that they can see my face. Still, my problems are numerous enough. I don't need the whole kingdom thinking I'm crazy too "I'm not happy with the situation but I accept that I am in it and the only thing I can do now is make the most of it."

"You are taking this very well." he smiles before it turns into a pained grimace "Thorin is going to be a-a um... 'trainwreck' when he learns of your new status."

"I made a deal with Thranduil so that I can continue on the adventure." I sigh at the reminder of the dwarf king "Thorin has nothing to worry about."

"I do not mean your professional position in the company, Thia." he whispers, confusing me greatly

"You sound like Thranduil now." I lower my head to look at his wiggling image before turning my head to gaze at my surroundings "Thorin and I kissed one time. I think I may have attacked Fili and Bofur once too. He won't flip out big time for this. Annoyed, angered, probably even a little disappointed I hope but he doesn't have the standing to hold the ferocity of a train wrecked emotional state."

"Thia... he can and WILL...."
"Why do you say that?"

"... We aren't suppose to tell you but you are his."

The hobbit is cut off by a butt to the face. I blink at his silence before turning and raising my gaze to the prince who has blocked my friend with his behind. I'd laugh but the solemn look on his face kills any thoughts of that nature. He inclines his head and I return it. I know what time it is. I was prepped for this but it doesn't make it any more desirable.

"It is time" Thranduil lowly states from the head of the table, surprisingly with I'll concealed distaste "for the consummation of this union."

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**IMPORTANT AN:** Couple of points to make.

1) Thia and Legolas DO NOT love each other. Thranduil DOES NOT love Thia, he's just oddly possessive of her. Thorin DOES love Thia but he is too stupid to say anything to her face, thinking that since she's his One nothing will ever come between them, whether or not he opens his mouth. Thia likes Thorin but she is not mentally or emotionally prepared for a serious relationship; making this marriage a really big step for her.

2) Thia has a slightly warped idea of what marriage should be. Rather than the love of two people, which she knows can happen but isn't banking on it, she pictures it as two people joining as simply a passage of life. She doesn't factor sex into the relationship at all. You meet someone, marry them if you can stand them, have kids, and die. Everything in between hasn't been planned for but she'll learn. QUICKLY.

3) Thia is pretty down to earth and accepts things the way they are unless she can change them. With no way out, she had to marry Legolas but it doesn't change her feelings about anyone or anything. It does change how she try to interact with a certain male of the dwarven persuasion but she will NOT be falling in love with Legolas, nor shall Legs fall in love with her. They are 100% platonic, so don'tkill me yet.

4) The plan is still the same. Go to the mountain. Kill a dragon. Battle goldsickness. Fight an army. Don't let anyone die. Marriage is no match for a girl with a schedule. Legolas and Thia will probably ignore the union for the most part.

5) Thorin... Lets not mention him just yet.

6) I skipped the wedding scene because it honestly wasn't important. It held no personal importance to either of the parties involved, aside from the desire not to engage in it. I have made a side chapter of them baking a cake though. Fun. You don't NEED to read it but trust me, it'll make you feel better with what it reveals. It was too long to put here and I'm not in the mood to shuffle around chapters

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Hello my pretties. Yes yes, I know. I'm a horrible person who hates true love. Call me Elsa. Or Anna, depending on which guy we are talking about. I'm sorry but I had to do it. It's for growth; LET THEM GROW, LET THEM GROW! I promise that there is a really good reason, I just can't tell you yet... because its in the side story. Trust me to write my story though, ok? It'll all work out in the end so don't run away. Ok? Please? Thank you for your reviews. Sunny, I did an alternate POV for that scene in the sequel of this story (don't start reading it yet) so sorry. Also, I watched the video and its adorable. Until next time.
DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 56

You know those prison scenes in the movies when the character is walking down death row to the electric chair, hangman's noose, firing squad or what have you? That's how I feel right now. There is this surreal feeling of shocked numbness where I'm not sure if I'm dreaming or awake. My feet feel like blocks of cement have been attached to them as we trudge past way too many doors. I can't understand why there are so many doors. Someone is talking to me and though I hear every word, I have no idea what they are saying. 'What's the expression? In one ear, out the other?' That's me right now.

It's like an outer body experience; like what is about to happen isn't really going to happen to me and I suppose that makes it easier in a dreadful sort of way. As if I am not the one walking down this hall with Legolas stepping lightly beside me as Thranduil trails behind us. They don't watch the act on consummation in middle earth, but they do have a witness to listen. I wish almost wish I hadn't sent Bilbo away because I could use a friendly wake up slap. I nudged him away not only because I didn't want him to bare witness to this but also because I got the dates messed up in all this madness. I seem to be doing that often lately... forgetting semi-important information. It better not be the value screwing with me.

I thought since all the conversations were more or less the same as they should have been in the forest, that we were on track for getting to the mountain but apparently, we were a little behind. I should have noticed when Bilbo's birthday was mentioned but no. At the reception, an elleth had mentioned how romaaaaaantic it was that Legolas and I were wed on Mereth Nuin Giliath. Now if I remember correctly, that's the party Kili heard happening when he was making googly eyes at Tauriel. The Feast of Starlight is when the dwarves need to escape. So, I sent Bilbo away; silently telling him I would catch up when I could. Though reluctant, he agreed and scurried away to be a hero while I more or less submit myself to something I'm no where near ready for.

'I don't want to do this.'

I shiver as goosebumps pebble my skin at the thought of someone listening to something so intimate. I shiver even further, thinking of actually doing it while no one listened. Even if it was with a loved one, I'm sure I'd be just as freaked out with the guy's dad behind the curtain. 'Perverted middle earthian bastards.' I've got the dye that I hope will fool... whoever but I just can't help but think that this plan might be... wrong. I don't know how to explain it... We reach our room and I stand before the door frozen, trying to make like Elsa and let it go. After we enter this room, I will no longer be able to ignore this... thing. I look up at the passageway ceiling and imagine it is the sky. Closing my eyes, I offer up a small prayer.
"God. Now would be a great time for that miracle church was always telling me about."

"Are you ready?" I turn to look over my shoulder at my two companions

"I..."

My legs quake and I know that I can't do this. I'm not fooling anyone. They'll know and demand I go through with it and I just can't. Not like this, you know? I never expected love. I never looked for it, if I'm being honest. What need do I have for a love other than that of my Lord? It was always enough for me and I thought it'd sustain me regardless of who I decided to marry. I'm sure that it will, even if I go through with this heinous act but I... I don't want to. My friend he may be, but I can't take him like that. Not Legolas... The wrongness of this act snaps at my soul like a whip, drawing me up short and refusing to let my body move any further.

"Young seer," Thranduil orders heartlessly, catching my gaze in a taunt "open the door."

"I-I-I just..." I fiercely turn my head away from him as stubbornness courses through me with a vengeance. I won't be forced to do something I don't want to, especially when I know it's wrong. I'm not a fighter, I know I'm not. You'll never see me charging into a war zone, but I am stubborn. Too stubborn for my own good. 'I've never been lost, but I think I just found myself:' Straightening my shoulders, I swing around and look the pair in their faces "I'm not doing this. We'll find another way but I'm. Not. Doing. THIS."

"Ballineth, what are you-"

"Your highness!" A guard rushes into the corridor with a clatter of metal armour and bends to a knee "The dwarves. They've escaped!"

"Hot diggity dog!" I fold my hands and smile goofily at the ceiling "Thank you, Lord almighty. That's some good timing you've got there, Jesus! I. Am. Out of here!"

I snatch open the door and charge into the room, not planning on leaving my belongings behind. With the dwarves gone, I've no less reason to fear anyone's life for the moment. Even if Thranduil chases them, orcs will distract him! My new elf counterparts step into the room after me, both looking unbelievably relieved. I get why Legolas is happy but Thranduil? He pushed for this to happen and I can't think of a reason he wouldn't want the thing completed. I don't know what I'll do about the incomplete marriage just yet... Even in my world, if you don't do the do, you can get the thing annulled no matter the time spent wedded. 'No time to dally on marital status, woman. Go. Go. GO!' Taking my own advice, I heft my backpack on and face the pair.

"Hey, sorry to marry and run but I've got a plane to catch." I point over my shoulder as if there is a taxi waiting "As Fall out boy would say; thanks for the memories, even in they weren't so great." I bow slightly "I've got to go save my friends from themselves."

"Indeed you do but remember" the king tilts his head in a way that makes him a little more menacing "You are now the wife of the elf prince of the woodland realm. With or without the consummation."

"Yeah, I know but how about this: I'll do me, you do you, and we won't do each other." the two look comically taken aback but I press on "As far as anyone knows, we came back here and banged a few nails. None of us seem to want this anyway so lets just leave it at that for now."

"... I find your suggestion both vulgar and originally refreshing."

"... I find your suggestion both vulgar and originally refreshing." the elf king replies haughtily and turns to exit the room but pauses at the door "Return my son to me in the same condition I am
leaving him in with you."

"I'll try my darndest!" Grabbing the elf prince by the wrist, I excitedly 'jump' to weapons room "Ok so you need to go and chase the dwarves. You'll fail but you'll gain some information."

"Excuse me?" he asks, slightly offended

"Grab their weapons for me right quick; they will do something stupid later if we don't. Get something for yourself too. I'll take you outside by the river but then you have to find Tauriel."

"I am to stay beside you."

"I'll meet you around Laketown, Legolas." I finish picking up all the personal artifacts I can stuff into my bag and start looking for the company's weapons "I'll be fine. Watch your back though."

"Ballineth, listen to me-"

"You need to go with her to where your mother... where your mother was killed." I pause slightly in grabbing weapons before shaking my head and continuing. Something tickles the back of my eyes but before I'm blessed with the knowledge, the sensation is strangely ended. Not knowing what to make of it, I shake my head to clear it "There is something you need to see there."

"... Is what is there, more important than staying with you?"

"Yes, I think so. I'll be fine with the dwarves once you go an your trip. " I guess. I honestly don't know how they will react. Probably not violently but I could very well be shunned. I shove a few more dwarvishly personal items in my bag to hopefully win them over "Stay out of sight of your father though, so he doesn't ask any questions."

"Will the dwarf king not be angry?"

"... Awwwwww man." I hiss slowly like when you stub your toe and you just have to take a moment to mourn it "Aw hell... I never got a chance to talk to Thorin about this."

"You said you would." he insightfully points out with a smug grin. Like a brother who teases you about all the trouble you're in for when your parents get home and see the broken window "I told you that you would forget and-"

"And that you wouldn't remind me. Yeah I remember."

"He will not be pleased..."

"Yeah well I didn't really have all the time I would have liked, ok?! I'm only human. Things got really out of control really fast and it really slipped my mind." I slap my forehead repeatedly at my cursed memory. I have NOT been at the top of my game lately. I shove the last few items into my bag before closing it and waving Legolas over "Come on, lets go."

"Where-" he begins to ask, quickly doing as I say but I 'jump' us to the rushing river where the dwarves are having their battle with the orcs before he can finish "What is going on?!"

"River dance." I say, taking the weapons from his hands "Go join."

"Where are you going?" He asks as I back away

"Laketown of course! I'd just be in the way here. I'll see you there soon." I've got to make repeat trips back and forth to be sure I get all the missing items after my memory lapse and that should
take some time. I picture the beach where the dwarves wash a shore and groan at the horrid night I
know I'm about to have "Thorin is going to flip worse than a chair on Jerry Springer."

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**Thorin POV**

"What do you mean she's married!?"

"Well I-I-I-"

With a mighty roar, I leap forward and attempt to strangle the stuttering hobbit for his uselessness
but my kin keep him from my hands. I throw them off and angrily pace the wet dirt instead of
throttling him. Nothing has been given easily today. We finally got away from the twice damned
eves only to be nearly drowned by the thrice cursed orcs. In the rush of water and adrenalin, I
didn't even think to do a head count. I was so sure she'd be there. So sure.

My Thia. Stolen. Taken by another. That elf rat gave her to his ratling son and now they are- I howl
in despair. I even saved him from an orc! Had I left him to his fate, Thia would not be connected to
him any longer. She had NO right to make that decision! She is MY one. I would have made her
feel loved. Cherished her for the treasure she is but now... Now she is... right now she's probably-

"I'm here. Virginity intact. So everyone just cool your jets because I can all but hear your yucky
thoughts."

Swinging around, I see the love of my life standing atop a small boulder. Her slim figure is clad in
a pristine white dress with tiny garnet jewels sewn into the seams. A thin crown of flowers has
been placed upon her head as well. The gems however reflect on her dancing eyes playfully;
making the orbs appear more copper than their usual chocolate beneath her thick lashes. The gown
reaches just above delicate ankles and a tiny pair of slippered feet. I raise my eyes to her beaming
oval shaped face and I know immediately that the grin is false. Her joy is faked and I can guess, or
hope, it is most likely due to her new status. She clutches the pink cloak she received from the skin
changer as if she is afraid the world will steal her very soul if she lets go. She sets her bloated pack
on the ground and begins handing out weapons to company, never emerging completely from the
safety of the material. 'She retrieved them for us.'

Unable to handle the distance any longer, I stride up to Thia and wrap my arms around her. She lets
out a small surprised sound that reminds me of a frightened songbird and I feel my fury rising
again from the elf king's actions. He will pay dearly for what he has done. However, there is also
the issue of Thia AGREEING to the betrayal... One look at the woman and I know that I will
forgive her when the time comes and that renews my need to reach the mountain. Fore once I
regain my kingdom, I will have this union dissolved by my own power.

Something possessive and demanding claws at my stomach; desperately commanding me to take
what is mine. And she WILL be mine. Attempting to calm myself, I inhale her scent deeply. How
can I not? My One smells of warm sweets and I feel myself relax beneath her familiar aroma.
Opening my eyes, I meet her searching gaze. She smiles hesitantly, as if at a loss for what to do. 'A
simple remedy can be made for that.' I gently return the hesitant gesture readily but as I aim to kiss
her, a throat clearing is sounded.

"Thorin... you uh... can't do that anymore." Bilbo whispers, as Thia places her hands on my chest
"It's... improper."

Ignoring the halfling, I follow the hands on my chest to slightly bruised wrists. They have not fully
healed due to the continuos strain of the chains, though one is clearly better than the other.
Refusing to release the girl, I tighten my hold on her and sneer at the burglar. He nervously watches me before his eyes flicker to the side. Pressure in my chest signifies that Thia is pushing against me in an attempt to free herself and I glance down at the girl before releasing her slowly.

"It's alright Bilbo. Its my fault." she waves to the distance "Could you guys go over there for a second? I'm going to try and clear this up."

"... Alright." he backs away and the company as a whole moves off with my nod of compliance "But if you need anything, we are right over here."

"So it is true." I say stonily once he is gone "You allowed yourself to be wed to an elf?"

"I didn't allow anything." she sighs, as if she if she has resigned herself to the fate but at the same time is too stubborn to accept it "I was given little choice in the matter."

"You should have chosen the other option then!"

"You think I wouldn't have if I could have?" Thia grips her arms and bites her lip. She lowers her eyes before shaking her head gently "It would have resulted in your death and I still would have been married."

"Didn't ye say that ye'd talk to him, lassie?" Dwalin interrupts, trying to enter the conversation

"Oh thank you for that, Dwalin!" she shouts sarcastically placing her hands on her hips and a false smile on her mouth "I sure did say that. I wonder what could have made that slip my mind? Gosh! Could it have been GETTING MARRIED?!"

"Well-"

"I never said when but I'm doing it now so give me a break with all things considered!"

"How could you willing give yourself to him, knowing that you are my One?" The interruption does nothing to soothe my temper and I growl at her shocked face. I may not have said it aloud but they signs were all there, weren't they? It is not my fault she refused to see what was right before her "Do not look as though you did not know."

"I... You."

"I did not know that I had to."

"W-w-well you did! How am I suppose to know what you're feeling?" she places a hand on her head and paces "Thorin! Why didn't you say anything?!"

"Are you not a seer?" I ask rhetorically, trying to rid myself of the guilt I feel creeping into my belly "Do you not say anything?"

"I did not know that I had to."

"W-w-well you did! How am I suppose to know what you're feeling?" she places a hand on her head and paces "Thorin! Why didn't you say anything?!"

"Are you not a seer?" I ask rhetorically, trying to rid myself of the guilt I feel creeping into my belly "Do you not say anything?"

"I'm a seer, not a mind reader!" she turns and shouts; waving her arms in the air "I can't just guess what you're feelings are from one interaction over a possible corpse, given your known possessive nature! Somethings are best left unsaid but THIS wasn't one of them! Why didn't you tell me? If you did, I wouldn't have...

"Do not try to make this my fault!" I thrust a finger in her direction and shout back at her, ignoring the calls of my company "Why must you always chose the most infuriating methods to complete an action? You are mine and mine alone, yet you allow yourself to be tied to that elf?!"
"YOURS? Since when?! I'm not yours! You didn't even give me a hint that your feelings were as strong or permanent as a One! I wanted to save your life, not break your heart. Am I suppose to just guess everything?!

"You married another to save my life?" I scoff and scowl; violently kicking a loose stone into the river "Could you not think of a better method?"

"Nooooooooo, Thorin. I couldn't! I'm sorry but I'm not a super secret agent with an arsenal of escape plans handily written on the bottom of my foot!" she screams storming up to me and jabbing a finger to my chest for punctuation "I am an individual person with thoughts and feelings that don't surround you! Excuse me for not taking into consideration how every single one of my actions could affect you on an infinite amount of levels."

"And as an INDIVIDUAL." I yell back, fighting not to grab her and hide her away where no one could ever touch her; Straining not to grab the girl and shake some sense into her "you placed yourself in a situation that you had no business being in! I can not save you from every thing, Thia!"

"I don't need you to save me from anything. I escaped from Azog, survived falling off a cliff, and got my chains off all by myself." she smiles cruelly and without an ounce of humor "In my spare time I have to make a plan to stop you dodo birds from potentially being eaten by a dragon. It's me who is doing all the saving here if you haven't noticed!"

"If you do as I say and just-"

"Oh heck no! I'm not a pretty little disney princess. I don't want the prince charming that I've got, don't offer me another one. It wasnt the best choice but it's the one I was willing to live with." she glares up at me with fire in her eyes. If I didn't know better, I'd think her a dragon. She lifts her chin and stands to her full height, gazing down at me with the only inch she has. I'd forgotten how tall the little woman is "I made the best of an impossible situation and I will not be cowed, lectured, or torn down for doing what I know is right! Not by a dwarf king! Not by an elf king! Not by anyone! Now shut your face before I fill it with my fist!"

I'm rendered speechless by the emotion clearly etched in her words. It appears that she is even more dissatisfied with the situation than I. 'Good, it will make disbanding it easier.' Despite her stubbornness and forceful personality, she was never willing to fight for what she wanted. The fire in her eyes is like molten lava; I'm sure if I reach out to touch her now, I'd burn. I doubt I’d mind at this point though. All I know is that I will surely conquer this woman. Opening my mouth to tell her just that, the hobbit cuts in on our conversation.

"I hate to interrupt" Bilbo calls timidly "But there is a man on a boat pointing an arrow at us."

Soooooo... surprise? Take everything you know about the typical hobbit story line and throw it out the window because I'm here to blow your minds. Some you'll like, some you won't. Keep all limbs inside the fan fiction and hang on for the rest of the ride, because we are going through Shishi's mind, AKA no-mans-land. I apologize for any errors; I didn't get to proof read this chapter as well as I would have liked. Thank you for your kind reviews
 Tween elves and men

CHAPTER 57

I quickly turn away from the angry faced dwarf to watch the arrow wielding bowman. He points his weapon at the snarling form of Dwalin but I suddenly spot Kili, who unfortunately looks as pale as Azog right now, creeping around slowly. 'Paleness in probably from that poisonous arrow he got stuck with. Note to self, get some Kingsfoil because Bofur takes a year and a day to do it.' Pulling myself back to the arrow at hand, I look at Bard for a closer inspection.

It would appear that he is what the company was yelling about earlier. Makes sense. Bard the Bowman; Husband, Father, dragonslayer, and eventual king of Dale. I accidentally huff out a laugh and Bard's attention swings to me. He takes me in with his grey eyes and I do the same to him with my brown ones. Jet black hair; clad in old leather and fur; deadly bow. That about sums him up. Best not to make any sudden moves then.

"Hello there, Bard." I call to him calmly, stepping slightly in front of Thorin. Wouldn't want him to growl like the maniac he is and startle the poor guy into shooting someone in the neck "How are you doing, buddy?"

"... I am well." At least he answered. Ever polite I see. He eyes me critically before deciding that he can't place me in his memory "Do I know you?"

"Not at all." I reply with a beaming smile which, from the twitch in his lip, I can tell he wants to return "But I know you."

"Clearly." Just then Kili suddenly decides he'd like an extra hole in his body in addition to the one in his now bum leg, so he picks up a stone to throw at Bard. Though I knew it would happen, I'm still amazed as the archer shoots it out of his hand with ease "Do it again and you're dead."

"You know what? I'd really prefer if nobody got killed, so allow me to start since there seems to be too much testosterone in the air. No one is shooting, hacking, stabbing-"

"Beheading. Disembowling. Skinning-"

"Anyone. Yes, thank you Bofur. None of that because I need you all alive and mostly well for this too work." Letting out a long sigh, I tell my anxiety to go screw itself for 5 minutes while I do this. Thorin would probably leave my butt right here if I have another fainting spell "Hi, my name is Thia. I know you don't know me Bard, but I need your help and soon enough you'll need mine."

"With?" he doesn't lower his bow, but his arms look less tense.
"Look, I was just forced into a marriage with a prince of Mirkwood by the king this morning. They" I gesture vaguely around at my dwarves "tell me that I also happen to be his" I jab my finger next to me, where Thorin has stepped up "one and only soul mate. I also can tell the future and it's making it REALLY hard to live in the present."

"..." a plethora of emotions run across the man's face in an instant but are cleared within seconds "The elf king would wed his only son to a human? Why?"

"She bares a strong resembles to his late wife... amongst other reasons." Balin cuts in, glancing towards Thorin

"Say what?" I ask dumbly as Bilbo steps up for an explanation "You knew about this?"

"I overheard them speaking of it, the prince and his guard."

"Well then..." Tapping my chin, I think about it and it makes an ugly bit of sense I guess. Thranduil wouldn't let Legolad marry Tauriel but he'd force him marry a human? I knew something was up but this is kind of incestuous "I guess its easier to have Legolas married for 60 years over an eternity."

"That sounds like... some tale." Bard tilts his head and I'm almost sure amusement is dancing in his eyes. Great, he's laughing at my problems "You are thus the princess of Mirkwood?"

"Yes, though not by choice. If you have any ideas on how to get out of that, I'll be glad to hear them." I run my fingers through my hair, before twirling my bead in habit "It's been one heck of a day and I have an awful feeling that it's going to be an even longer night. So if you could be so kind as to lower your bow, I'd really appreciate it."

"... Will you explain how you know me, what help you require, and what assistance you shall award me?"

"I might as well, but I can't give you all the answers. Not at this very second at least."

He looks at me. I look at him. We look at each other and promptly nod. 'Talk about in sync. Must be a human thing.' My group slightly takes the sticks out of their butts and point their weapons at the floor once Bard begins to lower his own. Balin steps forward again and begins to embark on his little peace rap. Content that no one will die just yet, I take a seat on a solitary rock and drop my head onto my knees. Feeling a major head ache coming on.

"Ugh, please not now." I groan into my lap, hoping that it's not an early sign of a cold "I wasn't even in the water or anything."

Married to one, soul mate to another, not ready for either. I remember when my biggest problem was making it to class on time. I need to think three steps ahead but at the same time, I need to stop tripping over all the little stones in front of me. It's more than a little hard only having two eyes right now. A wet squish sounds beside me and I instantly know it's Bilbo without even looking. Holding out my hand without lifting my head, I silently wait for his next move. Nothing happens for a moment but then as expected, my ring plops into my palm. 'At least I'm keeping on top of one thing.' I slip the band on and smile at the soft sigh that escapes Bilbo as the hold on him is relinquished some.

"I'll give it back when you need to wear it again." lifting my head, I take in his sopping form "So enjoy your freedom while it lasts, birthday boy."

"Thia... What... What are you going to do?"
"About?"

"This. That. Them." he shakes his head, flinging droplets of water everywhere "The elf prince, the ring, the future. But mostly Thorin. What are you going to do about him?"

"Honestly?" he nods and so I shrug my shoulders "Right now. In this second. Nothing."

"Nothing?" he leans away before shooting forward once more "How will that accomplish anything?"

"I need time to process everything. Thorin needs time too. We don't need to spend that time together, or who knows whose feelings will end up hurt when one of us says something out of anger."

"Thia..."

"I can't think about my feelings and Thorin's feelings and Legolas' feelings and apparently Thranduil's feelings too." I sigh and place my head on my knees again "Someone is going to be hurt by this, badly. Probably me since I drew the lucky straw of heartache. This is going to take a lot of thought and then a sit down with the participants to talk it out."

"Why do you not do that now then?" he asks softly

"You might not have noticed but Thorin's not in the mind to listen and I'm not in the right mind to explain." I growl lowly and rhythmically punch my leg. There is so much to do and so little time not to mention that lapses in my memory and gift. I know it has to be the blast attempting to keep something from me or force me to do something but it's causing more than a spot of trouble. I punch my leg once more for emphasis "We don't have the time and I can't have anyone distracted."

"Do you truly believe the distraction isn't here already?" I want to groan at the sound of Fili's approaching voice. Instead, I just refrain from lifting my head

"Of course it is but it's better than half way fixing it, only for someone to crack in the near future." Thorin's mind will be taken over by gold sickness and I don't want to add to that and having a chit chat when I just found out some crucial data is not a good way to do this. I need time, time I don't have, so I can actually give him an actual conversation. It's true that unless I completely identify his and my own feelings on the subject at hand, any effort towards it will make it worse "We can scratch the surface but ultimately we won't really have any time until..."

"Until what?" the young dwarf demands softly "Until WHAT, Miss Thia?"

"Until later."

"So you do nothing while my uncle, and you, suffer?" he kneels in front of me and pushes at my shoulders insistently until I sit up with a huff. Doesn't he have a brother to worry about? Catching my eyes, he holds my chin within his grasp "Uncle loves you."

"Did he say that?"

"No b-"

"Then you don't know that."

"... You are his One."
"That doesn't mean-"

"You are his One." Bilbo repeats firmly and unexpectedly. I hadn't thought that he'd feel so strongly about it. Releasing my chin, Fili rubs my knee approvingly as Bilbo continues "That is enough."

"Is it?"

"For him, yes." Lifting himself to sit beside me, the dwarf glares across the water "Yet... you are married to another. An arrangement you are clearly unhappy with."

"I know that, Fili!" I hiss through my clenched jaw "What do you want me to do about it now though? Tell him I love him and I'm sorry? That we can just forgot about the whole thing, get married and how a buttload of kids by next Thursday?"

"I'd love for you to do that." he smiles sadly "But I know you can not. I only wish for you to speak with him."

"I can't deal with his feelings and saving the potential whole of middle earth at the same time."

"Why not?"

"Gosh Fili! Because its confusing and time consuming." I throw my hands in the air, nearly knocking Bilbo over "A momentary lapse in judgement for either will lead to unbearable pain for not only him but all the people around!"

"Hasn't that already happened?"

"Fili..."

"The world will always need saving. Even if the valar called you to do so, you do not need to do it all in one night. Nor must you do so alone. But when a heart calls to another, only it can answer... even if only for a denial."

"But what if-"

"Lass." Balin calls to me then before I can finish "Do you have anything of value to barter with?"

"Um... My dress has-"

"He has refused that, saying he would not transport any ruffians who would strip a woman."

"Who offered my dress?"

"Nori."

"Of course. But uh... Yeah... um... yeah. Give me a minute." I reach for my bag and search for the jewelry I picked up in the troll horde. I knew it would be useful. I may not be able to avoid my own wedding but I can carry a piece of jewelry across 700 miles "Here. I hope its enough. Make sure to ask Gloin. He's got something hidden away."

"Thank ye, lass, but this should be more than enough." he pats my arm gently "Do not worry. Ye will think of a way best to deal with this in your own time."

"Thanks Papa B." He nods and grabs my companions, dragging them away only to pause at Fili's request
"Miss Thia." He meets my eyes and I force myself to do the same "Make the time. You won't always have it."

With that, he goes back to his injured brother, leaving me alone. Inhaling softly, I close my eyes and have a silent conversation with myself.

Now listen here Thia. You did NOTHING wrong. The road ahead is going to be harder on you mentally than it has been up till now but you must not second guess yourself. You know right from wrong, so let's just admit it. Marrying Legolas was not right. It was for all the wrong reasons, though there was little choice in the matter. Still, neither was it wrong. It was simply necessary and that's what's so sad about it. By saving Thorin's life, you nearly broke his heart. In this however, you have learned a lesson on life and love. Sadly, the delay in that lesson now has you asking a man, whose town you have yet to think of a way to save, for his assistance. Running around without a plan has now reached its end. So let's plan.

I pick up a stick and begin writing a list in the sand. Writing things down has never really been my strong suit but I think with all the things I need to get done, a list is a no brainer. 'Save Durin's line, save Laketown, kill a dragon, talk to Thorin, do something about marriage, get kings foil, get the white gems, talk to Legolas, talk to Thranduil, talk to Bilbo, talk to bard, stay alive, go home.' It's a long list with more talking than I care to do. But I do care, so I will.

"Which should I complete first though?"

Sadly, it'll probably be talking to Thorin. He's the biggest and smallest problem I have, not to mention that Fili is right. I WON'T have the time later, especially since the king will more than likely lose his pretty little marbles. I go over the details of the situation and come to as best a conclusion that I can. Walking over to the dwarf, I ignore his blazing gaze and simply say what I need to.

"Tonight, come and see me. We need to talk and I don't think it should... or can wait until we have time."

"Save Durin's line, save Laketown, kill a dragon, talk to Thorin, do something about marriage, get kings foil, get the white gems, talk to Legolas, talk to Thranduil, talk to Bilbo, talk to bard, stay alive, go home."
DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 58

"If you think, for even a microsecond, that I'm climbing into a barrel that you plan to dump fish into, you are sorely mistaken my good sir."

The barge driving Bowman swivels his head to glance at my hissing form. I can't yell, because if my buddies knew what he was planning, they'd probably toss his bow wielding butt over board and take their chances with the pitch fork wielding villagers. That doesn't mean I want to join them in their fishy doom, even if it means outing that I'm half seer to the man. Which he takes in stride; bless his heart. We had just reached the edge of Laketown when Bard instructed our ragtag gang to hop into the barrels and they all reluctantly climbed in grumpily. 'But not me. No sir.' I can't participate knowing there's a much easier way. My little plan made over cake with Leggy shows that I'm good for finding loopholes.*

"How else do you expect to enter?" Bard lifts an eyebrow, showing his curious amusement and suspicion "Fly in?"

"I'll meet you inside. But I can't fly, sadly."

"This may be a little scary, or creepy, or just plain weird but put it from your mind."

"… What are you going to do?"

"Go hanging out in your bathroom." I shrug at his taken aback expression "I'll try not to frighten your children to death."

"What-"

"Dwalin." I pivot to face the tattooed dwarf and glare at him "Remember your manners. Say 'thank you' rather than threatening bodily harm."

"What are ye, my mother?" he mutters

"If I were your mother, I'd cry."

The barrels rumble from the chuckles vibrating from within them at my jest. Not waiting for his reply, I 'jump' to Bard's bathroom. I'd hoped the room would be empty but of course it's not. Tilda is standing there with her hand on a lever, thankfully seeming to be done with her business. 'I'd hate to have literally scared the poop out of her.' Still... the poor girl looks frozen, like she's about to pass out. ORRRR scream, as she opens her mouth to do just that I jump into action. I hope this works on little girls better than it works on wizards and dwarves.
"I'm the tooth fairy." My employment list just keeps getting longer

"…. I haven't lost my tooth yet."

"Oh." I watch her wiggle an incisor. Crossing my arms and tapping my foot, I hum patiently "I must be early then."

I've never been so happy to know that parents lie to their children about mundane things. The girl immediately calms down, hypes up again, and bounds over to throw her arms around my waist. 'Affectionate much? Stranger danger, kid!' Not that I mind; the child is adorable. She begins chatting away about teeth and fairies; honestly the most interesting story I've had in a bathroom.

"-And that's why Sigrid won't let me play with Thomas anymore."

"That really sounds like pedophilia, Tilda but-"

"You know my name?!"

"It's my job to know."

"Tilda!" I hear, whom I can only guess is, Sigrid calling my potty partner "What is taking you so long?!"

"I'm talking to the tooth fairy!" honesty is always best

"Did your tooth come out?" her sister replies with an eagerness that almost beats her sister's

"Not yet, she says she's early."

"Well then you're lucky to have met her." With that, the older girl starts to walk away. People never listen to children. I could be a murderer! At least check to make sure its her imagination "Don't talk for too long. Da will be home soon and you know how much he dislikes you playing in there."

"Ok!" she calls before turning her sparkling peepers back to me "Is it true? Am I really lucky to have met you early?"

"Ah…" Thinking fast, I take a line from the big book of Gandalf's evasive answers "That remains to be seen."

"This is so exciting! I can't wait to tell Bain." The girl hugs me once more before flinging open the door with a clatter "It was really nice to meet you, Miss Toothfairy."

With that, the girl runs out of the room with the enthusiasm only a child could possess. As the door rocks closed, I shuffle for something to do and sit on the wooden throne but quickly stand. The dwarves will be slithering up through there soon enough. 'No need to add insult to injury and greet them with my butt.' I only get to pace for a few minutes before I hear the grumble of dwarves beneath the house. Shushing down at the floor boards only seems to make me look crazy and the group louder. As I'm throwing down soft insults, Bain swings open the door and kicks the boards in some kind of code. He lifts his head only to find a strange woman verbally abusing his toilet. He gapes at me in confusion and wonder, much like his little sister. Taking the initiative, I smile and grab his hand to shake it in greeting.

"Nice to meet you, Bain." I straighten up and wave at Tilda, who is giggling behind her brother
"Told you so. She's the tooth fairy and she's here to bring me luck."

"But… She doesn't have any wings." Similar to his father, THAT'S his concern

"I left them in my other bag."

"What-"

His question is cut off by a wet hand extending from the toilet seat with pure malice in every finger. 'Dwarves from the goo lagoon part XIII ½' I step out of the way as Bain clumsily attempts to assist Dwalin up from the lake below us. The dwarf has a biting remark at the end of his tongue but I clear my throat loudly. He snaps his head in my direction with stubbornness written on his face but grinds out a 'thank you but no thank you' at the offered hand. My friendly dwarf companion turned drowned rat grumbles darkly but allows Bain to at least hold up the lid while he climbs out of the toilet. My work done, I step out of the room and stand beside the Bowman family. Bard cuts his eyes at me over the head of his drop jawed teenaged daughter, but returns my nod with one of his own. I watch, thinking some magic must be involved, as I think of how Bombur will also rise from the the portal. 'How big is this toilet and why hasn't someone fallen in yet?!'

"Da." Sigrid comes to her senses and begins questioning her father "Why are there dwarves coming out of our toilet?"

"Will they bring us luck too?" Tilda asks, head darting between her father and myself. We simultaneously shrug and nod in adult disinterest but she is ecstatic regardless "This is the best day ever!"

I pat Bilbo's dripping head as the water logged hobbit moves past me and into the house. Bard departs from my side, taking his daughters to search for some dry clothing. With nothing else to do, I wait for each of my friends to pull themselves from the watery hole; making sure none are missing. The only one left after a couple of minutes is... Thorin.

Placing my attention fully on the toilet, my eyes connect with those of the emerging king. My chest burns as his eyes heat up upon meeting my own. I place a hand over my heart and quickly turn away from the sight. 'I must be losing it because there is nothing sexy about a guy crawling out of the toilet.' Yeah, so when he's all wet like that his hair glistens and makes his eyes sparkle. And so what if his clothes stick to him in allllll the right places, showing off his great physique? It doesn't bother me. Nope, not at all.

"I'll just go check on everything thats… not here and you…” I wave my hands and open my mouth repeatedly like a fish, trying to think of something to finish my sentence with "You just... pull yourself out of Bard's poop chute."

"Please choose your words more carefully." I lift my eyes and see Bard standing there with a hand full of clothes, looking slightly disturbed "They mean more than what you intended to express."

"Huh? I just said-" oohhhhhh. I really need to work on that "I didn't mean... I don't think… Thorin wouldn't knock on your back door." The man's eyebrow and mouth form into awfully straight lines and I hear Thorin scoff behind me "Not that there's anything wrong with you! I'm sure your just great. Not that I'd like to try. But that's just me! I'm sure plenty of people would like to try out your-".

"They may not be the best fit" Bard drops some clothes and a towel into my hands before walking away stiffly "But they'll keep your friend there warm."
I watch the man leave and sigh deeply. I can NOT believe that I just said there are plenty of people who want to throw him down. I'm supposed to be earning his trust, not sexually harassing him. Good one Thia. Your making real good progress. A large hand appears from behind me and snatches up a piece of cloth from my arms, dragging me from my thoughts. It's none other than the dwarf king and for once... just once can't hurt... I indulge my inner beast and watch as Thorin slowly dries himself off. 'Pity.'

Things get a little much when he starts to peel off his coat... followed by his armor... and all upper layers save for bronzed skin. His sinfully exposed chiseled chest is enough to make an angel look twice and swear. I tell myself to look away. I command myself to leave. Yet... I'm no angel. My feet are stuck to the floor, forcing me to watch the surprise strip tease with demented concentration.

The dwarrow in turn watches me as I watch him; cool electric blue eyes, blazing with a heat I didn't know existed, refuse to focus on his numerous scars but they just make the whole image more… male. I curse my baser nature as my skin pebbles despite the warmth of the house as item after item is placed within my arms. Drops of water caress his chest and I swallow hard to keep from openly drooling. Even as I remind myself of my fake elvish marriage, I mentally beat down the need that courses through my belly; A forceful desire that is just as dark as it is pure.

I feel my chest burn again, a lot brighter than usual, and the sudden flare allows me to spring into action. Shaking my head violently I shove the clothes into his arms, completely ignoring the searing feel of his skin beneath my finger tips, and high tail it from the room. Before I make it too far though, a hand on my wrist halts my motion. Thorin slowly pulls my body to his until my back rests on his chest and damn it, but I don't fight. The thud of his heart against my spine only makes me more conscious of only the thin material of my dress resting between us. It's torture as my breath quickens as he leans over my shoulder and nuzzles my ear.

"Thia…" He whispers so softly that I'm not sure he even spoke. I feel my knees quake as he lightly kisses the place that holds his healed bite mark. My head tilts of its own accord to offer my throat before I quickly cover the place with my hand. The dwarf hums out a chuckle before kissing the nape of my neck "I'm not interested in trying out the bargeman's 'poop chute' if it makes you feel any better."

I stare after him wide eyed as he releases my arm, picks up his clothes, and walks out the room without so much of backwards glance. I stand there for a good long while, not sure what happened, but feeling pretty annoyed by whatever it was. I can't believe he did that again. I can't believe I let him. AGAIN. 'Get your act, and legs, together Thia!' Running my hand through my hair, I take a much needed breather before I join the now dry company. Spotting Kili, I make my way over and assess his condition. I'm not a doctor but I know bad when I see it and I can honestly even smell it on him. Petting his hair, I walk over to the healer.

"Oin. Kili has been shot-

"I'm fine Miss Thia." The young dwarf huffs from his spot. His pale face is a testament to his true condition "There is no need to worry."

"Yeaaaaaah. As I was saying" I turn my head back to the healer "Kili has been shot with a morgul arrow. Kind of deadly."

"What?" Thorin asks, storming over to his nephew. Seems he was listening in "What do you mean?"

"I mean deadly as in kills." I pet Tilda's head as she runs by, not risking looking at him again "If
we get some Kingsfoil, he will be alright." If Tauriel ever shows up to make good use of it

"Kingsfoil?" the child sweetly comments, poking at Bofur's hat, much to the dwarf's amusement
"Sounds expensive."

"Its actually a weed that you feed to the pigs." I join the child in her poking and earn myself a
quick tickle to my lowest rib. Pushing the hand away with a chuckle, I get back to the whole dying
business "Regardless of who eats it, its needed to save our little buddy over there. I can get it easily
enough if someone will show me where it is."

"Where what is?" Bard enters the room with another bundle of clothes

"Where you keep the pigs." I stand near the Durin family, but look at none "I need someone to
show me the place so I can get some kingsfoil to help Kili."

"It is too dangerous." Thorin shakes his head, while gripping Kili's shoulder "I can not allow you to
go."

"It's even more dangerous for any of you to go." I use a spare towel to wipe the young dwarf's brow
while ignoring the 'allow' portion of the king's statement. You find out you're a guy's One and he
starts enticing and bossing you around. Typical "I can do this faster and safer than any of you."

"Still…"

"I'm going." I turn to Bard "Where is it?"

"I'll take her Da." Bain offers

"… You have no more than half an hour. Be quick." He turns his focus to me "Stay out of sight."

"Road trip!" I say loudly and throw my hands up. Kili winces and I apologize quickly to my little
wounded warrior "Go there Bain, I'll meet you in 5 minutes."

"How-"

"13 Dwarves and a hobbit crawl out of your toilet but you don't question them, now do you?" I
place my hands on my hips "Yet you ask how I get around. You can smell that it's not by such
unsavory means."

"Hey! Despite crawling up the loo," Bofur calls as Tilda snatches his hat off to place it on her own
head "we don't smell that bad."

"Riiiiiiight." I roll my eyes and point at the boy "Now mush! I have lives to save."

*You must read the side chapter of part 55 in order to understand this.

Hello my pretties! Thia did come up with a plan about the marriage and you can read about it in
the bonus chapter if you haven't done so already. Yay me! Until next time!
Chapter 59

"Grab as much as you can, I don't want to have to come back out here after the orcs show up."

"Orcs?"

"Yeah. They're always late to the party."

"I... I see." The teen picks up his pace in an obvious show of fear but says nothing of consequence. What a trooper "... This will move faster if you help."

"Not in this get up, buddy." I shake my head for emphasis "I'm strictly transportation only."

I gesture down at my wedding gown and slippered feet. The dress is almost as pristine as when I put it on; handling weapons has made it a touch dirtier than before. With only a moments hesitation, the boy does as I asked, side stepping the snorting live stock. I'll be sure to find something less… this… when I get back to the house. Hopefully they have better underwear than the elves, though I'm doubtful. I'm still upset that they stole my panties. 'Where were my official panty chasers when I needed them?' It really is a Tuesday... Not terrific, but a Tuesday none the less.

"Why are you wearing a wedding dress Miss…?"

"Thia. Why do girls usually wear wedding dresses around here, Bain?"

"To get married I suppose. How do you know my name?"

"I know a great many things."

"Do you know have some sort of sight?"

"What makes you ask?" did the dwarves say something about it? Doubtful "You're not scared are you?"

"N-no. You just seem to know more than you should." He shrugs and drops the subject "Are you married to that dwarf? The last one to come up our…"

"Thorin? No but…" I stop myself before I say too much "My plus 1 isn't here."

"Plus 1?" He frowns as he hands me some of the plant before fishing for more "Do you mean your husband?"
"If I had meant husband, I would have said my husband." I try not to sound too harsh about it

"Oh…" Bain bends low to snatch some of the plant from porky "Do you find the union unsatisfactory?"

"Indeed but enough about me." I quickly divert the attention to the boy "Do you have anyone you’d like to be significantly other with?"

"What?!" he shoots up from his labored position to stand ramrod straight; face flushed a deep red "NO! Well. I mean… I-I-I-I-"

"So you doooo." My eyes tingle but not harshly as I let the knowledge flow into my head. Dear Bain will live a good life "She's the reason you wanted so badly to get out the house. Her name is on the tip of my tongue… Sarah. Salty. Softy-"

"Sophie." He sighs, kicking over a pail and rubbing the back of his neck "Her name is Sophie."

"Oh yeah. Sophie." I smile teasingly and take the rest of the kingsfoil from the kid with a wink "Well you run along to SOPHIE but don't take too long. Your father will worry."

"Yes'sum." He answers

He dips into a half nod, half bow before scurrying away. My smile dims as I watch his retreating form dance around people and structures. 'Leo was just like that when he was younger.' Shaking my head, I lock my family problem back in its box and 'jump' back to the house. I thankfully end up in the main doorway, allowing me to simply walk forward into the sitting room. I hand Oin half the kingsfoil for him to handle as he will and place the rest in my bag to save for Tauriel. That done, I open my Thorin problem box and place my head on a swivel.

I wave at Bifur when he smiles at me but I don't dwell on pleasantries, as I am a girl on a mission. Locating the king, I wait for his attention to fall on me. It only takes a moment and I beckon him over and up into a quiet hall in the house. Bofur spots us and wiggles his eyebrows suggestively. I return it with a playful sneer before climbing the stairs. A room with a door would be best, but as the house isn't really ours to do with as we please, the hall will have to do.

THORIN POV

The determination in Thia's eyes as she compels me to follow her is astounding. I know that the topic she wishes to discuss is of the utmost importance to her. I follow behind the girl, finding that I quite enjoy the sight of her ascending the stairs. As much as I loathe to admit it, the dress really does fit her well. It lightly drapes over her, allowing her curves to show but only just enough that you know they are there. Even so, she would look much better without it. I can imagine it now: her clad in nothing aside from both arkenstones; her standing in the treasury amongst the greatest wealth of the kingdom; hidden from all eyes but my own. 'That elf bastard and his wedding be damned.' I am shaken from my thoughts when we reach the solitary landing. I wish to tell her that I understand her intentions but...

"Thia I-"

"I'm sorry." She bows her head and crosses her arms beneath her breasts "About this. About all of this. I only meant to make it all easier on you guys."

"Thia." It is good that she is coming to these terms herself. She will be safer if she just listens rather than acts blindly. That fire in her burns too brightly for it to go unnoticed by others if she is
trapesing around middle earth "You need to think before you act. There are other ways to achieve a goal without throwing yourself into harm's way."

"I know. Don't think that I don't. It's just..." she sighs and makes a noise between a huff and a groan "It was the best thing I could think of at that time."

"If you had come to me-"

"And bring Legolas with me? I jumped the gun on that one and he got hurt worse than I intended... even if he did deserve some form of punishment." I am unsure of what a 'gun' is but I assume she means she was too quick in her choice to bring the elf prince before me. Which is utterly ridiculous, and if he were before me again, I'd do worse for him taking her hand "It doesn't matter now any way, Legolas approves of the whole thing, besides the beating him to a pulp part."

"Of course he would agree to marry you. Any would be more than lucky to have you as a wife." Including myself. And I will "Do not sell yourself short, Thia. Wedding you is a great gift."

"Oh no no, he didn't approve of that." She frees her arms and waves her hands swiftly. I notice a sparking ring on her finger, similar to the one I… misplaced on the misty mountains. Though how she would have obtained it is beyond me "He approves of my loophole."

"What do you mean?" I suppress the bit of hope I feel rising in my heart "A loophole in what?"

"Well...I shouldn't really say..."

"Say... what?"

"Its just... you can keep a secret... right? "

"Thia. Now is not the time for secrets. We are here to speak. So, speak."

"Well..." she drags out the word as if thinking over her options "Who got married?"

"You know who-"

"Humor me." She tilts her head softly "Name the couple."

"Alright, if you insist." I fold my arms and glare at her smiling face "The elf prince Legolas and the Seer Thia Ma-"

"Buzzzzzzz!" She crosses her arms and makes a startling buzzing sound "Wrong. Guess again."

"I grow tired of this game." I frown as she raises her eyebrows and taps her foot. Deciding I won't be getting out of this without doing as she says, I think of another answer. If not Thia, than who was married. My eyes widen, and I meet her smirking gaze "You never gave your name."

"You all never gave my name either." She flashes a toothy grin ad begins pacing the floor "So Legolas and I baked a cake and came up with this plan. It's shady and doesn't really fix a whole lot in the morals section of the long run but it gives us time and space."

"...Ballineth and Legolas were wed." I breathe a sigh of relief at her nod

"Yup. Not Thia and Legolas." I feel a strong urge to kiss the girl "It's word play at it's best."

"That was well thought out on your part." The urge gets stronger but I settle for sweeping her off her feet and swinging her in a circle. Despite her taller height, she weighs next to nothing and I lift
her easily. She shouts in delight and holds onto my neck tightly as I continue to spin. Raining kisses on her cheeks she laughs and swats me away "Why did you not just tell me this immediately?"

"I would have but..." she shifts out of my arms slowly, as if she finds the separation unpleasant. Good "You'd rub it in Thranduil's face and then...then you said I was your One."

"And?" I question "You are my One and I plan to see to it that you remain by my side.. Is that wrong?"

"No. Not exactly but... I'm not ready for what you're asking for." She sighs and begins twirling her bead as I frown in confusion. Anything that she is unprepared for, I will teach her "This is the part of the conversation that I expected to take up a while."

"Why would it take any large amount of time? There is nothing for you to be ready for. You are my One, that can not be disputed." I lean on the wall and look at her patiently "Is that not enough?"

"No... No its not." She sighs once more at my frown "I never thought about it before the whole Thranduil business but I want to marry for love."

"As you should." I nod

"And I want to fall in love with someone for their character, not their title." She bites her lip before meeting my eyes "I need more than destiny. I want a choice in who I spend my life with."

I stare at the girl trying to understand what she is saying. Her face is pinched in a pleading expression, begging me to understand. This is not a dwarf, as such she does not have the immediate pull towards her One. Being a daughter of man only means she can not know it immediately, not that the feeling isn't there. It matters not, for I am here to see it for her. 'It is a small task of showing my little seer our shared future.' Ironic, but not impossible. Spotting a glow in the center of her chest, my gaze softens. The girl wishes so desperately for me to understand that it pains her. I will do my utmost to relieve her heart. Meeting her eyes, I nod.

"What do you need?"

"Huh?" she asks, mouth falling open in surprise

"What do you need in order for us to make this relationship meet your standards?" I clarify and step forward as she blinks owlishly back at me "I am willing to try this your way."

"Oh... I didn't think it be this... OK." She mumbles something about 'easy' and 'catch' but I ignore it as I circle her slowly "First things first. We are going to TRY to see if this relationship works, not MAKE it work. No promises."

"I will do my utmost, however" I shoot my hand out and grab her own, running my fingers along her palm "It already 'works' for me."

"Wha- Wha- What are you d-d-doing to my hand?" she stutters out a question as I continue massaging her fingers "I... Could you...um... let go...?"

"I'm sorry. I am making you nervous?" I place a kiss on her open palm before releasing her hand. The girl quickly pulls her tiny fist to her chest and turns her flushed face away. I enjoy teasing her as I continue circling "Go on then. What else?"

"If you could stop circling me like a piece of meat, that'd be nice." She snarks
"Done." I stop infront of her and smirk as she tightens her fist

"No more prison cell hanky panky." She turns even brighter and I almost worry that she may faint "Its... just... none of that."

"Alright." I do not plan on frequenting a prison cell again any time soon. She will be my wife without delay regardless. I have a strong enough will not take her fully until then. I promise only that: to not take her innocence. I gaze at her from under hooded eyes "But you are making this very difficult for me."

"Yeah… I'm getting that impression." she glares at me as I step forward and takes a step back of her own "Lastly, none of this can take place until I am fully separated from Legolas."

"You were never bound to the elf, you said so yourself." All pretense of the silent hunt is replaced by a strong need to dominate. I try not to growl too loudly "There is nothing holding you back from my side."

"My word holds me back." She points at her chest "Until I confront Thranduil and tell him my true name, he will know me as Ballineth and that makes the union true. When I tell him my name, he will have no standing to hold me by any other."

"Then go and tell him now." I throw my hands into the air "If it will make all things set to rights, go now then."

"Is that what you really want?" She peers at me from under her lashes and I openly growl in frustration

"No!" I bellow and point a finger at the shaken woman "I want YOU. I want you to want and have me. I want to kiss you until your lips are swollen and your breath is a fleeting memory. I want to lay you on a bed of silk and make love to you for hours on end until your body and mind are filled with nothing but me. I want you to stay by my side, bare my children, and care for me as I do you. I truly want your connection to that elf to be eradicated completely and for you to simply be safe. THAT is what I really want, Thia!"

I breathe heavily as Thia blinks rapidly at me. I know it is unfair of me to have placed all my desires for her out all at once but the thought of her going back to the elven realm so soon after I had her returned to my side is too much to bare. As she slowly comes back to her senses from the confession, I decide that the conversation has reached its end.

Placing a hand on her chin, I lift her face and gently bring my lips to her own. It's a soft kiss, so unlike the hungry one I presented her with in the dungeon. Wrapping my free arm around her waist, I prevent her from stepping out of my arms not that she tries. Pulling Thia's lip into my mouth, I nibble the flesh until a soft sigh escapes her before letting it fall free. I pull myself from her space and tweak her nose as she brings her hand to her mouth.

"You may not have another taste until you have removed Ballineth from existence.' I smirk at her confused face before walking away but let out a chuckle at her smothered curses "These were your rules, remember?"

Greetings all! Life is just as bland as it always is. So I want to spice things up, but I have a shall we shall call a 'delicate palate.' I want to include more ThorinxThia scenes without going over board and having a dry orgy. If anything gets too hot and heavy, it will be placed in the side story as a bonus so that this can remain rated 'T'. I will give you a heads up when that happens so you know.
You may of course, continue the story without the sexy extras. Hope it works out. Until next time!
"Stupid Thorin and his big dumb dummy head."

I grumble and destroy as much as I can pay for; which means putting a few scuffs on the wooden floor and then rubbing them off again. One minute the king is angry with me and the next he is talking about all that... mushy... embarrassing... flattering stuff. And then after I specifically tell him my terms, to which he agrees to, he goes and plants one on me.

"Ugh!" I growl at the sky with a shake of my fists "What is wrong with... with...EVERYTHING?!"

"If you would lower your voice, I would greatly appreciate it."

"Oh! Sorry Bard."

The man nods from his place at the end of the hall in acceptance of my apology, careful not to disturb his sleeping bundle. Tilda breathes deeply on her father's shoulder, all tuckered out. Her arms are thrown about wildly without a care; even in sleep she is sure that her father will not drop her. It's an 'aw' moment that warms my heart. 'With bad guys, marriage, and a foreboding dragon 'aw' moments are few and far between.' I have to appreciate them when they come by or risk being swept under by all the negativity.

"All the excitement of the day must have worn the poor girl out."

"Dwarves, hobbits, and tooth fairies with a sight are very tiring for children." he admits with a hint of scepticism

"But not you, huh?" I joke and open the door to the room he is heading for "Run into your own bouts of odd company often?"

"I've met my fair share of strangeness." he disappears for a few moments and then returns not with a child but now with a bundle of clothes. "I can not say that I have never met anyone quite as strange as you however."

"Oh?" I'm used to being viewed as a little odd. He hands me the pile of clothes without another word "Are these for me?"

"I doubt that dress is meant to worn for very long. You can change in there if you would like for it to last much longer." he nods towards the open room Tilda now sleeps in. He looks me up and down before frowning slightly "The clothes may be a tad bit too long... but otherwise they should fit."
"Mmmm. Thanks." I turn but stop as he begins speaking again

"Once you've dressed, come downstairs. I think it is about high time you explained yourself."

Tugging at the dress, I shift uncomfortably at the fit. Bard was half right; it doesn't fit perfectly but not because of length. It seems to have been made for a tall child, as the height is fine but the bodice is nearly strangling me. 'Death by boobage asphyxiation.' If we are being honest, I'm no playboy bunny. I'm not a prepubescent girl either. Funny enough, whether in laketown or Bree, all I see are B cups. It makes a girl proud of her Cs in an odd sort of way. Except of course when you can hardly breathe in a provided dress.

Deciding it will have to do, I swing my cloak around my shoulders and exit the room to go down stairs. Feeling that my temperature is elevated, albeit slightly, I move quickly so I can get the talk over and lay down to rest before I catch a cold. With the grace of a drunken turtle, I trip over the hem of the dress and tumble down the steps. As I am free falling, I collide with someone and we both end up a tangled mess at the bottom of the stair case. A sharp pain in my leg has me groaning before looking to see who had the unfortunate luck of thinking they could safely use a flight of stairs. Bifur lies partially under my legs, looking quite dazed. My eyes widen more at the blood on his face than re loopy elated expression as he's clearly out of it. Scrambling up I look him over but am unable to find an injury.

"Bfur. Bifur are you alright?"

"I... Yes... I just..." He gazes up at me sadly "I just really love you, you know?"

"I know, buddy." I coo lightly at the garbled affection like one does to a inebriated friend when they compliment your toes "I know." 

Fearing that I might have hurt him, I start down the hallway to get help but collapse again when my leg throbs in protest. Clenching my teeth I catch my breath before looking down to notice that a large dark spot is spreading over the lower span of the dress. Identifying the substance to most likely be blood, I attempt to investigate. Gently pulling the cloth back, I nearly gag at the deep gash in my leg.

"Oh come on, seriously?!" I fling the dress back over my bleeding leg and limp into the sitting room in pained annoyance "Could someone please go help Bifur? I fell down the stairs and he unfortunately caught me."

"Are you alright?" Fili asks concerned, rushing to my side and helping me to sit beside his brother in the recovering kiddy corner. Catching sight of the blood he worriedly begins to check me over "Where are you hurt?"

"Its just my leg." I grimace as his hand brushes over the cut. Hearing it, the prince aims to expose my calf but is stopped by his uncle. Thorin gestures over to Oin who turns me slightly away from the group to offer a semblance of privacy. Fili offers a hiss of his own as the healer exposes my wound. "It looks worse than it is. Have you checked on Bifur?"

"He is fine, lassie." Oin grasps my leg in his large hands, humming and tsking all over the place "You appear to have cut your leg on Bifur's ax... as well as developing a slight fever."

"Yeah, I thought that might have happened. I'm sure the fever will disappear on it's own." I inhale deeply as he pokes at me but remain still. I only relax when he sets my foot down and walks away "I didn't hurt him did I?"
"Worry not, Berch Kanaag, I was blessed to have been beneath such a lovely lady." Bifur enters the room. The blood, which I now assume is my own, is drying quickly "I was merely surprised by your eagerness. I apologize for causing you harm."

"It wasn't your fault." I grin and pat his shoulder at his playful flirting. He grips my hand before Thorin steps up to my side, dislodging mine and the other dwarf's hands from their conjoined place. I glare at the monarch but am ignored. Huffing, I continue my conversation "I should have been more careful."

"Yes, you should have." Thorin agrees, much to my annoyance "Though your injury is due to someone other than yourself."

"I meant her no harm." Bifur growls in defense

"What you meant has little consequence on what you did." Thorin returns with a growl of his own "Distance yourself. Now."

"Thorin-

"Ye will need stitches to close that wound. I'll make you something for that fever as well." Oin cuts me off as he moves through the steaming pair of males like they were nothing more than thick air "The blade cut deep but is nothing that I cannot handle."

Oin sets his bag on the floor and I half expect him to pull out his big book of boo boos, Doc Mcstuffins style. Of course, he instead pulls out a thick needle and thicker thread. I've had stitches once before. I had a tube inserted into my jaw to relieve some pressure. I felt nothing but I still cried just from the thought of it. I don't think they have any pain meds nearly strong enough to make this durable. Anything they do have will probably smell awful.

"Um... no, there's no need to go through the trouble." I inch away slowly, debating on whether or not I can successfully scramble over Kili "I'm sure it'll be just fine without any of that."

"Now lass..." Balin sits me back down firmly "Sit still and let Oin tend to you."

"Nah, it's alright. I'm good. A rusty ax has never killed anyone... That I've met. AND I've had my tetanus shot. So really, I'm good." I go to stand again but Balin doesn't seem to want to let go of my shoulders to let me flee "Well... Alrighty then."

The next 20 minutes aren't as bad as I thought they would be. That doesn't mean they are a blast. The numbing agent is JUST strong enough to keep me from howling in pain. 'I'm almost sure I crushed Thorin's fingers.' He was nice enough to let me use his hand as a stress ball. The way he is flexing his hand now that we are done, I can guess he's probably regretting it. Oin slathers my leg in some smelly cream before wrapping it up with a nod. The company disperses and I look up to find Bard waiting patiently for me at the table. 'Not even near amputation can deter him.' Testing out my leg, I limp over to sit at the table with some assistance from Fili, while Thorin trails behind still growling at Bifur. The four of us sit at the table awkwardly because you know, privacy is overrated unless you're stripping.

"Alright, Bard." I shift strangely due to the dress and wound before facing the man "Let me start at the beginning."

"-And that's how we got here."
As I spun my adventurous tale, little by little the dwarves had trickled closer to listen. I didn’t include my origins, the future, or Thorin’s title. I figured none of that would make the situation go any smoother. Nonetheless, I did disclose all of my gifts; just to give the man a heads up if I start breathing underwater or glowing all of a sudden.

"That is some tale." Bard rubs his chin in thought, reminding me greatly of Beorn. I miss that guy. I take the moment to rub my sore leg, since we are all rubbing things "Do you have any proof to support this?"

"Ye doubt her sincerity?" Dwalin rumbles, uncrossing his arms and taking a threatening step forward. "I do not doubt nor do I fully believe." The man calmly retaliates "Such a tale is hard to accept, you must admit... Yet I have seen her disappear with my own eyes."

"Then what is there to doubt?" Kili huffs out, trying not to sound like he is in pain "You men see proof and still question authenticity at its best!"

"I do not doubt as something is surely amidst here." Bard repeats, putting emphasis on the word 'not' to ensure his point is made "I am simply unsure of how much of what is being said is true."

"I see." I comment dryly.

I reach across the table smoothly and grab his hand to 'jump' us to the ruined city of Dale without so much as a warning. I give the man a moment to gather his bearings while I take in the city myself. It honestly reminds me of photos I've seen in history textbooks about WWII surrounding Japan. The bombs seem to have done to Hiroshima and Nagasaki what Smaug did to this place. I'm glad I wasn't present for either. Buildings lay in ruins; items thrown about as a testament to how quickly those involved fled the scene and NEVER returned. I try my best to ignore the numerous charred remains that had no one to retrieve them. Beckoning Bard over, I allow him to help me as I guide him to a pile of rubble.

"I'm not very strong." to prove my point, I try to lift a crumbling block. It moves eventually but not until I've worked up a good sweat "See?"

"You claimed to have been given the gift of strength."

"It has a few rules to it." I gesture towards the pile "Pick one up. The heaviest you can lift with one hand."

Bard watches me warily before doing as I asked. He picks up a large chunk before turning to me. Working my magic, I place one hand under the stone.

"Touch my wrist." He slowly complies "Great. Now let go of the stone."

He does as instructed after some hesitation. The weight of the block falls into my hands but I do not waiver. Bard's eyes widen and he takes a step back to get a better look. In doing so, he releases my wrist and the rock promptly falls to the earth. He stares at the stone before lifting his head once more to me as if I'd grown a pink fluffy tail.

"Told you so." I say with a smirk

"So you did." Taking in the sight of the dilapidated city, Bard sighs deeply "Why?"

"Why... what?"
"Why were you given these gifts? Why do you travel with dwarves?" he shakes his head when I shrug my shoulders, not planning on giving him a true answer "What compelled you to choose this place to convince me?"

"Well, its the place where Girion shot a dragon." I point to the structure that once held a tower and shrug once more at his lifted eyebrows "It's an important part of you since you are his descendant."

"How did you-"

"Sightly seer, remember?" breathing in the cool night air that is tainted with the scent of sulfur, death, and autumn I shiver and sneeze "I think its about time we went back."

"I agree..." He shifts from foot to foot in a rare display of nervousness "Will we be returning by the same method in which we arrived?"

"Everyone will be worried sick by the time we return if we walk back."

With that, I make contact and return us to the house. The dwarves aren't happy but I don't get chewed out too badly. Oin makes me drink some putrid medicine before the group decides on sleeping arrangements. I get to sleep in Tilda and Sigrid's bed; an odd cross between a full and a twin mattress. Beggars can't be choosers though.

Saying my good nights, I follow the teen, slip on a borrowed night shirt, and settle in. It isn't until Tilda throws a leg over her sister and an arm over me that I remember that I don't really need to borrow any clothes, as my bag lies in the corner of the room with all my necessities. Deciding it would take too much energy to detangle myself, I let myself relax. 'Its not my first dog pile.' Snuggling down, I close my eyes and drift into a restful sleep where people don't want to kiss or kill me.

Guys. I am so tired. So very very tired. I'm losing my steam with the story as well. Not to the point were it's on Hiatus(since it's done and all) but to the point where updating is strenuous. I'm just tired. It could be that I wake up multiple times a night. I don't know. I'm just exhausted. Thank you for your reviews. Thankzzzzzzzzzz... Until next time.
Chapter 61

I wake to warmth spreading through my body. For a moment, I think it may be someone putting a blanket on me but then I notice it is creeping under my back. And that it's wet. 'Either this is a water bed with a heating system built in or someone just wet the bed.' Leaping up, I peer down at the spreading wet spot. Shifting calls my attention to the source of the mishap. I don't know where Sigrid is but Tilda has awoken and is looking at her accident in silent horror. Her eyes fill with fat tears that threaten to spill down her cheeks. Her lip trembles and she gazes up at me in distress.

"It was an accident..." she cries out softly "I... I-I-I didn't mean it. Honest!"

"Accidents happen." I soothe the near frantic child. Pulling her from the bed, I pet her head softly as she slowly calms down "There is no reason to get all worked up over it."

"W...Will... will you..." she hiccups between sobs "Don't t-t-tell Da. P-P-Please."

"There's no need." She breathes a deep sigh of relief. Her shoulders slump down and she slowly stops sniffing. I take in my surroundings and notice that the sun hasn't risen yet, but the sky is beginning to lighten the sky. When she is calm, I step away and begin stripping the bed "Change your clothes and go get some clean sheets."

"Alright." she smiles stuffily

By the time she is cleaned and dressed, the bed is bare and ready to be made. I pull off my soiled dress and add it to the pile of linen before selecting an outfit from my bag. Rinsing off in a bowl of cold water, a gasp from behind alerts me to the fact that Tilta is still in the room. Turning, I catch her attention on my back. 'Again with the tattoo.' Sighing, I pull a pair of plum colored pants on.

"Sorry, did it surprise you?"

"I'm sorry! I didn't mean to stare. I've just never seen one on a woman or so..." she pauses for a moment and then curiously continues "Did it hurt?"

"No more than any other." I shrug and open the door for her "Now off with you."

She walks through the door and I start to close the way but spot a tomato faced Bilbo. He stands frozen right off the side of the doorway, I guess that's why Tilda didn't see him either. I'm a private person, don't get me wrong, but I can't help but roll my eyes at his embarrassment.

"Do you want something or can I close the door?"
"Oh! Um... Yes." I expect him to leave but instead, he steps into the room and faces the now closed door "Pardon me."

"You are pardoned but..." I raise an eyebrow at his back before slipping into a shirt "What is so important that you of all people would ignore proprietary?"

Um... well..." he fiddles with the leftover buttons on his coat as I turn him around. I'm honestly surprised that he has any buttons or manners left after all we've been through. I sit on the bare bed and slip on my boots "You see... the company... they..."

"Have totally lost their minds and thought it'd be a fine idea to ransack the armory in the middle of the night, got caught, and are now being judged by a quite possibly cannibalistically hungry village?"

"How..." He rubs his forehead as if to ward off a headache "Yes. That's precisely the problem."

"I thought so. I got all the weapons they still had but I guess that wasn't enough to deter them." Flinging open the door, the eavesdropping pair of sisters fall in. I blink down, not even surprised as the girls look up at me bashfully from their place on the floor "Make the bed, you two. Bilbo and I have some business to take care of."

"I want to come too!" Tilda demands, jumping from her place "Please! Please! Please?!"

"I'm sure you do but someone has to look after the house. Who knows what kind of trouble it will get into if we leave it alone." I silence any other protests be gently shoving the girl into her sister's arms "You girls stay inside."

Swiftly exiting the room with Bilbo hot on my trail, I leave the house and immediately follow the crowd to where I know the dwarves will be. Reaching back, I grab Bilbo's hand to lower our chances of separating. The further we go, the harder it is to move forward. 'I hate crowds.' I know I have a fever and the close proximity of unwashed bodies isn't making me feel any better.

Finding my inner city attitude, I start passive aggressively elbowing people out of the way with half hearted 'excuse me's. It isn't long before my companion and I burst through the edge of the crowd. No one seems to notice the sudden appearance of a panting girl and huffing hobbit, as their attention is fully on the scene. I drop Bilbo's hand and place my own on my thighs to catch my breath.

"We are the dwarves of Erebor. We have come to reclaim our homeland." the citizens of townsville grumble amongst themselves at the revelation, clearly unhappy with the declaration of the early hour "I remember this town in the great days of old. Fleets of boats lay at harbor, filled with silks and fine gems."

"Truly?" Bilbo whispers to me " This lot? "

"Time changes people." I answer back grimly "Gollum is a perfect example. "

"...Yes... I suppose so... But I wouldn't... That would never happen to m-"

"This was no forsaken town on a lake." I allow Bilbo to think on his situation, as it will do him some good "This was the center of all trade in the north! I would see those days return. I would relight the great forges of the dwarves and send wealth and riches flowing once more from the halls of Erebor!"

The people cheer, and why wouldn't they? A king enters their poor provincial town and promises
to bring back days of old that none of them are old enough to remember. When you live in hell, heaven is alway a dream. And here comes Thorin, promising to bring back the milk and honey.

That is why I hate this part. It never sat right with me; it was all out of character. Not to mention the villagers seem totally oblivious to the fact that there's a DRAGON sitting in the mountain just waiting for dinner and we are going from delivery to digiorno on a silver platter. At least someone is smart enough to question it in 3...2...1..

"Death! That is what you'll bring upon us." the crowd parts around the shouting bowman as he storms to the clearing. He is doing a pretty good impression of a feral wolf. He barely glances my way as he passes "Dragonfire and ruin. If you awaken that beast, it will destroy us all."

"You can listen to this naysayer," Thorin mockingly sneers at Bard's word and I can't help but feel angry. Even without knowing what I know, Bard makes an excellent point and it pains me to see not only how ignorant these people are, but also how willing Thorin is to disregard the warnings signs of his sickness "but I promise you this; if we succeed all will share in the wealth of the mountain. You will have enough gold to rebuild Esgaroth ten times over!"

"All of you! Listen to me, you must listen!" the desperation in Bard's voice as he tries to get his fellow townsmen to see reason. It's almost enough to make me step forward and stand by his side but I doubt anyone would really appreciate it "Have you forgotten what happened to Dale? Have you forgotten those who died in the firestorm? And for what purpose? The blind ambition of a Mountain King, so riven by greed, he could not see beyond his own desire!"

"Hold yer tongue bargeman!" Dwalin rises in defense of his king " Ye will not slander our kin freely! "

"Now. Now." the oily voice of the Laketown's wannabe leader slithers over my skin and makes goosebumps visibly appear on my arms. I'm not proud to say it but I'm so glad he dies "We must not, any of us, be too quick to lay blame. Let us not forget, that it was Girion, Lord of Dale, your ancestor, who failed to kill the beast. Hm!"

"It's true, Sire." Alfrid hisses in a rat like voice. His beady eyes scan the crowd in distaste until they meet my own. He offers a yellowed attempt of a grin before continuing "We all know the story. Arrow after arrow, he shot. Each one missing its mark."

"You have no right." Bard argues with Thorin. Bilbo steps away from my side and flawlessly slips into place with the dwarves unnoticed. Alfrid's black eyes make it impossible for me to do the same and I'm not interested in getting called out right now. Instead, I step deeper into the crowd "No right to enter that mountain."

"I have the only right." Thorin coldly replies before facing the Fatster "I speak to the master of the men of the lake. Will you see the prophecy fulfilled? Will you share in the great wealth of our people?"

The crowd is silent as they wait for an answer. I have come to the conclusion that they have no thoughts of their own and must be treated as sheep. Bard angrily growls under his breath at the situation. Alfrid is trying to peak around the people before me, so I burrow deeper into the fray to stay hidden. The Fatster's hesitation has been drawn out long enough and Thorin grows impatient.

"What say you?"

"I say unto you...welcome! Welcome and rise! Welcome, King Under the Mountain!"
The crowd cheers and each shout is like a knife in my gut because I know that soon they will all be screaming for a different reason. Bard sneers in disgust but he too is soon swallowed up by the crowd. I watch as the townsfolk swarm my friends as if it's played in slow motion. I see Thorin's proud form and I can only hope that he lives to regret this moment. I doubt I can save these people and that hurts the most. My thoughts are cut off when a hand covers my mouth, drags me out of the crowd, and into the distant trees.

Hello my pretties! Short chapter. Sorry. Thank you for your reviews. I like reviews, they make me want to update. So thank you for reviewing, it makes me feel really appreciated and thats a good feeling. I hope you enjoyed the chapter, until next time.
To say that I am freaking out is a major understatement. I struggle to free myself or at least get the attention of my friends but they are too busy sucking up the attention from the crowd to help little ole me. Pulling strength from my bead, I am able to break free as we reach the edge of the forest. Although Laketown is nearly completely surrounded by water, at some point it must have been attached to the land as there is a small patch of trees that seems to blend into the forest which we just escaped from. 'I have no intention of going back in!' From the corner of my eye I can see my attacker reaching for me once more, so I quickly defend myself. In a fluid motion I thrust my palm into the unsuspecting person's face, nearly cringing at the crunch of a newly broken nose. We both stumble back; me in a defensive stance and the male clutching his face in pain.

"Calm down, Ballineth!" the figure hisses from behind his hand "It is only I, Legolas."

"Wha-" taking a good look at my assailant, I realize that it really is Legolas! I immediately drop my defensive position and grab his arm. Dragging him a little further into the makeshift forest, I turn and give him my full attention. Placing my hands on my hips in an authoritative stance, I lecture the elf prince for his actions "Did you learn NOTHING from the last time, that sneaking up on me isn't a good idea? I mean seriously, how many times are you going to have to break your face for this lesson to set in?"

"It was not my intention to frighten-"

"The road to Hell is paved with good intention." I sneer but cross my arms and grumble "and I wasn't scared."

"-you, but we need to speak" he continues, ignoring my outburst "and I did not wish to risk you alerting the dwarves."

"So you crept up behind me like a thief in the night!?" I grip my upper arms and try to will off the uncomfortable feeling of the situation "I thought you were a murderer. Or a Kidnapper. Or a RAPIST. This had better be worth me thinking you were a rapist, Legolas!"

"As I was trying to explain," he begins again; his words nasally from his injury "I had no intention of taking you against your will or frightening you or-"

"I WASN'T scared!" I insist

"Alright." He lifts one of his hands from his bleeding nose in a calming fashion in an attempt to placate me. If anyone was watching it would have a look like I'm bullying him "I apologize for
surprising you, however it was for your own safety."

"I thought you just wanted to talk to me." I glare at the blonde elf, though not as hotly as before.
"Now it was for my protection? Your story is kind of inconsistent."

"Yes." He answers as if that simple answer explains everything.

"Why?" I prompt when he doesn't continue.

"I need to speak with you about my Father."

"Oh. Well... about that-

"You revealed our plan to the dwarf king, didn't you?"

"Well... I mean... Like... I did but..." his blank stare does nothing to aid me in finding an excuse. I honestly don't know what came over me or why I told Thorin the plan when he is the ONE person who didn't need to know. It's just that... the way it went down, I just HAD to answer him. Smiling pathetically, I shrug at my companion "Yeah. Yeah, I told him. Sorry."

"Ballineth... Then I must advise and remind you not to drag out this separation between you and I, as it will only serve to earn you my father's ire. Quickly tell him the truth when the time comes BEFORE your dwarf has time to make matters worse." he explains, pulling out some cloth and pressing it to his nose. A couple of corrective snaps later and I am thoroughly disgusted, which I think he did on purpose. I patiently allow him the moment to clean his face of blood, content to avoid the sound of grating bone "It is of the utmost importance that you do."

"Alright. I already planned on it but alright. Thanks for telling me." I let my arms drop slightly from their place across my crest to softly cradle my waist in a loose self-hug. Ahhhh, self soothing is great "But why did you have to snatch me up back there?"

"You were glowing."

"I tend to do that sometimes. Quite often, actually." I answer with a wave of my hand "That's nothing new."

"No but..." he shakes his head softly and peers in annoyance at the distant town "Men are not known for their wide acceptance of magic. That being said, they would not have reacted kindly to seeing your eyes glow... Let alone your entire being glowing, as it was."

"Wait a second." I pause to make sure I'm understanding correctly "All of me?"

"Indeed. It was faint at first but grew slowly to the point of noticeability if any were to look. I thought it best to remove you from the vicinity before anyone noticed."

"I... understand. Thanks." He nods as I turn back towards the crowd. I can barely make out the image of the company walking into the dining hall. Bilbo's form turns in a half circle as if searching for something, most likely me, but is hustled into the building soon after "And the dwarves?"

"I can not judge what the Dwarf King would have done upon finding that his self proclaimed life mate can turn into that which his heart truly desires."

"Does his heart truly desire gold over love?" I ask, turning to face the elf once more "Not that he loves me... Desiring a person because of what they are is different than desiring them for WHO
they are. I don't know if he understands the difference..."

"I can not tell you that, Ballineth, and know that your emotions play a roll in this as well." He answers as truthfully as he can "However there was no doubt in my mind that you are what he seeks one way or another."

"I get it." And I do. After all that stuff he said last night, I doubt I want to be painted his favorite color right now "Who knows what he would have done."

"I am unsure, however it is likely something you would not wish to occur with an audience." I give him a bland look to which he lightly smirks at. Who cares if he's probably right? Still… getting my bones jumped in the middle of a crowd is not appealing in the least "It is also likely to occur if you do not cease."

"Pardon?"

Legolas gestures to my general area and I look down. I see that indeed, my entire body is offering a slow glow that shimmers gold with each pulse. I shake my limbs in an attempt to disperse the light but it persists. I don't feel the familiar heat from when my gifted marks normally glow, so I'm totally lost as to what is happening. 'I've discovered all the gifts and unlocked all the characters, so what is up with me costuming as a nightlight?' Not knowing what else to do, I admit my confusion to Legolas.

"The source is unknown to myself as well." He guides me a few more steps into the trees and sits me down behind a withering trunk "It would be best to avoid the town of Men until it has faded."

"Yeah, I guess. No need to repeat Salem." I think of returning to Bard's house but I doubt he really wants to assist me in anything other than jumping off a cliff right now. Though he still has my stuff... "Where's Tauriel?"

"... She left into the forest before myself but I have yet to find her."

"Gosh, you guys are moving at a snail's pace." I grumble and continue to wait for my firefly membership to be revoked "I don't know where she is now but she'll be with the dwarves in the morning."

I momentarily wonder what is taking her so long. If Legolas is here and she left first, then she should obviously be around somewhere. Still, she doesn't show up until tomorrow even though she was supposedly running to save Kili's life. What is up with this timeline? DAMN YOU PETER JACKSON AND YOUR INCONSISTENCIES! Picking up a few stones, I chuck them through the trees and try to ignore the impossibly possible portions of this universe. 'Must. Not. Become. Self. Aware.' That's how all the good characters get killed off. Trying to pull myself from my fight with logic, I gaze over at Legolas. The guy is lost in thought, probably thinking of the love interest he doesn't know is lost to him already. With each stone I toss, I feel infinitely better. It's as if the stones represent my frustration and each toss alleviates the weight in my stomach. It's only takes about 10 minutes for my evolution to be almost fully reversed. 'So I guess this is more Digimon than Pokémon.'

"AU-girl digivolve tooooo..." I deepen my voice and flex "Flashlightmon."

"I am beginning to believe that you may very well be from a world outside this one... " Legolas scoffs, tenderly wiping his hand down his face. I freeze in my movements, wondering if I've been found out but he suddenly chuckles lightly "Though many winters I have seen, there are numerous lands I have not. You must hail from the wildlings of the far east fore I must admit that I
comprehend very little of what you say."

"It's alright; you'd be hard pressed to find my birthplace anywhere you've ever heard of." I smile brightly but it's ruined by a violent sneeze "I don't expect you to anyway."

"Clearly." He rolls his eyes "Your illumination has faded."

"Finally!" I leap to my feet and check myself over. No glow. Good "Now that that's taken care of, I need to go. Unless there was... something else?"

"No, that is all I wished to discuss with you." He begins to walk into the trees like he's in some epic movie sce-… oh yeah. Well… At least there are not TOO many explosions "I must locate Tauriel."

"Yeah..." I want to tell my friend about the heartbreak he's in for, but I know he needs to live his life the way he was meant to in order to become the person he needs to be "Good luck."

"Thank you for your well wishes." He pauses and looks over his shoulder with a toss of his hair "Return immediately. But... be wary of the dwarf king. His blood is tainted by madness."

Before I can confirm or deny his words, the elf disappears into the trees. I'm left standing in a nearly abandoned part of a semi-island that's on a lake attached by... whatever. 'Thanks a bunch fake hubby.' Deciding not to die exploring an unsafe environment on this fine day, I turn and hurry back to the town. The crowd has mostly dispersed and is returning to daily life as one does after such a morning. The smell of cooking fish makes my stomach rumble violently, reminding me that I haven't broken my fast for the day yet. I begin to 'jump' into the dining hall I saw the dwarves enter but think better of it. I doubt that would go over well with the inhabitants, whoever they may be. Still, I don't think the bouncers are going to just let me waltz through the front doors. '... I'll just have to ask someone to get one of the dwarves.' Plan formulated, I walk up the front steps and greet the guards. They are polar opposites; one is pale with the only color being his bright hair and the other is so tan that I'm pretty sure his hair was actually burnt black. Regardless of their coloring, both men are boxer material.

"Hey, you two. Um, my friends are in there and I was just wondering if you could let me in to go sit with them." The two beefy looking males look down at me with raised eyebrows. I try my manners "Please?"

"..." they exchange a glance and for a second I think they will ignore me but the red haired guard answers "What's a girl such as yourself doing frequenting such company?"

"Oh. They aren't so bad once you get to know them." Their eyebrows lift higher "Honest!"

"Hm." The black haired one responds "Wait here."

I nod as he turns and enters the building, leaving me with carrot top. I smile but he simply looks me up and down as if confused. Nervously I place my hands behind my back and rock from my toes to my heels, trying not to whistle. The remaining guard huffs and clears his throat before crossing his arms and scowling down at me.

"I have never seen you before." He looks at me in suspicion "What kind of 'friend' of the master's are you?"

"Hm? Oh, no." I wave my hands in front of me "I'm not friends with him. I'm friends with the dwarves."

"...That is unfortunate then." He looks at me with a startled expression that quickly turns into pity
"Hello, Beautiful." A slimy voice slithers its way into my ear canals. I look passed the guard and see Alfrid's rat face grinning his rotting teeth at me. So startled from the numerous holes in his sunny yellows, I miss the opportunity to flee as he wraps a clammy hand around my forearm and pulls me into the building. The duo gives me apologetic grimaces before shutting the doors behind us "I knew you wouldn't be able to resist my… charm."

Alfrid you slime ball! Ugh. He keeps popping up. He'll regret it if he gets too close. How'd you all like the chapter? What do you think is up with Thia going all light bright all of a sudden? Any ideas? Thank you for your reviews. I've answered all … I think... I keep all your reviews close to my heart and try to incorporate any suggests you make. Keep it up guys. I took a break and feel a little better. Util next time!
Stupid Alfrid

Chapter Notes

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson’s stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 63

"I saw you watching me from the crowd today."

The slimester slides closer to me as we walk down the empty corridors of the large house. I look to and fro, taking in the house with an uninterested expression. It's filled with mitch matched odds and ends; the best of the worst I suppose. Upon discovering that I'd get no help from the tweedle deedum guards, I took it upon myself to find my dwarves. It would be a whole lot easier if Alfrid wasn't metaphorically humping my leg every five seconds. ‘Thank God for metaphors.’

"I glanced in your direction, is all."

"No need to be shy. I won't bite... too hard." He snaps his teeth loudly and reaches out his bony hand to molest my chin but I bat it away and keep walking. Not that it deters him at all "I was watching you too. I get all kinds of wenches- ahh I mean LADIES casting looks my way but none are as fetching as you."

"Right... Still, you are mistaken." If I walk any faster, I'll be running. Alfrid's coughing laugh makes me think my manners might be an acceptable sacrifice right about now. He IS letting me freely roam the house which is odd, to say the least, but I'm not complaining "I am here for the dwarves, NOT you."

"You keep saying that, love" Ugh, he's given me a pet name. That word has never sounded so dirty. It's all made worse knowing that he cross-dresses as old ladies "but I don't believe you."

"Yeah well, that sounds like a personal problem." My stride is brought up short when the rat suddenly darts in front of me, blocking the path further into the house. Quick little bugger "What?"

"Will it be your problem when I tell the master of that unique little light trick you did?" I stare angrily into his face. 'I should have known.' His face cracks into a grin and his eyes boldly roam over my body as he tries to drag his hand down my arm "It makes me wonder what other surprises you hold. But two can keep a secret, if you're willing to make a deal."

"Two can keep a secret," I agree, snatching my arm from his reach "if one is dead."

"Is that a challenge, love?" he snickers unperturbed, uplifting his palms in a 'surrender' pose "I do love a challenge."

"... Any deal I make with you" I shove past the creep and continue moving "will be sure to cost
me more the revelation of any secret you could ever hold."

"Maybe..." he calls after me "But I'll take anything your willing to offer... or not."

Having enough of the rodent's company, I decide play time is over and I need to put some serious effort into finding the dwarves. Alfrid is quick to follow, tripping over his gangling limbs as I delicately storm through the house. I don't need him noticing that I can't really outrun him with this bum leg. 'I took an arrow to the knee, I swear!' I haven't the slightest clue where my company is and I won't find them by being nice. In a hostile take over, I start throwing open every door I pass, only paying enough attention to each room to know that it is empty of my crew. I'm sure if I throw enough open, one will contain my friends sooner or later.

"I love a girl with grit." Alfrid calls from behind me. I hope I find them sooner rather than later "It keeps the relationship alive."

"We don't have a relationship, Alfrid." I comment dryly

"And yet you know my name, love." He continues as I forcefully push open another door "I have not been given the pleasure to know you're name, however."

"Pleasure isn't what I want to give you." I roll my eyes but then decide on a nice turn of events. I've never had a chance to use this joke before… "Nunya."

"Your name is… Nunya?"

"Yeah." Reaching a dead end, I spin to try another hall but stop when Alfrid trips on the rug and starts to fall towards me with his arms outstretched. 'Does he expect me to catch him?" A quick side step saves me from having to touch the grease monkey as he kisses the seedy rug "Nunya Business. Now back off, unless you're going to help me find my friends."

"…. A beautiful name for a beautiful girl, Nunya love."

Great! ANOTHER alias. I'm beginning to feel like a criminal. Growling in frustration at not only having my joke fail but also at Alfrid for serving to further my annoyance, I turn away from the airheaded creep in search of more doors to throw open. Thankfully, Alfrid doesn't follow as quickly and it only takes three more door tosses to find the elusive party of thirteen and a half.

The group seems happy enough at my arrival, throwing up their hands and offering a cheer of surprise as if they expected me to still be asleep. I roll my eyes, but quickly enter the room in a hope to avoid Alfrid's return. The group is entirely too merry for my liking and before I can even do a full sweep of the occupants, Bofur pulls me into a bone crushing hug. His height puts his nose in my neck and his slobbering laughter is tickling the spot, making it hard to be angry and not laugh. But I won't be deterred!

"Thanks for abandoning me in a strange place, guys. AGAIN. How many times is that now? Two? No, no. I'm sure it's three." I pull away from the hug and tug at the dwarf's cheeks but he merely chortles drunkenly "It's not funny, so you hear me?! This is some bad habit you guys have."

"Aw lass." Bofur belches out a laugh that smells like he's been licking a bar urinal. I wave my hand in front of my nose, pushing his face further from mine. It can't be even midday but this guy is sloshed already "Ye were sleepin' all peaceful like, it'd 'ave been a shame ta wake ye fer somethin' so *hick* shhhhmall."

"Raiding the town's armory is small?!" I glare at his sheepish expression but I know none of them regret it. In fact, they have gone back to drinking, ignoring me completely "Oh but when I do
something for the greater good, I'm being 'irrrrrrrrrational.'"

"I did not say you were irrational." Thorin's voice rumbles from deeper in the room. I follow the sound and finally spot him at the opposite end; a pint in one hand, fork in the other, eyes on me. I force down any shudder that even THINKS of taking place and glare at the dwarf "I only said that you were not thinking your plan through."

"Yeah, well you're doing both." I murmur under my breath, folding my arms tightly "It all worked out."

"Everything will go according to plan."

"Plan? What plan?" He doesn't answer, just continued with his meal. No one is allowed to make foolish plans but me. Still, if his glazed expression is anything to go on, Thorin is just as trashed as Bofur. At least, I sure hope he is because the other option for that is far less appealing "What's going on now?"

"Well my dear, I am just treating a king as he should be treated." A warbled voice from beside the monarch answers. So focused on the king, I hadn't noticed that the room contained an additional individual. The Fatster sits at the head of the table looking all too comfortable "I must say, I was not expecting to host a party for royalty and exotic beauties today."

"Expect the unexpected, Master." Alfrid snorts from behind me "Not to worry, I'll keep an eye on her."

"I'm sure many eyes watch her." he responds, making me feel uncomfortably watched

"You have no idea." Alfrid continues, coming further into the room and once more reaching out to touch me "She is a RADIANT beauty."

"Indeed she is." Gloin snaps, suddenly standing between me and Alfrid "Best keep yer eyes, and hands, off her or risk possible dismemberment."

"I was just commenting on her GLOWING personality."

"Well find something else to comment on because she is spoken for and unavailable to accept any glances at her PERSONALITY." Dori intercedes as well "Off with you."

Thorin, Balin, and Dwalin share an oddly familiar and comical look before staring the day down. 'Here we go again.' Alfrid is going to get himself killed by my wild pack of dwarves who think I belong to their Alpha. At least this time it gets me away from a sicko. Gloin takes me by the arm and settles me down in a seat between Fili and Dwalin before retaking his own place. Alfrid huffs but makes no move to further his not so subtle hints of my shimmer and shine. The bald dwarf grunts at my arrival, keeping close tabs on the rat and the fat but Fili bumps my shoulder gently. Turning to face him slightly, I notice his sorrow filled expression as well as his brother's painfully pinched one. Silently cursing Tauriel for her slowness, I try not to look so worried.

"How's it going?"

"I sincerely apologize for abandoning you." Fili blurts out, much to my surprise "Failure has been written into my line.... I was given the task of watching over you and since then you have run into endless peril."

"Fili, I wasn't serio-"
"I left you in the cursed elf forest. A marriage was forced upon you for our sakes. I did not ensure that you were with us when we escaped." The crown prince looks about two seconds from bursting into tears "And now I left you in the home of a man who thinks we have wronged him. I have failed you and my mission to my uncle. I have failed in protecting my brother. Like this, I do not deserve to be the successor of the line of Durin."

The dwarf hangs his head with such shame that I want to just gather him in my arms and tell him it's going to be alright. I stare at him for a moment in surprised paralysis as tears do begin to leak onto his lap. 'I hope he's just a weepy drunk.' A quick look around and I notice that other than Kili, no one has caught onto what is happening. Telling the room that we'll return, I collect Fili and tell his brother to make a valid excuse.

Working quickly, I take the dwarf's hand and quietly exit the room. Remembering a sitting room from my door busting days, I guide the young dwarf there and settle him onto a decent sized couch. In a rare display of affection, I sit next to the dwarf and pull him into my arms. Stroking his back soothingly, I murmur softly into his ear as he whimpers into my shoulder. I cannot help but try to comfort the dwarf who is behaving so out of character.

"Fili. Whats the matter?" I ask softly once his whimpers lower into soft hiccups "This isn't like you at all."

"It is nothing..." he sniffs and pulls away, trying to stand. I hold fast however and force him to stay seated, though I don't force a hug on him again "It was a moment of weakness, nothing more. I apologize. It was not becoming of a prince."

"It's ok to cry sometimes. You can't always be a cold rock, no matter your origins." He sighs as I wipe his face of its tears. As much as I hate touching or being touched, the pain shimmering in his eyes is enough to make me forget my aversion "My only concern is what made you... break down all of a sudden."

"I do not know, Thia. I thought I was handling the quest well enough but when you mentioned us abandoning you..." he sighs brokenly again and I feel like a jerk for causing him distress "I was made very aware of my short comings."

"Oh Fili. The only thing short about you is your height." He shoots me a halfhearted glare but it doesn't last long when bonk him on the nose. He rubs the spot and I look at him sternly "You are brave, honorable, and your heart is always in the right place. You have not failed in anything that couldn't be handled and I don't want to hear you down talk yourself like that again."

"I must hold myself to a higher esteem than others." He tries to explain but I barely hear him through his downtrodden voice "As the crown prince, any mistake on my part will influence the dwarves under Thorin's rule indefinitely. This behavior can not stand."

"I accept that statement as true." He nods solemnly. The poor kid has so much on his shoulders and he's never even seen his throne "However sometimes you can be just Fili and feel things. Allow yourself to feel the pressure without falling beneath the weight."

"You speak as though you have experience." He doesn't say this cruelly, just curiously

"I may not be a princess, but everyone has stress in their lives. Letting it bottle up inside of you and exploding won't do you any good."

"But-"
"The only 'but' is going to be yours when I kick it back into high gear." He rears back in surprise and confusion but mostly confusion. I raise an eyebrow and I am more than happy when a familiar smirk places itself on his face "You may be a prince to the mighty line of Durin, but you're also Fili and I think being you makes you more amazing than any title ever could."

Fili stares at me with a series of emotions rushing across his face. He soon settles on relief and pulls me into a hug that makes Bofur's feel like child's play. I hug him back with just as much ferocity, if not more.

"Thank you." He whispers, almost inaudibly

"Don't mention it." When he slumps over into my lap, I begin to worry for his sanity "Fili? Fili, what's the matter now?"

He doesn't answer and as I crane my neck to see his face, I get an 'aw' moment. The dwarf is completely passed out, snoring on my lap. I take in the moment for all I'm worth. Moving a few strands of blonde hair, I'm gifted with a clear view of Fili's sleeping face. It's clear of anger and fear, sadness and mischief, worry and...death. All that's on his face is much needed peace and that warms my heart. 'If his head wasn't so heavy, I'd let him stay here all day.' Poking at his cheek, I grin as he attempts to nip at my finger.

"My legs are falling asleep, you know." He mumbles softly but makes no move to get up, instead snuggling the back of his head deeper into my belly. I wish I had my camera. Not knowing how to get up without ruining the surreal moment, I simply stare at the sleeping dwarf "Well... A couple of more minutes won't kill me."

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Hello there dear hearts! So here it is! As with most chapters, this one wasn't what I planned, but I like it anyway. How about you? Special thanks to for the reviews. They make me want to think of weird things and write about it. :) Until next time!
"What's going on here?"

Like a light switch had been turned on, my eyes snap open from my impromptu nap. Sleeping while sitting up has done quite a number on my neck if this stiffness is anything to go by. Rolling it, I wince as it cracks audibly but I continue anyway until it is silent. Breathing deeply, I blink the sleep from my eyes and find the source of the question. Thorin stands at the entrance of the room, looking anything but happy. 'Probably has to do with the sleeping cutie pie on my lap.' I'm honestly not in the mood for his aggressively possessive behavior and I have no intention of letting him bully Fili into feeling guilty about...well... feeling guilty.

"Nothing is going on." I explain firmly in a low voice, as not to awaken the dwarf prince. I wonder how long we've been like this but there are no windows to do a time check "We just fell asleep."

"In each other's arms?" he growls lowly, coming further into the room. He eyes his nephew was a critical distance that I find almost alarming "As my One, you should not allow others to touch you so."

"Even if we were mutually exclusive, that wouldn't mean I could no longer comfort my friends," I stubbornly persist. Snapping, I pull the king's attention back to me "He was in need of a cuddle, so I gave him a friendly one."

"He knows better than to touch another's One." Thorin continues but tries to remove some of the grit from his voice. He fails miserably but I'll accept the attempt "What upset him so, that he would neglect his dwarven morals?"

"He was feeling pretty guilty about some stuff but I told him there was nothing to feel guilty for."

"Ye-"

"I'm glad it doesn't bother you." I cut off, completely ignoring his indignant huff "He needs his rest. Especially with what is coming up."
"… The dragon may not be alive." He answers in a softer tone, transitioning with the conversation flawlessly. Good on his part "He has not been seen in many years."

"You and I both know that Smaug isn't dead, Thorin." He lets out a slow breath and plops down in the remaining space of the couch. Throwing an arm around the back of the seat, and by default me, he settles into place. I watch the dwarf warily but he makes no further moves so I allow it for now "The only way Smaug's reign will end, is with his death."

"You say this like it is a simple task." He takes one of my curls and rubs it between his fingers, nearly knotting it in the process "It is not."

"It's not simple, nor is it easy." I agree, curling a finger of my own into Fili's locks, rolling my eyes at the sharp tug it causes Thorin to produce on my own. Jealous much? I dive my fingers deeper into the golden coils just because I can "It's not an impossible task though. Girion already started the job."

"Girion, the bowman's ancestor? That is merely a myth created to excuse incompetence." Thorin untangles my hand from his nephew's hair and engulfs it in his own "Do not take the ramblings of that nay sayer to heart."

"Girion did strike Smaug, Thorin, and that will help us in the end… And Bard isn't a nay sayer. In fact, he makes a very good point." Thorin 'hm's lightly and continues messing with my hair, refusing to release my hand for the moment. I'd scoot over to get a better look at him but Fili's head pins my legs in place as much as Thorin's arm does to my upper torso. Not that I find Thorin's hands unpleasant just… distracting is all. It's mostly annoying that I know he's doing it on purpose "You should not have made a promise you might not be able to keep."

"I always keep my word."

"No, Thorin. You don't." My words flow freely and flippantly and I regret them immediately. He tenses into rigidity and I sigh deeply in irritation, but at myself and not the dwarf. As true as it may be, I promised to be like Elsa and let it go. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't throw things in your face like that. I'm just… worried."

"About what?"

"Nothing. Nothing. But…" I shift my upper torso as much as possible to face the king "How are you feeling lately?"

"… I am well."

"... I am well."

"I frowns and drops my hand to feel my forehead "Your fever hasn't returned, but are you feeling unwell?"

"No, I'm fine. Healthy as I can be right now. But I didn't mean that kind of feeling." I shake my head to displace his hand, trying to think of a way to subtly ask if he is slowly falling under gold sickness without alerting him that I'm asking whether he or not he is slowly falling into gold sickness "Any… urges?"

The dwarf is silent as he ponders my question. In turn, I bow my head and twirl my ring, waiting for an answer. It's not that I think him weak, but I know it's a very possible outcome being that it happened already. Legolas did tell me to be careful. 'What better way than to give the dwarf regular sanity checkups?' After a few more silent seconds, I am beginning to worry that the dwarf has either caught onto my questioning or he's taking a siesta like his nephew. Turning my head and looking up to try and sneak a peek through my lashes, I nearly scream in surprise at the closeness of the dwarf's face. I place a hand behind me to stabilize myself but end up nearly losing my grip.
due to leaning on Fili's legs. 'When did he put them on the couch?!' I settle myself by gripping the King's shoulders to keep from falling back and arching my back to keep both my leverage and balance from leaning onto the sleeping prince. It's a fairly uncomfortable position but it's the best I can do. Some of the tension in my spine is eased when seeing my distress, Thorin reaches forward to help me keep upright.

"Yes, Thia." He darkly replies, making my chest burn at the sound "I have had many urges, but I promised not to act on them."

"Y-you did? Well... O... Ok then." I manage to squeak out. I don't recall him making any promises concerning good sickness. I guess he could have made one too himself though "That's good to know."

"You have been making it very difficult for me to control myself." He presses, slowly being pulled forward by my weight "Take responsibility."

"I'll work on it, I promise." I'm not sure what I did but anything to make him stray from the gold sick path is a detour I'm willing to take "I'm sorry that I'm making it so hard for you..."

"Hard indeed." He agrees, pressing his forehead to mine

A shifting beneath my back has me turning away from Thorin and to the face of Fili who looks like he isn't sure whether to cry or laugh. Somehow, we ended up nearly completely on top of the poor kid, only leaving his head barely in my lap. I begin pushing at Thorin's shoulders to get him to sit up but he suddenly drops his head onto my chest and sighs loudly, grumbling darkly. I can do nothing more than pat his head while Fili starts cackling for whatever reason.

"This is honestly painful to watch." Fili huffs out pathetically, sitting up from my lap and agilely slipping off the couch "You should go rejoin the others, Thia. I need to speak to my Uncle."

"... Alright." I agree, though with some hesitation

Thorin pushes his hands beneath my back and sits up, embarrassingly pulling me onto his knees. It's not a friendly gesture but not really sexual either, so I let him be for now. 'Am I too lenient? Yes. But... I can't seem to help to shake the feeling that he (we) need this.' He seems intent on keeping his ear to my heart and I fight to keep it steady. It wouldn't due for him to hear it go all erratic and everything. He'd probably claim it was his doing... which it kind of would be. We sit this way until he finally releases me and gently pushes me in the direction of the exit. Curious but deciding now isn't the time to be stubborn, I continue to head for the door, nodding to Fili as I leave. 'At least I got a promise that he would control his gold sickness for now.' What more could I ask for? Dragon repellent?

THORIN POV

"How long have you been awake?" I ask my nephew after watching Thia close the door

"Long enough to know that she is unaware of the question she asked. She is too innocent for her own good sometimes. Even so, I do wonder what urges she was referring to if not those of the... bedroom... nature." He replies swiftly, stretching his limbs before his face twists with comical disgust "On top of me, Uncle?"

"Apologies. I had honestly forgotten you were there." I close my eyes for a moment, watching the scene over in my mind
"Any... urges?"

I silently gaze at the little woman pinned to my side and wonder just how she can remain so oblivious to her own words. Then again, her naivety is a part of her allure. Leaning in towards her downturned face, I take in the warmth of not only her body, but her personality. The way she cares for Fili is proof of her nurturing nature, though I will have to break her habit of touching and being touched by other males. 'She will make a fine mother indeed.' Glancing at her flat stomach, I allow myself to imagine what it will be like when our life is full of children. The image is enough to make me nearly forget my words to the girl last night and devour her offered bare throat. As she turns her head to face me, I'm sure I would have marked her neck once more if she hadn't gasped so softly. In her surprise, she almost falls over and I quickly reach out to catch her, fully intent on ignoring the feel of her in my arms. My resolve quickly weakens when she begins arching against me to keep balanced. Instead of laying fully into her as I wish, I offer an admission instead, though I know it is not answering the question she asked.

"Yes, Thia." I try to keep my voice even but the low glow rising from beneath her shirt, alerts to my pride that she is just as affected as I "I have had many urges, but I promised not to act on them."

"Y-you did? Well...O...Ok then." She pants out, still believing I speak of that which I cannot admit. It seems to ease her mind and keep her in my arms, so I am pleased "That's good to know."

"You have been making it very difficult for me to control myself." I persist, unsuccessful in my attempt to keep from her heat "Take responsibility."

"I'll work on it, I promise." I doubt she even knows what she is promising but her desire to support me is overwhelming "I'm sorry that I'm making it so hard for you..."

"Hard indeed." Her words are perfectly painful, causing me to press my forehead to hers, succumbing to the need to connect with her

A pinch in my side stops me mere moments from pressing my mouth onto her own and in an instant she has turned from me. A spark of unwelcome rejection snakes through me and the urge to dominate rises again. I blink it away swiftly, for I know she will come to fear me if I act rashly; something I sincerely do not wish for. Gazing down at my stern faced nephew, I smirk upon realizing what was happening nearly on top of him. Just like many times before, the moment ends with Thia attempting to be free from my arms, this time because of Fili. Primal desire to be shown as her alpha licks at my belly but rather than give in, I place my head between her breasts and listen to her heart beat; grumbling under the rhythmic sound and Fili's laughter. It's a soothing beat. Steady, strong... calming. I could listen to it for a thousand years... I barely register what Fili asks but sit up anyway, pulling my One into my arms and settling her on my knees. As much as I would like to have her cradled closer, I know the evidence my need for her would not be welcomed in present company. Nonetheless, I am content that she does not pull away from me this time.

"Did you hear what I said? Uncle?"

"My apologies, Fili." I shake my head to clear it of my One, though she is never truly far from my thoughts, and focus on my nephew "My mind wandered. What is it that you were saying?"

"I said..." the dwarfling hesitates. It is unlike him to be so reluctant, I raised him to say what needed to be said. I look at him pointedly and after a short while, he continues "I think you are being too forceful in your advances towards Miss Thia."

"My advances? Fili, I make no advances." I shake my head once more but with a small laugh "You
make advances on a person you would like to be your intended. Thia... Well... Thia is already mine."

"But... she isn't really." I snap my head up and the lad quickly tries to rectify his statement "Yet, I mean she is not yours yet. The elf prin-"

"Excuse me?" I ask rhetorically "She is mine. She has always been mine. She was born mine, for Mahal's sake. It is the world that is constantly coming between us."

"I just think that-"

"You think to tell me how to handle my One?" I scoff at the thought and turn away "I do not need your advice in this matter, nor are you qualified to offer any."

"Maybe not but she is not an animal or weapon to be handled, Uncle!" his voice grinds into my ears as he persists with the argument "If you continue as you are she will flee from your side, can you not see?"

"Flee?" The lass is from an unknown world with no foreseeable passage of returning, not that I'd let her leave me. Though a brilliant mind in her own way, the woman has little to no survival skills and would perish in the wilds within a week if left on her own. She knows no one that I have not encountered as well; severely limiting her resources. She could not leave even if she wished to "Flee to where?"

"There are plenty of people who would have her if she so chose. The elf prince AND king, the skin changer, Bifur."

"You?" I openly laugh at the prospect but then I am suddenly filled with indescribable rage. The intensity is enough to cause a fog to cross my eyes, blinding me of any details before me. The idea of anyone coming between me and Thia is not only laughable, but... unacceptable. 'He would think to take her from me?' Impossible! Turning quickly, I leap at the thief, seize him by the throat, and slam him into a wall "She will never be yours! I'd see you dead before I allow you to lay a finger on what is mine!"

"St... op" my competitor pants, barely able to breathe with my forearm choking off his air, let alone speak "I don't... didn't... just..."

"You..." I lean in to whisper in his ear as he claws at my hands "Stay away from my treasure."

I watch his face as it changes in color from the lack of circulation and air. This miscreant will not be given the opportunity to interfere. I'll make sure of it. I hold my position, pushing my weight further onto his throat and waiting for him to die. 'Die? Who... is dying?' The fog over my eyes starts to dissipate and I toss my head wildly in an attempt to further it along. Taking a good look at who is before me, I jump in shock upon seeing the near purple face of my nearly unconscious nephew. Releasing him immediately, he drops to the floor and sucks in big gulps of air. Hands shaking at what I was about to do, I fall to my knees and gather Fili's quivering form into my arms. I curse myself openly as he stiffens in my embrace but I force myself to take comfort in the fact that he doesn't pull away. I pet his hair and rock him as I haven't done since he was a young dwarfling.

"I am sorry, Fili. I am so very sorry." I apologize over and over, confused as to what just occurred. Fili wouldn't betray me in such a way. He'd never try and take her from me. He knows she is mine. He knows... "I don't... I don't know what came over me. I was just so... angry..."
"… Uncle…" he all but whispers "Do you think… do you think its gol-"

"Hush now, Fili. Don't say it." I continue to rock him until my limbs go numb from the position "Don't say it."

*I don't believe that Thorin's gold loving problems would have magically appeared when he reached the mountain. It's mostly the idea of gold not just gold itself, as is shown by his gold lust before they even entered the mountain, that causes the sickness. Thus, Thorin is combining his love of gold and Thia into one big ball of obsession because to him, she is priceless. As he gets closer to the mountain his behavior will change rapidly and the sickness will reach the movie point. No way was it sudden and it has varying degrees. I hope you guys see that clearly enough. Pay attention to how he interacts people. It changes deep pending on how deep he is in the sickness.

Thanks go out to my commenters for the reviews.
DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 65

I put away the oddness of the two Durin's behavior upon reentering the merry scene of my other Dwarven companions. They all seem to be in good spirits, which is always a welcome sight. Even Kili, who is harboring a potentially mortal wound, is smiling and enjoying himself. His glee falters slightly upon seeing me but I grin and he takes it to mean that all is well.

I join in on the fun, even indulging in a few cups of the good stuff for no reason other than because I can. It isn't actually very good but I manage to gag down a few cups of the watered down liquor before I feel it trying to return to my mouth. 'I never did like alcohol.' Still, I am able to force myself to finish the cup before I start to become too light headed to continue. I forgot that guzzling makes it go straight to the head. The group chuckles at my antics and Bifur ruffles my hair, gently removing the cup from my hand.

"I think you've had enough, Berch Kanaag." He explains when I attempt to retake the cup. Not to prove my worth by drinking more mins you, but by showing that I know it's time to stop. He keeps it just out of my reach, placing a cup of water in my hands "Drink this instead."

"Oh come on, Biffy." I whine, purposefully sounding like a child. Thinking about it, it's not really helping my case "It's not even that strong. I've had milk with more kick than that."

"All the same, my dear girl. Bifur is correct." Balin betrays me by joining the opposing side "Drink the water-"

"-and leave the ale to the real dwarves." Nori adds, earning a dry look from Balin and myself "What? A lady should not drink with her male counterparts."

"How oddly respectable of you." Dori drawls from across the table

"It comes and goes." Nori snaps, gulping down another pint and smirking at my water "Don't get used to it."

"We wouldn't dream of it." I snort into my cup

I'm glad I don't have to drink anymore. It's true, the drinks here aren't nearly as potent as back home but I was never good at it anyway. I'm proudly able to claim to having never been drunk, which probably isn't that impressive to my fellow party members. In addition to that, I prefer to keep my wits about me in a room full of males. 'At least Fatster and Rat face are gone.' I place my elbows on the table and rest my hands in my palms as the time just rolls by. A yawn stretches my jaw, signaling the coming night and I welcome it.
Soon enough Thorin arrives with Fili and the party begins to simmer down, not by much though. I eye the two of them but they seem determined to avoid my attention. I stand to go over and address their rumpled clothes but stumble slightly; catching the hem of my shirt on a wayward nail. It tears, leaving a huge hole in the side. I move to the door quickly, not wanting anyone to make a big fuss. I'd been informed that the kind old Fatster had given us rooms earlier and it seems like I have to make good use of one. I slip from the room with ease and am almost to my quarters when a heavy hand lands on my shoulder. I jump and swing around but relax immensely when I see its only Bifur.

"You startled me, Bif." I exclaim with a harsh whisper "What are doing out here?"

"I was following you, Berch Kanaag." He answers. I tilt my head in confusion but he continues "I saw your accident and thought I could be of assistance."

"Oh this?" I gesture to my shirt with one hand as I hold it closed with the other "Its nothing. I can fix it in no time if I have some needle and thread."

"Then I shall find some for you. In the meantime" He starts stripping and I just stand there with my mouth open. He hands me his undershirt and look at it silently, not moving to take it "Wear it for now."

"Bif... I don't think-"

"You cannot wear a torn shirt for long and you cannot sew it while it is on your body."

"Well yeah..." he talks a good game but I'm not sure I should wear his clothes. It's kind of like... the hoodies girls take from their boyfriends. Really personal. I could just go to Bard's house but... it's late and really cruel especially with what happened today. Still, it'll only be until I fix my own... I nod and take the offered shirt "Alright, thanks."

"You're welcome." He replies replacing his outer clothes and gesturing to the closed door behind me "Go and replace your tunic. I will return once I have found the needed materials for you."

"K." I open the door and wave at the dwarf before closing it and walking into the room

Peering around, I listen to Bifur's fading footsteps before I start undressing. Throwing off the torn shirt, I quickly replace it with the provided one. It's thick with the smell of sweat and long use but I'm not getting the 'dirty' sense from it. Just well worn. Shrugging my shoulders, I pace the room and think of Thorin. I've been doing it a lot lately but I never actually have the right things to say. What can I say now? 'Best be prepared to have a few members of your company stay behind due to various reasons including but not limited to anger, sickness, and hangovers.' In all honestly, that's probably exactly what I should say.

Buuuuut then he'll be pretty upset when the dragon completely decimates the town around his kin. At least, I hope he's sane enough to be worried this time around. I need to find a way to prevent Smaug from coming to Laketown in the first place. A knock at the door has me snapping from my thoughts and wondering how long I'd been sitting on the bed, lost in space.

"Coming." I half jog, half limp to the door before snatching it open "Did you get... the...Thorin. Hi."

"Were you expecting company?" he asks with a smirk. It disappears quickly after only a moment and I watch him take a deep breath before storming past me and into the room "Where is he?"
"What are you-"

"Do not lie to me! I can smell him." He moves to the bed searching here and there before he lifts my shirt to examine it. In realization, he swings to face me, glaring angrily at the shirt "That. It isn't yours."

"No. Mine tore." I feel the intense need to explain, though not from fear. I don't know what it is, but I want Thorin to know exactly why I'm not wearing my shirt "Bifur went to go find me some thread and gave me his shirt while I waited."

"Thia." The dwarf drops my shirt into the corner of the bed and walks the edge of the room until he reaches the door. He shuts and switches the lock before turning back to me "You cannot do these things."

"Um... Why did you lock the door?"

"Because it would not due for someone to walk in while you are changing."

"But you're in here."

"Thia." He says my name again and it feels like he's begging "You are my One."

"You've told me that but I-"

"It pains me to watch others touch you."

"I...I didn't... mean to hurt you." I start. It was never my intention to hurt him "I just needed a shirt."

"Then take mine but please, remove his."

For the second time today a dwarf strips in front of me. In my desperation to relieve his ache, I turn my back and do the same. What happens next is something I... probably should have seen coming. His burning chest comes to rest fully on my near bare back as he wraps his arms around my stomach. He pushes his nose into my neck, inhaling deeply as my own breath quickens.

"You smell like him." He whispers into my spine "We can't have that."

Thorin POV

"Coming." I hear the girl approaching the door and I wait patiently for her to open it. She disappeared from the party and I want to ensure her safety before I turn in for the night. My actions against my nephew have left me... Cautious. The door swings open, with the girl smiling tiredly "Did you get... the...Thorin. Hi."

"Were you expecting company?" I ask with a smile, breathing in her scent. I frown when I notice a foreign aroma, much too earthy to be her own, from the room. The prospect of another is unacceptable thus I walk past her and begin my search "Where is he?"

"What are you-"

"Do not lie to me! I can smell him." Seeing her shirt upon the bed, I lift it and notice a tear. If this is her's then... "That. It isn't yours."

"No. Mine tore." I try to listen to her explanation as I know there has to be a good one. She
wouldn't betray me. Not her. Never her "Bifur went to go find me some thread and gave me his shirt while I waited."

"Thia." I lower her ruined tunic slowly onto the bed. Moving, I keep to the sides of the room as to not startle her away but knowing I cannot stand to leave another's smell upon her skin. Blocking the exit, I turn the lock for her protection. To keep others out and away from us. Her "You cannot do these things."

"Um.. Why did you lock the door?"

"Because it would not due for someone to walk in while you are changing."

"But you're in here."

"Thia." I nearly beg, trying to make her understand "You are my One."

"You've told me that but I-"

"It pains me to watch others touch you."

"I..I didn't… mean to hurt you." Worry paints her face and I am touched that she cares. There is a spark of helplessness in her voice as she tugs at the intruders tunic uneasily "I just needed a shirt."

"Then take mine but please, remove his."

I remove my clothing and swiftly offer her my own shirt in exchange for her removing the current one. She turns her back and I think she my refuse my offer until she reveals her skin before my eyes. I know this is not an invitation but the sight of her flesh, broken only by a thin band and the Arkenstone, is enough to bring me to my self control to its knees.

Coming up behind her, I wrap my arms around her trim waist and pull her back to press against my chest. Her skin is soft. Softer than I could ever have imagined. Tracing her throat, I take in her scent and watch her breath quicken. If not for Bifur's stench disturbing the purity of her, the moment would be perfect

"You smell like him." I whisper and watch her skin pebble "We can't have that."

The scene doesn't end there. But it gets a little… heated and I didn't think it was as child friendly as 'T' rating. It's in the side the side chapters' story. Read it if you want to finish the scene, don't if you're content. The story continues smoothly with or without it. Thank you for your reviews.
A pounding on the door knocks me back into reality; shattering the heated moment. I'm almost tempted to ignore the sound and bask in the wonderous feeling of the dwarf but I know I can't... Well I can... But SHOULDN'T. I've honestly allowed this... lusty teenage fiasco to go on for far too long. *It's just been so hard to make rules and STICK to them when it has to deal with a certain dwarf.* He's like kryptonite to my self control, it's awful. I hastily spring away from Superdwarf and pull on the closest shirt I can find, right before the door bursts open. I'm breathing so heavily I think I may pass out but I'm still able to spare a wince for the splintered lock.

"Are ye alright, lassie?" Dwalin drunkenly asks, stumbling into the room loudly. A much more sober Balin follows immediately after, casting a knowing look at the shirtless king "Ye disappeared and when we came to check in yer room there was all this noise and… Thorin? What are… Oh. I see."

"She is fine." Thorin says proudly, his voice husky. He attempts to clear his throat before he carries on "I checked on her myself."

"Did ye find the brute who did that to her neck?" the bald dwarf surprises me as he howls with laughter "Those are some love bites ye got there!"

I quickly slap a hand up to my neck in an extremely late attempt to hide the marks. It only causes Dwalin to holler louder which in turn makes Thorin push him out the room and slam the door. However with it being splintered so badly, the wooden structure swings back open to reveal his still snickering face. He eventually calms down but then catches sight of a very swollen wet spot on the front of Thorin's pants, causing him to fall into a laughing fit again. He's so loud, I think he may tear down the walls.

"Ye just couldn't wait." He shortles as his brother pushes him down the hall "Yer constantly late. Did ye finally decide to come a little early this time?"

"Oh gosh... " I whisper so only the king can hear "I'm sorry. …So sorry."

"I shall wear it with pride." He leers with enthusiasm

"Please don't." I glare but look away as Balin swings open the door again

"We are going to have to find you a new room, Miss Thia." He comments, testing out the door before pinning a look a on Thorin "You cannot volunteer to share your own."
Agreeing that the current room is unacceptable, we gather my few belongings, including all the missing articles of clothing, and leave. We all attempt to locate a new room for myself and I pick the first eligible one. It's not the best but the strange feeling between my legs makes walking any further... undesirable. Its like someone suckerpunched me in my unmentionables with arousal and I'm not sure if it's supposed to feel like that. But enough about THAT.

Stepping in to the room, I look out the window as the two dwarves check the space for monsters. Opening the wooden pane, I allow the air to cool my face and clear my mind. Even though I feel like I should feel guilty about what happened, I don't. I wasn't drunk, tipsy at best, so I know my actions were mostly my own. Sure, a little freer than usual but nothing over the top. I'm just as glad that we were interrupted as I am annoyed, if that makes any sense...

I want to keep true to my ideals but whenever I'm around him, they just don't seem so cut and dry. I cluck my tongue, thinking of the implications of what that means. 'Lust or Love?' The fact that I let him go as far as he did is enough to know that I really, really, REALLY like him and I know it's at least one of the two options. Either one is a slippery slope, especially since when this is all over I'll be gone, but I'm hoping its l-

"The room is clear." Thorin announces, stalking over to my side and shutting the window "Winter is coming."

"Tis true." Balin agrees, hooking his thumbs in his belt and rocking slightly "We leave early tomorrow so it'd be best to get some rest tonight."

"Yeah. Yeah that's right." I nod and breathe deeply, trying to ignore the feel of Thorin's eyes burning into me "Thanks for... finding me a new room."

"Thank you for allowing me to see you to your quarters." He replies, stepping closer "If you'd like, I could-"

"And thank you for returning to your own, lad. Sleep well, lass." Balin chimes in, pulling the still half naked Thorin out the room. The snowy dwarf winks at me before closing the door but I still hear him lecturing the king as they walk down the hall "Just what do you think you were doing in her room at this hour?"

"She smelled of Bifur. I couldn't leave his scent on her." He explains easily enough and I sigh, throwing the source of the night onto an empty chair "I was simply-"

"-attempting to further the line of Durin, no doubt." I drag my hand across my face at the bold dwarf. My belly shivers at the thought, but I rub away the very idea "Now is NOT the time to start sowing your seeds, even if she is your One."

"I am no dwarfling that I need to be warned away from such endeavors. In fact, with what may lie in wait for us, NOW is the best time to start sowing your seeds, even if she is your One." I can hear no more of the conversation and decide not to strain my ears or morals anymore for the night. Removing my shoes and pants, I pause at the shirt. Thorin's shirt. 'I... don't have anything to replace it with.' I doubt he'll even miss it. Would barely notice it was gone… Climbing into the bed, I snuggle down into the shirt and let his scent rock me to sleep.

I feel like I'm on fire. The feel of his mouth nearly drives me insane. The tickle and bite of his beard make me unsure of whether to laugh or hiss but both are impossible as he takes my breath away.
He's heavy, but I feel completely... complete under his weight. He's like a heavy blanket on a cold winter morning but I doubt they sell what he's doing at Macy's. Looking down, I meet his burning eyes but that's not what catches my attention. It's the roundness of my stomach that I focus on and for a moment I'm so scared I could cry. But then he holds my hands and I know it will be alright. I try to call to him but I can only whisper. He opens his mouth to respond but his voice is not his own...

"Thia? Are you awake?" a voice drifts into my cloudy head "Hello?"

My stomach pulls a google easter egg and does a barrel roll, making me swallow the bile in the back of my throat. No more drinking, talks of pregnancy, or Thorin smells before for me. Nope, nope, nope. I let out a rumbling breath and try to crack open my eyes. In finally doing so, I expect the room to be flooded with light but it isn't. Glancing towards the window, I see that the sun hasn't even begun to peak over the horizon yet to light the wood. Thinking I may have dreamed the voice, I turn over and try snuggle back into bed. Sadly, the voice returns but this time with a knock.

"Thia please wake up." it persists "It's important."

"Ok ok. Hold your horses." I grumble at the door "Give me a minute."

Pulling on my pants, I opt to remain shoeless as I hobble over to the door. I run a hand through my bed head but it gets stuck in the curls. Too tired to force it out, I open the door as is. Standing on the other side is a wide eyed and bushy tailed Bilbo. He looks up at me in confusion but I ignore it, simply pulling him into the room and shutting the door. I plop down on the bed and eye him sleepily.

"Well... lets hear it."

"What happened to your throat?" he asks, which I know isn't what he woke me to know

"Mosquito bite." I answer waving my free hand as if it was still in the room "Why are you here so early, Bilbo?"

"We are leaving." He answers shakily, as I finally slip my fingers out my hair "And Thorin doesn't want to bring you along."

"I figured he would try to do something like this." I yawn around my fist, trying to shake the sleep from my limbs "Who else is he leaving?"

"He was discussing with Balin that Kili may be too weak to continue and that Oin will most likely stay to care for him." he lists on his fingers "and if no one can find Bofur, we will have to leave him as well."

"You won't find Bofur in time and Fili will stay as well to support his brother."

"How unfortunate...They travelled this far..." he lowers his head in remorse "It's almost hard to believe that its almost over."

"Mmm. I'll stay with the boys but your big part is coming up." I slip the ring off my finger and hand it to the startled hobbit "You'll need this for your mission."

"I-I-I can't. How can I..." He breathes deeply and I wait for him to finish "I'm not a warrior. I can't slay a dragon."

"All the warriors who fought him up until now have died, maybe it's time to try something new." I
state and smile at his grimace "Don't worry, Bilbo. You aren't being asked to slay a dragon. This story has a different part for you to play."

"Then who will slay him?"

"The dragon slayer of course."

"Of course." His lips lift slightly and he regards me kindly "Does he save the princess?"

"Nah, it's not that kind of story." It's true. Bard saves a couple of Princes though. Technically his daughters BECOME princesses but let's not get technical "There are hardly any girls in the story at all."

"A dragon slaying hero with no damsel?" he jokes lightheartedly "How sad."

"Silly silly Bilbo." I tsk and wag my finger at him "Who said that the dragon slayer was the hero?"

"Well… I…" he creases his eyebrows in thought but comes up with nothing "Does our fine story have a hero?"

"It sure does and one day I'll tell you all about it." I laugh as he rolls his eyes and gently guide him to the door "Knowing you, you'd probably still be at a loss."

"Humph!" he huffs, mildly offended "Well then I shall see you…"

"You'll see me when you see me." I answer, offering no new information "I need to talk to Thorin before we part, so tell him to come up for a moment."

"Well… Alright" he agrees but frowns at my neck "But refrain from the behavior that provided those 'mosquito bites' this time, hm?"

"Yes, Master Baggins."

He stares at me for a moment, trying to discern my seriousness before simply nodding firmly and making his way down stairs. Leaving the door open, I locate my socks and shoes. After slipping them on, I fold my torn shirt as well as Bifur's and make the bed, being sure I've got all my things since I won't be returning. Passing a mirror, I look at my reflection to ensure that my stomach is the same size it's always been. Deciding it is, I step out the room, close the door, and lean against it to wait. It isn't long before I hear Thorin's boots thudding on the stairs. I hug the articles of clothing to my chest and offer a small smile to which he returns full force.

"Morning." I offer nervously, all boldness of last night escaping me "I heard you were trying to leave me."

"I would never leave you." He insists rubbing my arm and and placing a possessive hand in my hip "I simply do not want to endanger you further."

"I know and I've decided to stay" I try to ignore the heat generated by his hand and stick to business "but I must insist on something."

"…What?" He asks, pinning me with his blue gaze "What is it?"

"... You must listen to Gandalf's advice." I reply firmly "Do not enter that mountain."

To answer some questions, Yes! Thorin has a good sense of smell but thats just a dwarf thing.
Typically animals that live closer to the earth have a better sense of smell and that includes dwarves... in my universe at least. Thranduil did name Thia *Ballineth* for a reason. He thought it fit her personality and gift and he's kind of right being that it roughly means *girl with a powerful sight* or simply, *young seer*. One can locate Thia's gifts in the authors note of chapter 33. Lock and Key. Thia likes Thorin. She is just inexperienced and has a lot on her plate. As for the marriage, Thia needed to stay on Thranduil's good side (at all costs) so he can help later and wouldn't kill Thorin. Thank you to my reviewers. Though few in number, you are always appreciated.
Chapter 67

Chapter Notes

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 67

"I know it sounds strange, being that you made the trip for this purpose, but you have to trust me on this. Do not enter the mountain without Gandalf."

The hall is filled with so much silence that I could choke on it. The odds of Thorin actually heeding my warning are slim but maybe, just maybe, he will listen. If he could wait for Gandalf then things could turn out so much better for everyone. Some spell or enchantment or... anything really would be better than walking in blind. The king's silent stare makes me uncomfortable but I battle to keep his gaze instead of dropping my own. Thorin suddenly reaches forward and places a rough hand on my forehead.

"Are you unwell?" he probes, seeming openly concern "Maybe your fever has returned. You are speaking nonsense."

"No... No, Thorin listen to me." I shake free of his hand and begin marching down the wood floored vestibule, feeling boxed in by the heavily decorated walls "You never listen to any of the warnings ever given to you."

"I know what is at stake." He retorts, crossing his arms "I need no forewarnings."

"But things ALWAYS go wrong when you ignore them!" I lean my forehead against the wall because I might as well be talking to one "Please, just this once... listen."

"I listened last night." From the corner of my eye I can see that his arms remain crossed but his face is clear of any anger. The emotion there is not one I'm ready to name "Even though it was the last thing I wanted, I stopped because it is what you desired."

"Well thank you for being a decent... dwarf being. I don't want to talk about that now." He raises a brow and I throw my arms in the air, letting the items I carry fling around the corridor "This and that are two very different things. If you enter that mountain..."

"What will happen" he prompts gently, as if I had not given him any idea of the possibilities already "if I enter my home."

"... Nothing good." I swipe at a tickle on my face. My hand comes away wet and I gape in disbelief. I hadn't even realized I'd started crying. I angrily rub at my eyes and continue "Please. Just... Just wait for Gandalf. You can open the door and everything just don't. Go. In."

Arms encircle me and I grit my teeth to fight the sobs that threaten to burst from my mouth. Thorin
turns me to face him and holds me to his hard chest as I try not to pour a silent waterfall down his back. In return, I wrap my arms around his thick back and try to calm myself. It's just too much. Knowing that this is a major domino that could lead to his very possible death. I know, I knew before I asked, that he has to go with or without promising to keep himself alive. It annoys me to the point that I want to push him away be done with it all.

At the thought, I am unexpectedly struck by a need I've never come across before. 'I don't want to let go.' It's never happened to me prior to this point; actually wanting to keep someone in my arms and to stay in theirs. Too afraid to completely acknowledge what is rapidly becoming impossible to ignore, I slowly retreat from the embrace. Thorin releases me with minimal hesitation.

"I understand your fear-"

"Then why do you disregard my counsel?" I demand in a harsh whisper, furiously wiping away the remainder of my tears from my face "You're always receiving advice. From me, or Gandalf, even Elrond that one time but you NEVER listen!"

"You are my One, Thia." He replies simply and I just want to smack his teeth down his throat. I roll my eyes and try to turn away from him but he stops me by holding my arms "You know this."

"Yeah. Yeah, I get it!" I shout through gritted teeth, shaking with fury at his desire to be a parrot. It's not that I don't care, I just don't need the idea shoved down my throat "You've told me. Fili's told me. Balin's told me. EVERYONE has told me. What-"

"So why do you keep away?" he cuts in swiftly "Why do you ignore what has been determined by fate?"

"Because!" I answer trying not to sound like a child "Because, I want to live my life in a certain way regardless of what fate dictates."

"Why?"

"Why?!" I cry out in annoyance. His calm voice grating on my nerves "Why? Because I just have to!"

"… As do I, my love."

I open my mouth to say something, anything, yet nothing comes out. My eyes brim with tears of understanding his meaning but I bite my lip to keep the liquid diamonds at their precariously balanced position on my lashes. I can only offer a single nod to show my acceptance of his decision. Thorin smiles sadly before pulling me into his arms again and kissing my forehead lightly.

It's like ice in my veins to see the truth but I know I can no more stop him from entering Erebor than I can truly throw my morals down the drain. I can give him a little hope for when he'll need it though. Sniffing, I once more pull away and look him in the face. His thick, peppered hair frames his chiseled face. His brow, creased with worry, makes his blue eyes appear darker than is true. Against my better judgement, I reach up and smooth the wrinkles out with my fingertips, dragging my hand down to feel his coarse beard. Such a simple gesture but stil so intimate. The dwarf sighs contently, closing his eyes and leaning his cheek into my palm.

"You will listen and listen well." I lift my other hand to trap his face in my grasp "You will need this sooner than you know."

"Thia, I-"
"Your darkest moments are when you can see the lights clearest." I state, clearing my throat around his interruption "The key is patience."

"Patience?"

"Mhmmm." I nod vigorously. Though I am taller than him, it's barely an inch. Leaning up onto my toes for the extra leverage, I place a soft kiss onto the dwarf's forehead. Holding the moment, I allow my body to tingle and spark openly before pulling away "It works on all things, from girls to walls of stone."

He says nothing more and neither do I. He simply nods, returns the mark of affection, and walks away; leaving me in an empty hall with clothes all over the place. I can only hope that he listens this time and saves us both some heart ache. Snatching up the articles of clothes strewn about, I place my cloak over my shoulders and begin to seek out the rest of the dwarves before they leave. I audibly grumble in annoyance when I remember what Thorin did to my bra. 'I don't even know how to use bindings.' Closing the cloak over my front, I lightly move down the stairs, careful not to jostle my leg or free flying puppies. Finding Bifur easily enough, I walk over to return his belongings.

"Hey, Bifur." I call, catching his attention "Sorry about last yesterday. I ended up changing rooms."

"I heard." He states, sounding unbelievably depressed "May I ask you a question, Berch Kanaag?"

"Ask away."

"Did-"

"Bifur." Bombur interrupts, joining our conversation along with Balin and for some reason, Nori "Don't."

"Don't what?" I ask curiously but when no one answers, it only furthers my confusion "What don't you want him to ask me?"

"It's-" Balin starts is cut off by a snarling Bifur

"I am not so addled that I can not speak for myself!" he barks out "I need no assistance from you."

"Then by all means." I say, thinking this is an attempt at a bad joke or something "Ask away."

"... Did I ever have a chance?"

I'm waiting for a click or something in my brain to alert me of the joke but there is nothing. I'm left standing in front of four dwarves with no idea of what pertains to the question I've been asked. 'A chance at... life? Liberty? The pursuit of happiness?' It's like I'm missing something obvious but...

"A chance at what?" I ask with no other option

"Ouch." Nori hisses, patting a grief stricken Bifur on the back "You can take that as a no."

"Come on Bifur." Bombur guides the apparently shell shocked dwarf away as I stand by in utter confusion "It was just not meant to be."

"Um..." I blink, rubbing my eyes as the two disappear around a corner "Anyone mind telling me
"Life." Balin states matter of factly, following after the two dwarves "Simply the facts of life. He should have known better then to make such an attempt."

"Uh…"

"I never knew you could be so cruel." Nori begins circling me with an expression that's oddly similar to glee "I kind of like it."

"Yeaaaah, you're creeping me out so…" I edge away from the wierdo star "I'm going to go now."

"Now now." He croons "Just wait a second there."

Nori catches my arm and kind of playfully forces me to turn around. Not sure what his game is, I remain with him for the moment but let him know of my displeasure. I throw him the most annoyed look I can muster this early in the morning. It doesn't faze him in the least, so I settle for sighing in exasperation.

"What do you want, son of Korin?" I place a hand on my hip and wave my other hand in a loop "Make it snappy."

"Well, it seems like you're going to be our queen pretty soon." he flashes a toothy grin at my grimace. It's a bit soon for that, isn't it? I mean really soon... "I'm just wondering what your story is."

"My story?" I huff out a laugh, ignoring the queen part for moment. I think of how boring my life story is in comparison to theirs. Then I realize that their story is now my own, which causes me to smile quietly "It's a long one and I'm not done living it yet, so… be a little more specific."

"What is your father's name?" he questions abruptly

"Why would you want to know that all of a sudden?" I answer with interest "Are you planning to look him up in the phone book?"

"The what?" he shakes his head as I begin to explain "Don't answer that, little woman. You know my father's name, it's only fair that I know yours."

"I guess." I don't see the harm in sharing the information but neither do I see the benefit which is making this harder to gage "…Malcolm."

"Is that how you got your name?" he continues by leaning on the wall, seemingly getting ready for a long conversation. He's strangely talkative, especially since I know the other dwarves are getting ready to board the boat "It would make sense."

"Listen. We'll have a little chit chat about namesakes later" Lifting my finger to gesture out the window, I point him in the direction of his brothers "But right now you have a boat to catch."

Taking the hint, he walks with me to the water. We weave through the crowd and I watch the scene play out as he joins his kin. The company is entirely ready to leave; armed with shiny new weapons from the town's armory, they make a nice little battalion. I stand a short distance away; not in the crowd of people but not completely separate from them. I act as a sentry, silently observing but no longer interfering. At least not at the moment. Bilbo looks around and from the way his mouth moves, I know he's counting.
"You do know we're one short?" he states to no one in particular "Where's Bofur? Who shall watch over Miss Thia in this... lovely town while we are gone?"

"If he is not here, we leave him behind." Thorin answers before searching and finding me in the crowd. He offers no smile or wave; instead settling for inclining his head towards me "He can help look after Thia until we reunite."

"He will have to remain, we have to find the door before nightfall." Balin contributes "Any advice, lass?"

"Look hard." I reply with a shrug "It's there."

"Well, one would hope so!" He replies with a small grin before he slips away. We watch as they all start to board the boat and I wince as Kili hobbles over, lowering my eyes in sympathy at what is coming "We can risk no more delays."

"Not you." Thorin stops the young dwarf from climbing into the vessel "We must travel with speed, you will only slow us down."

"What are you talking about?" Kili questions in pure disbelief. I step forward to help but Balin gently shakes his head, so I retreat back to my place "I'm coming with you!"

"No." the king denies the prince entry onto the boat firmly but I can feel it in my gut that he wishes it were different "No."

"I'm going to be there when that door opens." He tries to appeal to his grim faced uncle "When we first look upon the halls of our fathers, Thorin…"

"Kili, stay here. Rest." Thorin nods in my direction "Join us once you've healed."

"I'll stay with the young ones." Oin announces, climbing from the haul. Kili looks more than devastated as he is led to stand beside me. Thorin offers no resistance to the healer's decision and climbs into the boat "My duty lies with the wounded."

"You will see the home of your forefathers, Kili." I try to encourage, as Fili hisses into Thorin's ear "Do not lose heart."

"I wanted to enter along side my kin... My brother..." He softly utters, weak in both body and spirit "Now…"

"Now you enter with them all the same." I finish, bumping his shoulder lightly "You will enter with your brother, as you were meant to."

"My brother?" he repeats airily "Fili belongs-"

"I belong with my brother!"

We watch as Fili glares at his uncle before turning from the boat and walking over to stand beside his brother. Despite being pale from sickness, the boy beams with barely contained love for his sibling. Fili wraps his arm around his brother and whispers in his ear, words I don't mind remaining a secret even to me. I return my attention to the boat as a trumpet blares at they set sail. All the dwarves stand upright as they drift away into the fog as if they were ghosts. But they are anything but shadows of the past. No, they are the evidence of the future I plan to see take place. Over the chill of the morning I can imagine that fiery heat I'll no doubt come into contact with before my time in this world is done.You
I cast my gaze away from the departing figures of my friends as the cheering crowd's voices fade out of my mind. My eyes settle on the dark watery surface mere steps from my feet. The shimmering black water greets me only with the swift knowledge of its inky depths. Understanding immediately dawns on my tired mind, causing a resigned sigh to escape from my lips. Stepping to the edge of the creaking, water damaged planks, I seek forgiveness for my future actions from my departing companions in the form of hidden reassurance. Cupping my hands over my mouth, I shout to them hoping my voice with carry over the now thunderous crowd.

"Don't worry about them!" I call, waving my hands wildly "I'll take care of everything!"

Yahoo! Why yahoo? No reason actually. Time to give thanks to my reviewers! Thank you! I'm watching spongebob, no one can bring me down. Until next time!
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CHAPTER 68

I stand beside the Durin brothers and Oin as we watch the boat drift out of sight. I ignore the ramblings of the Fatster and wait for Bofur to show up from his late nap. Just as the boat gets far enough that turning back is too much work, the jolly dwarf tumbles through the crowd. I listen with half an ear to his exclamations, and step closer to the youngest Durin.

"Wait! No!" I hear Bofur's loud voice and turn slightly to acknowledge his presence. It takes him a moment but he finally notices the three of us standing beside him. His look of distress turns into desperate relief upon finding familiar faces "Did ye miss the boat as well?"

"No." I answer shifting on my feet and keeping everyone in my sights as the crowd quiets slowly. Not an evil slow where they want to kill us, but rather on that an audience falls into after a show is over "We stayed for a slightly different reason."

"Kili?" Fili cries out suddenly, drawing attention to the boy... man... dwarf "Kili!?"

The young dwarf is far paler than before as he leans on both his brother and myself for the support he can no longer give himself. Even through his many layers, I can still feel his rising heat. The crowd around us ignores the scene, moving on with their day as if we were beneath their notice now that our money bringer is gone. Oin quickly takes my position beside the ailing dwarf and they begin searching for a place to oversee his heath. 'Not that it'll be easy.' I allow them to gain a few rejections before simply guiding them to Bard's house. I knew I couldn't suggest it right away because they would have insisted on trying other venues. Even now they argue with me.

"He won't help us, lassie." Bofur chirps from the back of our small group. Lugging his own weapons, as well as Kili and Fili's larger ones, is enough to slow even a dwarf "Not after... ye know. Thorin wasn't very kind in his opinion of the man."

"That's true but Bard will help us." I insist, knocking solidly on the door "He has to because I'm not taking no for an answer."

"And I suppose that persistence works?" the hatted dwarf responds doubtfully, but trying to keep the topic off the dying prince "Because it wouldn't work for me except to land me in chains."

"It will work because he wants it to. And if that isn't enough" I shrug with a grin "my breasts are more convincing than yours."

"I demand proof."
"Uncle will be most interested to hear of your request." Kill drawls with a wheeze

"... I'll just take yer word for it then, lass."

"Good call."

Despite our bantering the house is quiet but I will not be dissuaded. Balling my hand into a tight fist, I bang continually on the door like the bargeman owed me money. It rattles in its already rickety frame, threatening to simply fall over but I continue without remorse. How can I not, when my friend stands near death behind me? I increase the tempo of my banging until the door finally swings open to reveal Bard's completely unamused face. So focused on my banging, I nearly punch the guy in the chest. He hardly notices as he looks down at me before glaring past my head.

"No." he barks out before any of us can say anything "I'm done with dwarves."

"Bard-"

"Go away!"

"Do not yell at me." I snap with a frown "I'm sorry about Thorin but there is no need to be rude."

"..." he returns my frown for his own before dipping his head the tiniest of ways "Go away, PLEASE."

"No! No! No one will help us. Kili's sick…" I turn and look at my pale companion as Bofur continues "He's very sick."

"How is that my problem?" Bard grumbles, clearly still angry. Who wouldn't be after the king's slanderous speech? I'll have to remember to poke him in the eye for that one "Once Oakenshield awakens the dragon, he won't be sick anymore. He'll be dead."

"No, he won't." I don't shout but I say my piece very clearly. I refuse to let anyone speak ill over any of my group, not even a soon to be dragon slayer "He won't die, I'll make sure of it."

"How will you defeat a dragon?" the bowman rhetorically asks, almost with a laugh. It is laughable if I'm to be fair "I have seen your gifts. While impressive, I do not think they will greatly hinder one such as Smaug."

"I won't defeat him but neither will he kill my friends. That's not the part I'm to play." I answer honestly "If you help us, I'll tell you how to make sure he doesn't kill those who matter to you either."

"My family…"

"They will survive if you help us. Though..." I pause thinking of a delicate way to put it "I do not know the future of what will happen to us or them if you don't."

"Are you threatening them?"

"With what's coming, I don't need to."

"... Fine. Come in." he answers, ushering us through the door "Quickly!"

We enter the house swiftly, placing Kili on a flat surface and cutting his pants from his leg. He howls in pain and I can only hug myself to keep from covering my ears. The skin around his wound is blackened, almost charred in a way that makes my stomach churn for the second time
today. I'm momentarily brought back to a random movie I saw once; wondering if the hollywood information could be trusted. 'It's fine if it's red, as long as it doesn't turn black. If it turns black, you will lose it.' He won't lose his leg because… because he just won't. Kili lets out another blood curdling scream that snaps me back into reality.

"We have to do something." I murmur, knowing that we must help the dwarf until slow moving Tauriel finally makes an appearance "There's something… Uh…"

"Can you not do something?" Bofur pleads with the healer

"I need herbs." He answers swiftly, cleaning the wound "Something to bring down his fever."

"We have nightshade." Bard offers, rummaging through his cabinets "Feverfew…"

"They're no use to me," the healer waves his hand, trying to concentrate "Miss Malcolmson, do ye have anymore Kingsfoil?"

"The weed…" Bard whispers, connecting some dots "The one you wanted from the pigs…"

"Yes!" I shout gleefully, reprimanding myself for forgetting in my shock "I'll get it! Bard!"

"Yes?"

"Are my things where I left them or should I start digging in the trash?"

"…. They have not been moved."

"Thank God!"

Rushing as quickly as I can up the steps, I burst into the girl's room and locate my bag. Digging through it, I snatch up the kingsfoil I packed away and kiss it gratefully. When I stand, something falls out of my bag and I hurry to pick it up. Glancing down at the object, I blink in confusion at my mirror image. 'My ID card… How’d it get out my wallet?' Not having the time to waste on contemplating teleporting identification, I shove it back into my bag and thump down the stairs. I crash into the sitting area and shove the plant into Oin's face rudely but uncaring.

"I got it!" I huff out as he takes them out of my hand with a grunt. Looking around, I almost swear under my breath upon finding Bofur missing "Where is Bofur?"

"He went to find more kingsfoils." Fili answers, stroking his brother's arm as Oin works his mojo "He will be back soon."

"Yeah." I whisper, biting my lip in apprehension "With a league of orcs and two elves on his tail."

"Did ye say something, lassie?" Oin hollers

"…No, nothing."

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**Mean while: Erebor**

The closer I get to Erebor, the further away Thia's warning gets from my mind. I just can not think of it, or any other distractions. 'Such as the lads.' As much as I would like my sister sons to be present when the door is opened, I find myself unable to hold off even without the time constraint. The company scales the mountain side quickly and with little hesitation; their compliance fuels my need to find the hidden passage. Assistance is needed every now and again, however we arrive at
the predestined location with a few moments to spare. Everything will work itself out once Erebor is reclaimed. Everything.

"This must be it. The hidden door." I face my company and offer a cheer "Let all those who doubted us, rue this day!"

"Hey, we have a key." Dwalin grins from beside me and starts patting the wall "Which means there's a keyhole here somewhere."

"The last light of Durin's day... will shine upon the keyhole." I turn to see the sun setting herself to bed and aim to hurry the search "Nori. We are losing the light. Come on!"

"Be quiet." Nori places his ear to the stone and growls at Dwalin, who begins kicking the wall "I can't hear when you're thumpin'!"

"I can't find it. It's not here!" Dwalin ignores the thief in favor of desperately searching for the keyhole "It's not here!"

"Break it down! Come on!" each of my kin grabs a weapon and begins hammering away at wall but to no avail. Blades chip and break but the stone doesn't budge. There has to be a way in, there just has to be! I chance a glance behind me to see the sun nearly gone, my hope dining with it "We lost the light..."

"It's no good! The door's sealed..." my advisor lowers his weapon, much to my dismay as the sun fully sets "Can't be opened by force. Powerful magic on it."

"No! The last light of Durin's Day... will shine upon the keyhole. That's what it says." I shake the map and look around into the faces of each of my men before settling on Balin "What did we miss? What did we miss, Balin?"

"We've lost the light. There's no more to be done. We had but one chance." Balin waves the rest of our kin away from the wall as I stare at the key in my palm "Come away lads. It's over."

"Wait a minute, what? Where are they going?" the hobbit flits around in a tither that I can't bring myself to reprimand. Dropping the key and shoving the map into the halfling's arms, I start down the hidden path "You can't give up now! Thorin, everyone, please! I'm sure Thia would have told you if this were all for naught!"

"Thia?" I hear Balin question over the sound of my near collapsed spirit "Yes... I suppose she would have but I've heard nothing of it."

"She said there would be. Yet... she did not wish for Thorin to enter." Nori reports. It is blatantly obvious that he was dropping eaves upon our earlier conversation "Has she somehow hidden it from our sight?"

"The lass minded not if we opened the doors, only our entrance." We discussed Thia's warning after we'd docked across the lake, though I had not revealed all that Nori apparently had witnessed. Defending the girl hotly, Gloin shoves past the thief "We know her gifts do not extend to such ends. Her warning was no doubt a flighty worry for our safety that the more delicate sex are prone to express."

"Let us leave this place." Blaine announces, effectively ending the debate "It is getting dark."

My thudding decent down the mountain is halted as my ears ring with the words brought to my memory by my company. They soon drown out into a much sweeter voice. 'Your darkest moments
are when you can see the lights clearest. The key is patience.' The key, I only need to wait but… for what? Such a cryptic warning, you'd think my One a wizard! 'Girls and walls of stones… walls…' The mindless squawking of the hobbit becomes too much to ignore and I turn to admonish him just as he kicks the key very nearly off the cliff face. I understand clearly in this moment what I must do and I mentally thank my One for her foresight. I step on the key string before it tumbles over the mountain side and pick it up as my kin gather around once more at the commotion.

"It is there. She said it is there and I trust her enough not to give-up so easily." We move together as a single unit and after a moment, destiny shows itself. With a wide grin, I insert the key into the clearly shining hole in the wall. It clicks softly and swings open with a low shuttering groan, the company staring in amazement beside me "Erebor."

"Thorin." I look to my advisor and clasp him on the shoulder before looking forward once more "I suppose she was right then."

"Thank you, all. Thia." I murmur, grateful for them making the journey with me and for her giving me more than hope. Steeping into the archway, I gaze around "I know these walls. These halls. These stones." I start forward but a tickle in my mind tugs me away from the orifice. It soon fades away and I am free step further into the archway but go no deeper than a step "You remember it, Balin. Chambers filled with golden light."

"I remember." He agrees

"Herein lies the seventh kingdom of Durin's folk." Gloin reads from a wall engraving "May the heart of the mountain unite all dwarves in defense of this home."

"The throne of the king." Balin traces the image

"And what's that above it?" Baggins meekly asks but I am too overwhelmed with joy to be annoyed by his ignorance

"The arkenstone." Balin explains patiently in my place

"The arkenstone… Wha-" he stops, seeming to be caught in thought "The image on Thia's back that you were all so worked up about?"

"The very same." I concede, smirking down at the smaller male. A strange but familiar heat rises in my belly but I think nothing of it "And that, Master Burglar, is why you are here."

We have finally reached the mountain! To all my awesome, wonderful, amazing reviewers, THANK YOU. I'm so excited. Until next time!
CHAPTER 69

I am almost hesitant in sending Baggins into the mountain but a part of myself rationalizes my worries away. *I am not entering the mountain myself, therefore my One has nothing to fear.* Having resolved the unsettling feeling in my gut I allow myself to contemplate the pull of gold from behind the massive stone slabs. It's like a thick honey sliding over the surface of my skin; pulling me under a sweet spell of delicious promises. Without any more deliberation, I set the hobbit to his task. My treasure awaits.

"You want me to find a jewel?" the hobbit questions

"A large white jewel." Balin explains further. Cupping his hands to visually assist the burglar in his search "Yes."

"That-that's it?" he continues, seeming to be in disbelief. His large feet, which I still must force myself not to stare at, shift his weight as he fidgets "I imagine there's quite a few down there."

"There is only one Arkenstone." Balin walks into the mountain and the halfling follows but I still hear their voices echoing through the tunnel "And you'll know it when you see it."

"Right, the only one." he agrees, but then laughs nervously "Except for Thia's, of course."

"Indeed, she is not to be excluded."

"Without her, you'd all be halfway down the mountain by now. "

"Aye... Aye. But let us set aside thoughts of our resident seer for the moment, hm?"

"Yes, of course." Again, the hobbit shifts on his boulbus feet. I catch the movement from the corner of my eye but ignore it. While not as hairless as elves or men, dwarves do not grow as... Furry as halflings. I find myself leaning toward smoother textures as of late and begin to wander into my thoughts before Baggins stutters out a question "I-is something the matter, Master Balin?"

"... In truth, lad. I do not know what you will find down there. You needn't go if you don't want to. There's no dishonor in turning back."

"No, Balin, I promised I would do this." I relax a little upon hearing his resolve. Despite Balin's words I would have found every dishonor in the hobbit's abandonment at such a late hour. Under no circumstance will any of us turn back now before this mountain is reclaimed! To have come so
far and to turn back NOW is... No. It is good that the halfling stands his ground "I think I must try."

"It never ceases to amaze me." Balin chuckles lowly

"What's that?"

"The courage of hobbits. Go now, with as much luck as you can muster." I lean against the outer wall and wait for their conversation to end "Oh, and, Bilbo."

"Mm?"

"If there is in fact a um... a live dragon down there..."

"... Yes?"

"Well. .. don't waken it."

Balin swiftly exits the mouth of the secret entrance with further conversion and gives me a sidelong look of resignation. There is little we can do now besides sit and wait. Inhaling the distant metallic smell of wealth, I walk to the cliff edge and do just that: Sit, wait, and let my thoughts roam. I think of how it will feel when I finally walk into my home. The melancholy, memories... gold. Silver, gems, and jewels. Looking down at my palms, I see the difference than when last I was home. A child I was then; My hands, once bruised with calluses of choice, are now marred with scars of survival. How different will these walls feel? The gold? My legacy...My treasure.

My beautiful shimmering treasure that is soon to be all mine. With that thought my head suddenly feels heavy and the land before me wavers, causing me to reach back to gain purchase on the earth. Instead of the rocky pebbles I expect, I feel nothing but air. The sky rushes around me but I am unable to move, frozen by the idea of falling upwards. My assent is halted as I come to rest solidly on a cold stone floor. Righting myself, I immediately begin to search for the source of my transportation and come upon a large table at which a single woman sits. Recognition creeps into my mind from numerous talks and colored description, and I bend to a knee in respect.

"Raise your head son of Durin." she commands, her voice full of life and authority "We only have a moment to speak before you must return."

"I mean no disrespect, my lady but" I approach slowly when she beckons me forward "what could Blessed Yavanna, chosen mate of Father Mahal, have to speak with me about?"

"It is simple." she informs, somehow shrinking the entire room until we are proportionate to one another. She is even more striking this way; her presence threatens to crush me but her words knock my breath away "The mother of your child."

"... Though I have found she who I would like to be my wife... we have no children."

"Is that so?" the goddess stands and begins circling me with a knowing smile "Did you not lay with her just last night?"

"How did you-" I stop myself from flushing and demanding answers, lest I suffer her wrath "We became close but we did not truly share a bed."

"You mean you did not enter her body, of which I am well aware. Thia Malcolmson clings tightly to her views on life." the goddess returns to her seat and gestures me over once more "It is why such precautions had to be taken to protect the future of your line."
"I... I am not sure I understand what you are speaking of, my lady." I am growing more confused by the second "What precautions? What does it have to do with my line?"

"The children of my husband are indeed thick skulled!" the green woman scoffs and sits back in her tall backed chair "You know what I speak of. To what end do you keep your silence?"

"I know not-"

"You lie." She sneers but the expression only compliments her face "You gleaned the meaning of the dream you two shared last night, even if the girl did not."

"... Dreams between One are not meant to have audiences, your grace."

"Nor should children be created by your shoddy performance upon yesters eve but that is neither here nor there." my cheeks flush despite my best efforts at the reminder of my actions. My control was... not what it was meant to be "I shall speak plainly. Thia Malcolmson is with child. YOUR child. Through her, your line shall continue."

"How is that possible? Why THIS way?"

As much as the very thought of Thia growing round with my child fills my soul with gladness, I cannot comprehend how such a thing is possible or why it would need to be. From what has been said, and from our shared dream, I can assume that the conception was created last night. Though I lay fully on the girl, our clothes separated us the entire time. To have seed travel through clothe is an amazing feat that I suspect few can claim to have accomplished. I begin to wonder what other miracles will occur when I finally know the girl as my wife.

"It was a necessary course of action. You need to be made aware so that you may protect her properly, for she will need you to... when the time comes." My attention is brought back to the goddess as she explains, though my mind is hardly keeping up. Thia. Pregnant. With my child. It is too good to be true and yet no lie could ever sound so sweet "There is no doubt that more time than is available would have been needed for the young woman to let you know her as a husband should, but this can not wait."

"Thia..." I whisper the girls name in disbelief. Through our bond as One we are able to share many things, including dreams. The girl, while unaware, shared a vision with me last night but it was clear come morning that she was unaware of either experience "She does not know."

"No, and you shall not be the one to tell her."

"I should-"

"She will find out in her own time. For her own peace of mind, she must come by this knowledge on her own terms." the room grows once more and I know I am being dismissed but there are still many questions I need to ask "Return to your mountain, dwarf."

"Wait! Why can I not tell her? To Help her understand?" the room disappears before my eyes but I continue to shout "What do you mean that there isn't enough time? Why have you done this? Tell me!"

"It has always been for one reason." the woman whispers as the wind rushes into my ears Always one. "

"What reason!?!"
"... To save the line of Durin."

I let out a howl but know that no more information will be given to me. Landing on my side with a thud, I nearly careen off the mountain side and had it not been for my kin's quick reactions, I would have. I can gather from their concern that they have obviously noticed my absence. Shaking off their hands, I steady myself on my feet.

"Lad, what happened?" Balin's voice penetrates my ringing ears. He looks ragged with worry and guilt nudges at my gut "You disappeared and then suddenly appeared again with no warning. Was it Thia? Has something happened to Kili?"

"No... no, it was Mahal's wife." the group gasps but I press on "She imparted a surprising piece of knowledge concerning Thia to me."

"Well?" Gloin questions boldly "What knowledge has been given to you about the lass? By a Vala no less."

"She is... carrying my child."

"Lies..." I ignore Bifur's threatening growl "Filthy lies."

"Thorin..." Balin chastises angrily, nearly shaking with rage "Tell me you did not dishonor her in such a way! I specifically told you-"

"I did not!" I bite out in return, though understanding of how it may seem "Our father's wife did not explain very clearly but the gods made this possible and I am happier for it. As should you be."

"We are. We... truly are. All children are a gift and this one shall be no different, but why has this occurred?" Dori asks distantly, foolishly believing that any child of mine could be held to the same standards of any child before them "What purpose could it serve?"

"I do not know." I admit shaking my heavy head, still coming to terms with my luck "The green lady only imparted that it was because more time was needed than we have and that I am not granted to inform Thia of her condition. She must learn of it in her own time."

"I doubt the little Miss will be too happy regardless of who tells her." Nori adds from his place, a few paces away "She isn't the type to simply allow life changing decisions to be made for her."

Before anymore comments or questions can be asked, the ground beneath our feet begins to rumble. We rush as far from the edge as we can manage, gripping the ridges in the mountain for balance. The shaking is so severe that the loose pebbles beneath our feet leap with the vibrations. We do not move for long moments, even after the shaking subsides.

"Was that an earthquake?" Ori chances a hopeful whisper "I hope that was an earthquake."

"That, my lad" Balin corrects exchanging an expression with me "was a dragon."

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**Laketown**

Kili's pain has returned and he is screaming through clenched teeth by the time the rumbling starts. Bard's children arrived moments earlier and look just about terrified. Tilda moves between hugging her sister's waist, as Sigrid pets her head soothingly, and hiding in my neck. I mentally call Bofur to hurry, knowing I could just retrieve him but needing this to play out. I've long since told Bard of my plan and though reluctant, he agrees. We all sit quietly waiting for the earth to stand still again.
"Da?" Sigrid calls faintly to her father but her brother answers instead

"It's coming from the mountain."

"You should leave us." Fili tries to reason with the man "Take your children and Miss Thia, and get out of here."

"And go where?" the man offers me a solemn look "There is nowhere to go."

"Are we going to die, Da?" Tilda's whispered voice is muffled in her sister's skirts

"No, darling."

"The dragon" she whimpers and I sigh at her broken words "It's going to kill us. Kill us dead... Just like mum."

"..." I look up at the place over the table and Bard's eyes follow mine. We stare at the hidden weapon before looking at each other once more. Bard nods and grabs the large arrow from its place "Not if I kill it first."

He exits the house with Bain hot on his trail. I focus on Kili trying to ignore what I know is coming, since getting worked up will do me no good. The tension becomes too much too quickly, and I leap from my seat to gather what weapons we have. The remaining occupants of the house watch me in silence that is occasionally broken by Kili's hisses of pain. Curiosity eventually wins out with Tilda and she slowly comes to my side.

"What are you doing?"

"Getting our weapons together." I answer, pulling them all further into the room

"Why?"

"It'll make me feel better."

"Ye can't fight a dragon with a sword, lass." Oin offers, wiping Kili's brow "The hide is too thick."

"They aren't for a dragon." I answer loud enough for him to hear. The door starts to rattle and I know it isn't a friend "They are for the orcs."

"Da?" Sigrid calls and moves to the door but I pull her back "Is that you, Da?"

The doors burst open to reveal the snarling face of an orc. 'Definately not Da.' Bard's daughters, fighters that they are, try to keep the intruder from entering. Fili leaps from his brother's side and grabs one of the weapons I gathered before joining the fray. Outmatched and outnumbered, the orc is quickly dispatched but I hear the commotion outside and know that it's about to get real.

Before I know it, Tauriel is flying through the door kicking orc butt and not bothering to take names. Her hair whips around her face like a red cloud and I can admit to being more than a little impressed. Then I see Legolas through the window doing a series of alternating front and back flips and it makes me feel kind of useless so I trip an ice that wanders too close. I wait until nearly all the orcs are dead or escaped before offering words of encouragement to my friends.

"Show off!" nearly snapping my neck, I glare at the she-elf "And just where were you, huh?! He's been waiting for you and he doesn't even know it!"

"Excuse me?" She asks but I pay little attention, instead gesturing again to the now delirious Kili
"Oh no!"

"You killed them all..." Bain gazes around in amazement as he enters the house, totally ignoring my outburst. The same can't be said for the elves who look at me like I've lost my mind.

"There are others. Tauriel, come." Legolas beckons the elleth but I know she is hesitant to leave Kili just yet. The elf Prince watches in confusion, turning his face to look at me and I give a slight shake of my head. His brow creases in confusion and he calls to his companion again before running out, knowing she won't follow but hoping it anyway "Tauriel."

"We're losing him!" Oin shouts as Kili gives a week whimper.

Bofur bursts into the house with the kingsfoil right on time, having missed all the action. It finalizes Tauriel's decision and she enters the house fully, going over to Kili's side. Knowing that all will be well, I grab my bag and chase after my not-husband, only catching the end of the conversation between the elf and dwarf.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm going to save him."

"It's about damn time!" I yell, hustling out the door. I'm glad everyone is so focus on everything thing and misses, or ignores, my departure.

I'm enjoying writing this section, so expect a couple more before long! Thanks for the reviews. Until next time!
Chapter 70

Erebor

"What about Bilbo?" Ori questions over another rumble

"Give him more time." I respond vaguely, going over the day's events in my mind. I'm perfectly content with the way things are and with all the pieces falling into place, all I must do is wait "Just a little more time."

"Time to do what?" Balin persists to interrupt my thoughts "To be killed? I know you are excited for the child Mahal has given you but we must focus on the task at hand."

"You're afraid." I state, confused as to why everyone is so disturbed over the events

"Yes, I'm afraid. I fear for you. A sickness lies upon that treasure horde and you..." he grips my shoulder and lowers his voice so only I can hear "A sickness which drove your grandfather mad might be affecting you now."

"I am not my grandfather." I reply lowly and shake off his hand. I'm angered by his suggestion but relax upon thinking of names for my child. Something strong but fitting. I'll make him a cradle of gold and he can sleep with my treasure until he is old enough to sleep on his own. He'll grow into a fine lad that will be able to stand at my side. Thus, I must be there to stand beside him as well. Something I can not do if I go mad "I will not fall as he did."

"You're not yourself." the dwarf insists, gesturing toward the passage "The Thorin I know would not hesitate to go in there."

"I am much more than I once was, Balin, hence I may act a bit different from here on out."

"Yes but-"

"Things are not so simple anymore. Not when I have every reason to succeed now that the gods have blessed me once more." I grin at the open sky, ignoring the thundering from inside the mountain "I will not risk this quest for the life of one burglar."

"Bilbo." Balin mentions as I walk away, clearly not as elated as I at what the future now holds. I am irritated by my advisors constant pestering "His name is Bilbo."

"Yes yes, I know."
"Do you?"

"Of course. My One finds great pleasure in his company and I have found that he has his many uses." I make my way to the open passage as it becomes clear that I will not be left in peace "Let us go get the hobbit then, hm?"

I don't wait for an answer, striding into the secret passage intent on finding the halfling and being done with the badgering. The thundering steps behind me, confirm that my kin have followed but at a slower pace. An alarm sounds in my mind, the warning of my seer is still fresh, but I will be here but a moment. What is the worst that could happen? Within minutes we arrive at the end of the passage and I gaze about carefully. It opens into a welcome sight; gold. More than one could ever count, obtain, or spend in even an elvish lifetime. I gape in awe and delight before remembering that I am here for the hobbit. Before much longer however, the burglar stumbles into me on his own.

"You're alive." I state plainly "Thia will be pleased."

"Yes... um. Alright though not for much longer." he responds, appearing to be in a fright

"Did you find the Arkenstone?"

"The dragon's coming!" he hisses, looking around frantically but I will not be dissuaded "Must we do this NOW?"

"The Arkenstone?" I insist, it is a great part of my treasure "Did you find it?"

"...No, we have to get out." he starts to step towards the passage but I will not allow him to leave. Lifting my hand to stop him, I'm surprised when my sword lifts of its own volition but I do not feel the need to fight it as it works for my purpose. I glare at the hobbit as he shivers in fear "Thorin? Thorin!"

I'm not entirely sure what I would have done to the hobbit if the dragon hadn't shown up. His arrival pulls the rest of our group from hiding and as a unit we all look upon the greatest calamity of our age. His wings are large and strong; tipped with razor sharp claws that could slice into any surface with ease. His scales shimmer; reflecting alarmingly off the gold below him in a way that I find most alluring. I entertain the thought of keeping his scales after his death for armor or jewelry. My treasure would look even more perfect with with the addition. My fantasy is cut short by the screech.

"You will burn!" the wyrm bellows

"Come on!" I order, taking off running

"Come on" Balin repeats, calling for the halfling in particular "Bilbo!"

I am the last to leave, unable to exit without catching another glimpse of the treasury. 'I will return.' My hesitation allows the dragon fire to catch onto my cloak, setting the furs ablaze. Thankfully, my kin stamp out the flames and I escape with only a few singed hairs. The time spent after this could be measured in minutes, hours, or days but all I know for sure is that it is entirely too long. Smaug chases us relentlessly and all we can do is scurry around like rats. Each time we gain some advancement, the dragon appears to collapse our footing. All the while, I feel a growing pull back to the room of gold but know I cannot return upon the threat of death. Unlike my grandfather, I heed this warning and stay out of sight when possible. It is by no small miracle that we are able to get the forges lit and bathe Smaug in a sea of gold. The sight is magnificent and for a moment, we
truly believe that we have killed a dragon. His corpse would make a fine statue to ward off enemies but I watch with dread as the fire drake bursts free of the molten liquid, fuming with rage and malice.

"Ah, revenge! Revenge! I will show you revenge!" he takes to the sky, screeching his fury "I am fire. I am...death!"

"...What have we done?" Baggins whispers at the dragons departure

I glance at the hobbit in confusion before focusing on where the wyrm is flying to. He decends on the small town upon the lake with a fury that could set the world ablaze. 'Thia!' I rush after the dragon but am halted by my kin before I step onto the scorching gold floor. My heart feels as if is being crushed as the first wave of heat bursts from the drakes mouth. He continues his rampage but begins to flash in his movements. The dragon rears back and begins to spew flames again but they are decimated when Smaug suddenly disappears from the sky. There is only one explanation for it. I know what she meant when we were sailing away now. Thia... she's trying to...

"The wee lass is trying to kill a dragon..." Dori says in a whisper "Mahal protect her..."

"THIA!" I cry to the top of my lungs, even knowing that she can't hear me but not being able to stay silent while I am about to lose so much "Please... Don't."

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**Laketown**

I chase down the elf but he's a quick one, especially with my bum leg. Deciding it would be easier to just 'jump' to him, I do so. I land on his back and he falls over under my sudden weight, just as an orc blade slashes through the air where his neck used to be. He quickly stands up and dispatches the remaining orcs while I do my best to stay out the way. I barely manage but soon enough the coast is clear and I'm able to relax for a moment.

"What are you doing here?" Legolas demands heatedly "It is not safe."

"Buddy, this whole town is going to be fully engulfed in flames soon enough. No where is safe." he glares down at me but offers no rebuttal so I go on "Bard the Bowman and I have a plan to defeat Smaug but I have to go free him from prison and you need to get ready to start your trip with Tauriel."

"She seems to be quite content where she is." he spits out venomously, to which I ignore "What plan have you come up with to defeat a dragon that hasn't been thought of before?"

"Drown him."

"Drown a dragon?" he scoffs but thinks on the idea "...Is the lake deep enough?"

"Yes. Plus I will have the strength and lung capacity to hold him under to at least soak his flame so he can't set us on fire." I explain searching the skies for the beast "Bard can do the rest."

"You are confident in this 'Bard?' It will not be that simple." he contradicts, not that I didn't expect him to "He will fight you. You could-"

"I know Legs." I smile softly at his worried expression. It's more of a look that you give a sister than your wife and I find that I'm quite alright with it "I'll be careful and you will too, won't you?"

"I am always careful."
"Right." I laugh and point back the way I came "Now go, I have to break a man out of jail."

"Prison breaks are frequent when you are involved, are they not?" he grins before disappearing on me

"Yeah. I guess so." Wasting no more time, I 'jump' to Bard. He's in a tight cell and I end up inside with him. Not the most comfortable place and being so cozy with him is more disturbing than it should be. A few 'jumps' later and I'm on the right side

"Open this door!" he demands, as if I were the one to put him in there

"Hold your horses, King dragon slayer." I glance around the debri for the ring "I have to find the keys."

"I neither desire nor deserve either of those titles. Over there!" he points to a wall with the desired items "Quickly!"

"Allllmmoooost... There!" the door swings open and Bard springs out "You remember the plan?"

"I start shooting. You drag him under water. I shoot when he comes out." he grabs a conveniently located bow and quiver of arrows to which I make no mention of "Why must I start shooting if we know none of the arrows will pierce his scales?"

"Continuity. Just don't hit me." I say, not willing to tell him it's because his son needs to see him so they can nearly die together. Sneaky, I know, but necessary. A roar echoes through the town and we know it's starting "Go."

The man nods and I watch him leave, thinking of all the reasons why I shouldn't do what I'm about to do but knowing I'm going to do it anyway. A tug in my chest pulls my attention to the mountain and I'm sure if I listen hard enough, I'll hear Thorin either rejoicing over his gold or angrily calling my name. Probably both since he entered the mountain after I SPECIFICALLY told him not to. I sigh and watch as Bard showers Smaug with arrows. Taking it as my cue, I 'jump' to the most dangerous I can imagine: Smaug's back. The sheer heat permeating from his scales is enough to punish me for my actions. Hanging tight, I tell myself that first degree burns on my thighs are better than dying.

"Who dares to touch the magnificent Smaug?!" he roars and for the first time in a long, I feel like I'm watching the movie instead of being a part of it

"I am dragon rider!" I howl, throwing my fear into the into the wind. What else can a girl do when she's riding a dragon? Taking the lead, I 'jump' us into the icy lake, breathing with ease "Hear me roar!"

Alright so this may have crossed into a different universe but fear not! Hiccup and toothless shall not be making an appearance. Though I may take some notes on dragon riding from the movie if I can remember any. Could you imagine Thia trying to tame Smaug? That would be... pretty awesome if you think about it. Hm... Thank you for your reviews. The ID is important but not really. Yes! There was a shared dream but Thia didn't know it. You guys are always faithful. Until next time!
Chapter 71

My instinct not to breathe underwater overcomes the agony of running out of air despite my knowledge of my gift. I know that all my gifts until now have worked but what if I misunderstood this one and I can only take a single breath or something like that? The deeper we sink, the more I begin to question my shaky plan. It grows darker as the sunlight loses its ability to penetrate the liquid and all I'm left with is my own glow, which once again covers my whole body. A harsh jerk by Smaug causes an involuntary gasp from me and just like that, I'm breathing again. I sigh gratefully and focus on the dragon, not the bubbles escaping my mouth. He struggles to right himself but under the water's surface, I'm faster and more agile than him. Circling his enormous body, I take hold of a flailing wing and drag him lower with the acquired strength. The lake bed is littered with debris from years of poverty; the perfect place for the dragon to eternally rest.

"Release me!" he blubbers, water rushing into his snout and choking him. He rumbles in frustration before actually giving me specific attention for the first time "Your coloring is most curious. It would sit well with my treasure. Once I rid my mountain of those dwarf vermin, I will take you there."

"I'm not a piece of jewelry and the only way I'm entering that mountain is over your dead body." I return, glad that the water stays out of my mouth, allowing my words to come out clearly. The water heats around us and I know I only need to hold out for a little longer to put out his flame "I won't let you hurt them anymore. They've suffered long enough."

"Suit yourself, woman." his answer is choked by steam "However, that king has already fallen and their suffering has only begun."

I'm not entirely sure how he is talking under water but the question dies on my lips when what I should have seen coming, comes. A clawed appendage appears from my side and swipes me across the chest, causing me to lose my hold on him. Even without looking down, I know his claws have sliced to the bone and quite possibly through them. I imagine it's painful based on the amount of blood that pours from both my mouth and gashes but I don't feel anything. 'Shock is an amazing numbing agent.' I blink slowly at the dragon as he offers a strange smirk.

"If you live then we shall meet again, curious one." he blows out, though I'm pretty sure we won't either way "Try not to lose the color if you are unsuccessful is preserving your life."

As I watch Smaug awkwardly swim away from my drifting body, I wonder if I gave Bard enough time. I kept the dragon down here for long enough, didn't I? I've done all I can where he is concerned, haven't I? I hope his fire is gone. 'How did the water get so cold?' My back bumps something but I can only blink passively at the wreckage of a long forgotten ship as my limbs
become entangled in ropes, seaweed, and cloth. It's a large ship; old and dilapidated but even in this state I know it must have once been beautiful. Probably from before Erebor fell and trading was plentiful. Little fish poke their heads from around corners and I think I see some of their sharper toothed cousins lurking about but it's just... so dark. I half expect Ariel to swim her little red headed butt out of no where and save me but I think that's asking too much of the little mermaid.

The sky rumbles and creaks but I've done all I can and now... I'm just so tired. I try not to but am lulled by the gentle pull and tug of the water. It might not be able to kill me but blood loss sure can. Even if I can come back from the dead, I'll still be trapped beneath the water on this ghost ship where no one can reach me. I try to rub my eyes but my arm won't move. I roll my gaze to the side and find a little relief in knowing it's, at least, still attached. Not as attached as I'd like it. In fact, it hangs by mere threads. My chest looks to have exploded or perhaps caved in; the skin around it floating lazily as my blood dyes the water a vibrant hue. Smaug really did a number on me. 'Thorin is going to be so angry with me...' I can distinguish between the dull screams and muted colors no longer from beyond the watery veil. My senses fall into oblivion like falling into a deep dark hole and watching the light of the world grow smaller with the distance. Before I'm completely gone, because yes, I'm dying... I catch a glimpse of the mighty dragon falling by my side to lay upon the lake bed. His eyes dim slowly as we watch each other fade away before I know this world, or any other, no more.

EREBOR

A yowl of blessed agony reaches my ears and I know that it is Smaug's death cry. He plummets toward Laketown and disappears under the water. It disturbs the surface but its only moments later that he has completely disappeared and all is still. I wait for a sign. Any sign... to tell me that she is alright but all I am gifted with is silence.

"Wh...what was that?" the youngest Ri asks "What happened?"

"It fell, I saw it. It's dead." I barely hear Baggins' rejoice over my attention to the city "Smaug is dead."

"By my beard, I think he's right! The lass did it." Gloin clammers up from his spot behind the stones "Look there! The Ravens of Erebor are returning to the Mountain."

"Aye, word will spread." I turn to my company as Balin raises a joyful cry "Before long, every soul in Middle Earth will know the Dragon is dead!"

I do not wish to ruin their joyful mood but only fear resides in my heart. There is no doubt that Thia had a hand in Smaug's demise and surely she knows that we, I, could see the battle. So why has she not come to me? Why has she not come to tell us she is alright? Only one reason comes to my mind and it is supported by the heavy feeling in my gut and the emptiness of my soul. 'She is unable to do so.' She can not tell me she is unharmed... because she isn't. Unable to take the company of my kin any longer, I retreat back into the mountain to nurse the pain in my chest.

My heartache leads me to my gold and I force myself to find joy in it, searching endlessly for the item that will bring me closer to my fallen One. For days I search, not sleeping... barely eating. The gold soothes my mind but not my heart; in fact it only makes the pain worse. I can not fake interest when one of the company approaches me, fully focused are locating the arkenstone. I'm sure if I find it, all will be well. Hence, for days I walk over the sea of gold, and hope for a glimpse of the familiar, an infinite amount of times. My suffering is muted by the proximity of what I have searched for for so long but I searched for the other half of me for much longer. At one point, this gold is all I wanted but now... All I want is Thia, my perfect and truest treasure.
"Gold. Gold beyond measure, beyond sorrow and grieve." I laugh at my past self and the idea that monetary gain was a cure for all torment. Even surrounded as I am, I still grieve. I still find sorrow that threatens to break me beyond redemption. The sound of footsteps pulls my attention above, where I find my kin and the halfling watching me. Thia is not with them, as I knew she would not be. As much as my heart demands answers, I wish to welcome the lads before I question them. I toss a coin to my heir in the hope of lightening the mood "Behold, the great treasure hoard of Thrór. Welcome, my sisters sons, to the Kingdom of Erebor."

The company rushes in soon after and greetings are exchanged. Though I am relieved to see my company returned, a crucial member is missing. I can wait no longer to hear the fate of my One. Pulling aside Fili, I command the rest of the group to continue the search for the arkenstone. I guide him to one of the areas we cleaned and regard him carefully.

"Fili, I left you to care for Thia, did I not?"

"...Yes, Uncle."

"Then why was she with Smaug?" I ask, trying to remain calm "Why is she not here? Why is my One... namadinûdoy. Please. Tell me what happened."

"She... I was distracted... with Kili and she..." he hangs his head in shame "She just... left."

"Where did you last see her?" he doesn't answer and it causes a spark to rise in my stomach "Fili! Where did you last see her?!"

"... On the dragon's back, same as you, but..." he lets out a shaky breath "She was not on him when he flew out of the water..."

"So you just left her there?" I growl, anger overriding the fear "You left her there to die in the freezing water? Alone."

"I thought if Smaug had risen and she had not" he offers without raising his head "that she was already dead..."

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**Somewhere other than Erebor**

I awaken groggy but dry and with a dull ache in my chest. Dry isn't what I expected when I know I died while swimming with the fishes. I do not remember what happened between dying and now. However the knowledge is in my head without even remembering the incident that I've used my one get out of death free card. Moaning softly, I turn over and feel a soft pelt of fur. The familiar scent has me sinking into its depths and I begin to fall back to sleep but a shifting stops that train. Gingerly testing out my range of motion, I sit up carefully and examine my surroundings. A large black bear is wrapped around me and after a split second of fear, I realize it's Beorn.

"Morning." I say casually, not sure what else to offer "Do I have you to thank for dragging me from a watery grave?"

"..." He snuffles at my head before turning into a huge naked man. I ignore his nakedness in favor of giving him a bored expression "No. I found you floating against the river, something I have never seen naturally done. How you got there and what brought me to you are unknown to me."

"Hmmm, dragon. Thanks, I appreciate it, regardless of the how and why." the man leans over and thrusts his nose into my belly, sniffing around the surface. I go to swat at him but the movement irritates my chest "...Not to sound ungrateful but could you NOT do that?"
"Oakenshield moves swiftly." he ruffles my hair good naturedly "He will have an heir soon."

"Your nose must be off because there are no heirs in there buddy, not unless my name is Mary all of a sudden." I clear my throat to get the idea out of my head "Fili is Thorin's heir, you know that."

"...Who is Mary?"

"The virgin who gave birth." he sniffs at my stomach again but continues lowering his head to my crotch and this time I do swat him "Stop that! It's weird!"

"It may be." he answers randomly before getting up and strutting his naked butt over to a pile of clothes "You smell of both."

"I'm not sure what you're talking about." I answer, pulling my untorn shirt hem from my chest and looking at my skin. 'Great, Beorn changed my clothes.' Two wide scars run across my chest; one passing between my breasts and the other running from my collar bone to wrap around my upper arm. They don't appear to be raw but they sure do feel like it. To be honest, they look old. Healed even, like I've been asleep for years. That kind of worries me "How long have I been out?"

"A week."

"A week?!" I choke on the cup of water he offers me "Oh no. A whole week? Where are we? They probably- Oh Thorin! He probably thinks I'm dead! I have to go!"

I leap up and try to 'jump' to the dwarf's location but end up flickering in place. Looking around in confusion, I try once more but the strain is too much. My stomach jerks painfully, causing me to cry out as I collapse. Thankfully Beorn catches me before I hit the floor, though he is still half naked. He wraps me in a thick blanket and starts walking, through the trees. I don't know where we are or where we are going but I trust the skin changer. Much to my chargin, he lifts me up to smell me again. I slap at his bare chest lightly and try to fight the sleep quickly descending on me.

"You mustn't strain yourself in your condition." He admonishes lightly

"What's wrong with me?" I ask weakly, unable to stay awake any longer

"Nothing is wrong with you." he answers, cuddling me to his chest "Your body simply needs more rest for the future you shall bring."

What's going on my peepers?! We are getting close and closer to the end. Soon the whole crew will be back together and I can maybe stop throwing you guys for a loop every other chapter. MAYBE. The khuzdul means nephew, that's all. Let's give a warm round of applause for my reviewers reviewing! You are awesome. Until next time!
CHAPTER 72

"-Woodland Elves!-" my offspring snarls, approaching my warg. She growls fiercely in defense when he comes too close and I do nothing to calm her; instead indulging in the thought of her tearing the orc's throat out "-The King's son and a She-elf. They tracked us to Lake-town.-"

"-And you killed them?-" I question as much as state

"-They fled, squealing like cowards.-"

"-You fool!-" I growl into his face, displeased with the turn of events. I desire Oakenshield's head, not an army to do battle with! I turn my fury back to the foolish orcling "-They will return with an Army of Elves at their backs!-

"-What would you have me do?-"

"-Ride to Gundabad.-" I dismiss the disgrace from my sights "-Let the Legions come forth.-"

"-Yes.-" He jerks his metal plated head but does not move away "-There is more.-"

"-Then speak quickly.-" I am beginning to lose interest and I will find no qualms with replacing this pest of an heir "-lest I find your tongue better fit to be eaten by the wargs than in your mouth.-"

"-Oakenshield has taken a wench--"

"-As I have known for many moons.-" I begin to slip my knife from its place at my hip "-This is not new to me.-"

"-She is breeding.-" he answers swiftly, once more catching my attention "-His scent was heavy upon her flesh and the smell of a child came from her womb.-"

"-Breeding? He thinks to further his line, when I have sworn to end it?!-" I remember the woman, for it is true that she is not a she dwarf as I first suspected. Far to slight to be any part of a thick dwarvish females. She held so much fight, despite her size, and yet so much fear. The taste of her tears, the sound of her terrified fluttering heart, the feel of the power radiating from within her very body. A frightened little rabbit with the strength of a dragon she was. Even a soul so detached from the light as could feel the potential rising from her. Yet, a breeding rabbit is a slow rabbit no matter the hidden strength "-She has slipped through my grasp twice; there will not be a third time. I want her. Alive. It will be torture for the dwarf to watch his beloved and child suffer under my hands... And entertaining for me.-"
"-So it is done.-"

The welp rides off as I run thoughts of claiming the woman before Oakenshield's very eyes. Of slamming into her tight little body until the welp is spewn from its mother's mouth. Of peeling back perfect skin from delicate bone and feasting upon it. So many possibilities. Saving the thoughts for later, I address my army.

"-Elves! Men! Dwarves! The Mountain will be their tomb! To war!-"

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**SOMEWHERE ELSE**

Consciousness eludes me over the next few days like I'm the plague. I'm barely able to stay awake long enough to eat and drink what little food I can manage to throw down my gullet before my stomach protests and tries to empty itself. It wouldn't be so bad if the nausea didn't drain me even further. My fatigue and constant fitful sleep make it impossible for me to gain the time or strength to find Thorin or the rest of the company. I ask Beorn about it numerous times but his answers are always vague and I'm too worn-out to push for more. So I ignore the crippling burn I feel in my chest and try to tell myself it's just an effect of the vomiting. Even so, I have a horrible feeling that I need to rise and get some where safe, my body is slow to heal. By the time I am well and able to stay up long enough to eat a full meal, 3 weeks since the death of Smaug have passed. My wounds have finally stopped aching and despite my insistent need to regurgitate my food, I can even 'jump' short distances. Making up my mind, I decide it's time to return.

"Beorn!" I call, searching the fields and woods beyond the house, that has been my home for the past few weeks, for the bearman "Beorn, I need you to take me to Erebor. Where are you?"

"Here." He responds and I follow his voice. It leads me to a stream, the very stream that brought me here, where the man attending to a bloodied deer. The poor creature has nearly lost a leg to the wild but pity is not on my mind. The sight of scarlet does nothing to excite me, as I've seen blood countless times during the trip thus far, but the smell of it curdles my stomach and I dry heave. Beorn quickly finishes his task, washes his hands in the stream, and guides me away "Forgive me."

"It's not your fault. It's just another thing to add to my 'can't tolerate' list." I swipe my palm down my face before settling a hand on my tumbling stomach. It settles after a few deep breaths and I am able to give the skin changer my attention again. He is watching me curiously and I find it strange when he says nothing "What is it?"

"You truly do not know?" he asks. My confusion must show on my face because he sighs and walks us back to the fenced in yard and then the house. He picks up my bag and holds it out for me, then grabs a packed sack of necessities, handing me that as well "Armies are moving upon the mountain in the distance. We need to hurry if we are to arrive before them."

"Yeah." I agree. I avert my eyes as not to watch as he strips and hands me the cloths. I shove them into my bag as he changes into his true form and then climb onto his large back as I have done many times in the last few weeks. I have not been far from the skin changer since he found me, even on his patrols. Leaning into his fur, I grip the skin around the back of his neck tight enough to keep my balance but not enough to hurt him with his own strength "I'm ready."

When he feels I am secure, Beorn darts forward and we begin our ride. Riding a bear is nothing like riding a pony or horse. His back moves similar to the way a human's would when they give piggy back rides and I can feel his muscles stretch and strain with his motion. We've traveled like this a couple of times since he's been babysitting me, and I have long since found the rhythm. I focus on the passing trees as they thicken and then thin out again, each day bringing us closer to
the distant peak. No monsters attack us. No elves or dark magic. The dwarves were on foot and Beorn is faster than any pony, thus the trip is much shorter. The sky opens above us a week after our start and I can finally get a clear view of the lonely mountain.

The reach of my heart wants to urge Beorn closer but the logic in my brain understands when he halts. There, riding towards the mountain is Thranduil's army. Sliding from the bear's back, I try to think of who I should go to first. Thorin, and tell him I'm alive, or Thranduil and be done with this marriage charade. While I run the risk of Thorin refusing to let me leave again, I don't have the white gems I promised the elf king yet... Erebor first then.

"Thank you for caring for me." I stroke my friend's snout and he huffs, licking my face "I'll see you again soon. Be safe."

I take his clothes out my bag and place them beneath a nearby tree. He doesn't stop me as I take my leave; instead, watching me as I sneak as close to the mountain as I can before 'jumping' short distances the rest of the way. I'm worried... so worried that in my absence Thorin has completely fallen under the spell of goldsickness. I don't know what I'd do if he is in that state. How can I pull him out? No one could before... he had to do it himself. 'Have I protected him too much? Not enough?' I save my worries for when they are needed and keep my concentration on getting to the mountain. I land before the great entrance and watch as stones pile across it, sealing the gate once more. I cannot see anyone, but I can hear Thorin barking out orders.

THORIN POV

"This mountain was hard-won" Thia gave her life to see me returned to my home. I must protect it as I could not protect her. The gods warned me to do so but I could not and this is my punishment: Wealth in body, death in soul "I will not see it taken again."

"The people of Laketown have nothing. They came to us in need." Kili pauses in moving the debris. The lad has worked hard since his arrival but is clearly still recuperating "They lost everything."

"Do not tell me what they have lost. I know well enough of hardship or have you forgotten what you allowed that thrice damned wyrm to steal from me?" the lad lowers his head and I feel a pang in my chest for blaming him. The company informed those who were missing of Thia's condition and ever since, they have been walking on eggshells. It was neither his brother nor his fault, for I doubt they would have been able to stop her. The girl's departing warning showed her intentions clear as day. Though, I wish my kin had tried to protect her. At least a bit. Maybe then... There is no use in dwelling on the stabbing pain my chest, for it will always be whether I dwell or not "Those who have lived through dragon's fire should rejoice. They have... much to be grateful for."

"And you?" the sweetest voice I have ever heard drifts from behind the stone wall. It is like 1000 angels singing in the mountains. So clear and true that for a moment, I think I must have perished or imagined the sound but it comes again "What are you grateful for?"

"...Thia?"

"Well that's nice of you." The voice responds jovially, giggling like silver morning bells "Are you going to continue with the compliments, or let me in?"

"Thia..."

"Hi, Thorin."
"Thia!" I call madly, trying to catch a glimpse of her but the wall is in my way. Grabbing stones, I
snatch them out of place, throwing them to the side "The stones. Move them. MOVE THEM!"

The company immediately jumps into action, tearing down the wall that we'd only half finished.
While building it, there seemed to be so few that we constantly needed more. Now there are so
many and they keep me away from my only goal. A sharp tug of the right stone causes the whole
structure to collapse and the barrier is gone, leaving only a cloud of dust and nervously smiling
girl. My heart implodes repeatedly behind my ribs as I step forward. She does the same and not
soon enough, she is in my arms. I crush her to my chest, too afraid that if I let go she'll disappear
again as she has done numerous times before. I look her over for injuries and feel ashamed when
she winces during my search. Pulling her inside, I growl at anyone who attempts to come near her,
nailedly breaking Bifur's arm when he tries to touch her in greeting.

"Thorin. Thorin, calm down." She starts but I cannot bring myself to comply

"No. No, I refuse to be calm." I drag her from the room, daring anyone to follow. Pushing her
against a wall, I pin her with my gaze "How can I be calm when you have left me for so long?"

"I tried to come back -"

"For the second time since I have met you, I thought you were dead." I press our foreheads together
tightly, wanting to protect her from everything "The first time helped me realize my love for you
and the second showed me how little everything mattered without you."

"Little?"

"The world was less lively; my heart beat hardly at all; the very sun was no brighter than a
dandelion when I thought you'd..."

"I'm here." She coos, placing a hand on my cheek. Closing my eyes, I lean into her palm before
kissing the pads of her fingers "I'm here."

"... It took gaining a mountain of gold for me to understand that I had nothing if you were not here
with me." I press my forehead harder against hers until our noses touch, my eyes on her brown orbs
"What have you done to this King? Why must you play with my heart so?"

"I didn't mean to...honest. Not that you can really complain with all the heart tossing you do to
me." she softly replies, smiling and looking down at my chest "I planned to come right away, I just
got a little hurt and then I kept getting sick -"

"Smaug." I know he had something to do with her pain "And sick? Sick how?"

"I-I-I just threw up a lot." She waves her hand to dismiss the illness, not understanding the
implications "It wasn't anything serious, just kept me too weak to do anything but sleep."

"...Indeed." I wish to tell her the reason behind her stomach illness but I have only just gotten her
back and do not wish to anger the gods once more "How were you able to care for yourself?"

"Funny story actually and I'm going to keep it short." She looks up at me alluringly through her
lashes "Beorn."

"...Beorn." I repeat and inhale deeply, calming myself because the skin changer is not important
right now "You said you were hurt. Show me."

"What? No no no, I couldn't." she stumbles over her words, crossing her arms over her chest, giving
me a clear suspicion of where the wounds may lay "They are already healed and so there's, uh, no reason for you to worry, or even see them for that matter."

As much as I desire to determine that she is well with my own eyes, I do not wish to force the girl. No, I cannot force her but neither can I take her word for it. 'She hasn't the knowledge to make a correct assessment.' Now would be a good time for Oin to examine the girl, especially since she does not know she is with child. My child. OUR child. Her health is of the utmost importance to keep both herself and our child fit and happy. Grasping her wrists, I turn the girl so her back is to my chest and my back rests on the wall; placing my chin on her shoulder. I extent our hands out and splay them across her belly, protecting what is hidden, even from her, within. Even this early, I can feel the changes in her body. Thia settles into the position easily and from the way her breath slows, I know she is nearly asleep on her feet. I assist her in sitting before giving her a few instructions.

"Stay here." I tell her, heading back to the company "I will return with Oin to check on your wounds, since you will not allow me to see them. I will keep my eyes from your flesh but you must permit him to examine you."

"They are fine, Thorin." She insists slowly

"I simply wish to be certain." I give her a stern look as she all but pouts "Allow me this."

Any further resistance she offers is too low for me to hear. After a long moments hesitation, I peel myself from her side so I may return just as soon. Finding the company scattered around the treasury, I answer as few questions as possible before locating the healer. He converses with his brother and does not hear me coming. I swiftly approach, Gloom seeing me before he does.

"Oin." I touch his shoulder, bringing his attention to me "As you know, my One has returned. I need you to take a look at her."

"I've heard the news. Congratulations are in order." He responds, giving me a hard pat on the back "What am I looking for?"

"She was hurt by Smaug but insists that her wounds have healed." The room offers a soft murmur of admiration, wonder, and disbelief "I also need you to check the health of the child. Make sure it was not harmed in the ordeal."

"Aye. It should an easy enough task."

"And you mustn't let her know she is pregnant." I continue giving him instructions as we head back "She will know when she's meant to."

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**THIA'S POV**

All that 'jumping' has tired me out to the point where I just want to curl up in a ball and sleep for days. The only thing stopping me is the fact that that is all I've been doing lately. I place my back against a pillar and lean onto it, telling myself that I'm only resting my eyes for a moment. The next thing I know, someone is patting me gently awake.

"Thia?" I crack open my eyes and offer a small smile to the king. He has brought Oin with his medical bag, a bit of food, and a pile of blankets in the shape of a cot resting nearby. They must have set it up while I was asleep- resting my eyes. We make our way over and he indicates for me to take a seat "Sit."
"Welcome back, lassie. I hear ye've had quite the adventure." the healer comments while waiting for me to settle down "Let us begin."

"Yes, I suppose thats true." Thorin settles behind me once more and I'm remind of one of those baby birthing classes you see on TV. It's an odd thought and I shake it free "Let's get this over with."

"I'm going to ask ye a few questions. Answer them as truthfully as ye can, aye?" I nod, hopping to get through this quicker than last time "Alright, where do yer wounds lay, child?"

"Across my chest." Easy enough "And my arm. Upper right."

"Mmmm." He hums, stroking his beard "I'll be needing ye to remove yer shirt and lie back."

"... Do I have to?"

"I'm afraid so, lassie." He offers a reassuring smile that doctors hope make you feel better, but doesn't "Ye may use yer shirt to cover yer eyes if ye don't wish to look. Thorin will not look upon ye either."

"Yeah…” I agree. Forcing my mind not to acknowledge that the monarch has already seen those bits. Has already touched those bits too... Has already had his mouth- 'Shut up shut up! Not now brain!' Despite that mental reminder, as much as I don't want the healer seeing my goodies, I want to watch him looking at my goodies even less "Yeah, I think I'll do that."

Taking off my shirt, I cover my face with it quickly and fall back against the blankets after Thorin shifts out of the way. I use his lap as a pillow and peak up at him to make sure his eyes are closed. His thick lashes fall across the tops of his cheeks like little blankets. They aren't girly but the are perfect. They have to be because... well... he's as perfect as perfect can get. Whats a little madness in the family count for anyway these days? I grit my teeth against the feel of Oin's thick fingers suddenly touching my scars. Although none of the wounds touch them, my breasts are horribly sore but I figure it is just the proximity of the cuts. Each time he gets too close to one, I have to swallow a biting remark for him to be more careful.

"Sensitive?" He asks suddenly, after a particularly hard twitch

"Um... yeah. Yeah, a little."

"Nausea, increased sleep and hunger?" He continues rapid fire "Weight gain?"

"All of... the above." I answer slowly "What does this have to do with the cuts in my chest?"

"Stressors. That's all." He then goes back to doing his thing "Nothing to worry about."

I silently count all the pokes, hm's, and pauses, each time hoping it's the last. I flinch suddenly when the healer starts pressing around my lower abdomen. I haven't any cuts down there and I can't imagine what he expects to find. Thorin runs his hand through my hair, humming gently and it calls to me like a familiar tune but I know i've never heard it. Even so, the very words are on the tip of my tongue as if I've sung it countless times. I'm tempted to ignore the healer's touch but when it happens again I'm compelled to ask.

"O... Oin?" I call, trying not to sound embarrassed. My lack of activity as of late has caused my middle to start developing a pouch and I'd very much like to keep it out of focus unless its high necessary "What are you doing?"
"Do you feel any pain here?"

"Uh, no..." his pushes in different angles, each with a negative answer, until I have to ask again "Oin what-"

"Checking to make sure nothing was missed." He answers vaguely. I let him continue, unsure of what he's looking for but knowing that he has more medical knowledge than I. A few more strange prods later and he seems satisfied "Ye are lucky indeed. Aside from those fancy new scars ye've gotten, ye are in the same state ye were before ye met the thrice damned dragon."

"That is good news." Thorin grins strangely, keeping his eyes closed as I sit up "I would hate for you to be... in any other state."

"Um... yeah. I'm glad to hear it. Thanks for looking me over." I thank the healer as I put on my shirt and yawn openly "I'm so sleepy lately."

"Your body knows what it needs," Thorin answers, somehow getting me under the covers and tucking me in. He should teach a class on it "Sleep. You are safe."

"I want to be there when he comes but I guess..." I yawn again, snuggling down "Only... a few..... minutes couldn't hurt."

"Then sleep." I nod but can't let go of his coat. In fact, I'm tugging it so hard, it's probably permanently wrinkled. Chuckling lowly, the king runs his knuckles against mine "Yes?"

"Do you think...Could you just, um..." I stammer, trying to say what I want but too embarrassed to do so. I want him near. I don't know why but I NEED him to be with me and it hurts to think of him going away "Could you... Do you think you could... I..."

"Thia?"

"Stay with me!" I blurt out and then grimace at the pleading in my voice. Clearing my throat, I try to salvage my adulthood "Just until I fall asleep... Please?"

"Ah, my love..." he whispers, bring my hand to his lips gently "I was already planning to."

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Hello everybody! Sorry I'm late, this chapter was a doosey to edit. Lets give a warm applause to my commenters for the wonderful reviews! To each of you, I offer one actions you would like to see happen before the story finishes. *It has to happen before the movie ends, not after. Thanks so much. Until next time!
Chapter 73

Thia's breathing evens out before long and I know she has fallen asleep. She truly is exhausted, as is the way of motherhood. After getting a clear report from Oin, I am glad to hear that both my One and our child are in good health.

"The lass is healing well from her brush with the drake. She is lucky to have escaped with mere scars... How they became scars in such a short time is... unimaginable." he begins packing his tools in confused wonder. I do not completely understand it either but this can only be seen as a gift "She will be in need of rest, much more than is usually needed."

"Why?" I ask, worried over what the reason could be "If both are healthy, what is the matter?"

"I know ye fear for her." Oin places on hand over her belly once more, confirming what he already knows "The child... is growing fairly quick, which leads me to believe that it is more dwarf than man."

"I have no interest either way." As long as it is healthy, it matters not which of us it takes after. Still... "What would that mean?"

"Regardless of the child's race, the lass is undoubtedly a daughter of man and a small one at that." he sighs, pulling away from the girl "The disproportion between mother and child with be great and the strain of the pregnancy will take its toll."

"...Will she be alright?" Dwarven pregnancies are few and fair between. I remember how it was seen as a miracle when Dis gave birth to Kili so close to the time after she birthed Fili. Both gave her their fair share of burdens during the carrying months and birthing but she pulled through. Thia could very well suffer because of her race "She will not be harmed?"

"It is too early to tell." he answers honestly and I cannot fault him for it "Find comfort in knowing that other than the child's size, I can see no other need for concern."

I thank him for his assistance and dismiss the healer. After giving me firm instructions not to disturb her sleep, Oin leaves. I lay beside the girl, pulling her into my arms and basking in her presence. I snort softly upon, once again, finding another's scent on her. 'No doubt it belongs to the skin changer.' As much as I desire to fully engulf my scent around her, I know she needs her rest. An extended replication of our child's creation would be preferable. Instead, I place my cloak over her slim shoulders. She shifts closer to me in her sleep as I wrap my arms around her, feeling her heart beat rhythmically. I'm content to hold her like this forever; my One in my arms with our child safely resting between us. I indulge in the moment that has escaped me numerous times for as long
as I am able. Eyeing her bare throat, I'm reminded of the white jewels coveted by the elf scum. 'They would look perfect around her neck.' A beautiful spit in the face of that rat for all he has done. I remind myself to present them to her when she wakes before pressing my nose into her hair and breathing deeply. The moment is not to last though, for before long the sound of hoves beat against the gate bridge and I know I must leave my family. Ensuring that she is safe, I secure my weapon and reluctantly head for the gates.

I know I'm asleep but I also know that this isn't a dream due to the familiarity of the location. Yeah, I'm in an alternate state of consciousness but I've been to this dining hall before. 'Why can't we meet in a living room or something?' I briskly walk forward, not bothering to look around at the décor this time. Making my way to the large table, I greet the imposing occupants.

"It's been a while since we last spoke." I nod to the eight guardians "I hope you are all well."

"We are." They return simultaneously "Yourself?"

"Other than dying, I seem to have a new gift that I cannot place."

"Oh?" Mahal responds, though I have a strong suspicion that he knows exactly what I'm taking about "Tell us, that we may help you."

"Alright then. My entire body has been glowing at random times lately." I explain just to keep the conversation moving "It's happened twice already but I can't think of any gift that it could fit into that was given to me."

"That is not entirely true." Yavanna cuts in, as I 'jump' to the table for better access. Knocking over a salt shaker, I use it as a makeshift seat "It is... the gift of a gift. It comes from within you."

"That's... not really helpful at all." I blink rapidly as she laughs softly. The group joins in with her infectious laughter and I toe the spilled salt in embarrassment "Am I missing something? I don't mean to be abrupt but I'm really too tired to play the guessing game."

"It is why you were brought here. We had to wait to inform you of its success until after you healed." I watch the group as the exchange satisfied expressions "Your duty is clearly causing an increased need for sleep."

"You can say that again." I rub my eyes sleepily, not catching the entire conversation "I thought it would be easy enough to save Thorin and the boys but they are making it harder than it has to be."

"Thorin?" Manwë speaks up, looking well and truly worried "You believe this to be about the Dwarf King?"

"Isn't it?"

"We have called upon you to inform you that your duty has been fulfilled." He continues slowly, looking me straight in the eyes "You have been successful in saving the line of Durin."

"How can that be if I haven't stopped them from dying in the battle?" I argue

"I told you she did not understand..." Nienna murmurs softly with tears in her eyes. She glares at the other vala in watery anger before gazing down at me in pity "You were... Your ultimate purpose here... You were not meant to save the current hiers or king..."

"That doesn't make sense."
"You see-

"No. I mean that really doesn't make ANY sense! Then why did you bring me here? You asked me to save the line of Durin." I frown deeply, not bothering trying to hide my annoyance "I haven't done that yet so how have I done my part? Is there some Durin that I've saved that I don't know about?"

"… It would seem so." Varda exhales and exchanges a wary glance with his lovely wife "It seems there is some confusion as to what your goal was to be and-

"Does it matter?" Ulmo interrupts with gruff scoff that I do not appreciate in the least "With our aid, she has completed her task."

"A task that I seem to have gotten completely wrong yet somehow still fulfilled." I cross my arms over my chest, not enjoying being left in the dark "What have I done?"

"… I gave you a gift. Do you remember what it was?" Yavanna asks softly

"Yes. I was to protect the live's of those I love until they reach their full potential." I answer swiftly

"Yes. It was to aid you in carrying the fate-"

"I know. I remind myself enough as is." I cut off "I carry the fate of the Durin's like a sack of grain on my back."

"No, not on your back." She lets out a breath and looks at her husband for confirmation. He nods and she focuses on me once more "We asked you not to save the line of Durin by carrying their fate on your back… but in your womb."

I blankly stare ahead, sleep completely eradicated from my brain. I'm unhappy that I'm not a fire breathing dragon. I'm extremely unhappy that I'm not a fire breathing dragon. If I was a fire breathing dragon, I'd melt the hopeful look on each of their faces. I step away from the green lady as she reaches out a hand to comfort me. I shake my head violently and the room wobbles on its axis as I try not to hyperventilate but fail miserably. I stand and bend over, placing a hand on my stomach and clenching my teeth to steady myself. The group murmurs amongst themselves but I don't even try to catch the words they exchange. The walls begin shaking and even in my foggy mind, I understand that this specific realm is probably dependent on my emotional state. 'Which is shot to hell right now.' Not knowing what else to do, I sit back down, unintentionally completely covering myself in salt and begin to rock myself back and forth.

"It's not fair."

"We thought you understood what was being asked and wanted to be the first to congratulate you-"

"That's not what you said I needed to do!" I refrain from banging my head instead, flexing my fist like I'm carrying a stress ball. It's not helping. I've been so careful ALL my life and this... this can not be happening. It can't because it... it... "It's not fair..."

"You agreed. We needed to be the first to tell you of your success." Mandos coldly speaks, repeating the earlier statement "It is why the dwarf king was instructed not to inform you of your condition when our guardian sister, in her over excitement of the success, told him."

"He… he knew?" And that bastard didn't tell me?! Talk about trust issues "When did this whole… Pregnant thing…. Happen?"
"Yes he knew…"

"And he didn't tell me..."

"It occurred in Laketown." the green lady offers a sheepish smile, trying to pull me along in the conversation and away from my rising panic attack. She reaches toward me but I scuttle away from her touch. Her hand fists sadly before she clears her throat "I do not think I have to say more on that point."

"No. Um, no. I've got... I remember." Refusing to think about the night, I try to continue gaining information "A-A-A-and the whole body glowing …. What is that?"

"It is the pulse of your child's soul offering you strength." I open my mouth to mention that it happened before I got freakin' magically 'pregnant' but Nienna beats me to it "Though the body was created in Laketown, the soul has resided within you since you agreed to this task."

"That's moderately disturbing."

"I agree."

"But I… I didn't agree to this!"

I protest in a high pitch angry at their poor instruction giving. How am I supposed to do ANYTHING with a baby in tow? I need a job and the child will need constant care and I didn't even get to finish college. Diapers and clothes and bottles and oh my God! My parents are never going to believe this! I slap my hand against my temple and the other over my mouth. Do…Do I even get to go home? Do I want to? Can I? Am I supposed to take Thorin's baby from him, because I could never just leave it here! I bite my lip at the questions tumbling in my brain but settle on a simple explanation.

"…Why?"

"It was meant to be this way. Though, you were supposed to understand the ultimate goal." Nienna consoles from a distance, not trying to touch me as her fellow guardian had "You were meant to fall in love, marry, and have your children. You completed all these requirements..."

"Not in that order..."

"Well... no..."

"I couldn't accept that I was in love and I married someone else and now I've gotten pregnant by a guy who isn't my husband. This is NOT ok." My voice doesn't raise above a whisper and I'm not even sure they can hear me over the cracks forming in the wall "This isn't… How am… What am I supposed to do now?"

"Protect-"

"I swear to GOD if you say that one more time…” I don't finish the threat because I have nothing to finish it with. I don't know what I'll do, just that it won't be enjoyable for anyone involved. Climbing to my feet, I slip from the table and head towards what I perceive to be the exit. Shaking the salt free of my clothes, I wobbly move forward "I have to go."

"Where?" Oromë finally speaks. He had been a silent attendee, listening but never contributing "Your duty is finished. There is nothing left for you. It is time to return to your-"
"NOT until I've done what I came here for."

"And you have."

"No... No because there is the only reason I agreed to your poorly explained plan." I reply, not bothering to look back "I'm going to save them and by them, I actually mean THORIN, FILI, AND KILI. Just in case you're confused!"

Throwing open the doors, I feel good when they collapse on their hinges. The blinding light dampens my spirits a bit but then I'm lying down and I know I've returned. I'm alone and I'm grateful for that because if Thorin was here... oh the things I would cut off. Never in a million years did I think THIS is what they meant. Never in a billion years did I think I'd be forcefully married and then pregnant with another man's child. Oh gosh, I've got to tell Legolas. Tears begin trickling down my cheeks as I hide my face in the blankets. A few sniffs later and a glow begins to radiate from my abdomen spreading slowly across my whole body and this time I know what it is. 'At least it's empathetic, so that's good.'

"Uh. Hey there."

Tentatively, I lift my shirt and begin poking lightly at the skin that stretches over my lower stomach. To my amazement, the glow offers a little pulse in response. Despite only being a month in existence, the child can respond so clearly. MY child, I guess I should say instead. I roll my eyes, trying to pretend like I didn't just fall in love. Considering how long it took me to even admit my attraction to Thorin, one would think I'd need at least an hour to adjust to the idea of becoming a mommy. But I don't. That worries me but I just can't help the warm fuzzy feeling in my chest.

"It's only been a month but you can already do that? Impressive." I talk quietly, not sure what else I can do. All I know about motherhood starts after the baby is born. All I know now is morning sickness, sleep on your side, and talk. So I talk "You're really strong aren't you? Good, because your going to need that strength if you plan to be mine."

The glow recedes to settle around my middle as I continue speaking. It's almost like the baby is actually talking back to me. I'm not sure if I should be worried or excited about that little fact or if its all in my head. All of them at once, I suppose. It's a surprise, I won't lie, but I'm not mad at the child. How can I get mad at someone for just... existing? It's more my fault for not asking enough questions and then letting Thorin... yeah.

"I'm sorry I freaked out. It's just that your existence is kind of unexpected and... scary." The glow dims significantly and I hurry to explain "B-b-but you shouldn't be scared. Because no matter how scared I am, I'll always protect you, ok?"

The glimmer evens out and I smile down at my belly button in relief. My mommy and me moment is ruined by shouting voices and I'm brought back down to earth. 'Well, middle earth.' Escaping from under the covers, I fix my clothes but pause at Thorin's coat. I take in his scent against my better judgement, annoyed up the wazoo by how much comfort it brings me. Grumbling, I drape it over my shoulders and search out the disturbance. I find the company quickly enough, and stand behind them while listening to the argument. It isn't done through a hole in the wall this time but the mental barrier that Thorin is throwing up is still pretty intense and not in a good way.

"A bargain was struck!" Bard shouts down at the dwarf from a top his horse

"A bargain? What choice did we have but to barter our birthright for blankets and food? To ransom our future in exchange for our freedom. You call that a fair trade?" the dwarf throws back. It's not a fair trade, I agree with the dwarf on that but I also know that he did agree to it and a war isn't going
to fix that "Surely you jest!"

"Thorin, stop being so obstinate." I call out softly, catching the attention of 15 guys. I shift from foot to foot nervously, silently thanking the hobbit when he rushes to my side "You can't go to war over something so small."

"Lady Thia." Bard calls, sliding from his horse and coming towards the gate. He looks happy enough to see me and I'm honestly ecstatic that he's alright as well. I begin to step forward to meet him halfway "I'm am glad-

"-that she defeated the dragon while you received all the glory, Bard the dragon slayer." My motion to greet the man is halted when Thorin takes hold of my arm, firmly moving Bilbo away with a brush of his hand. I slowly look at the king and see a spark of what I've feared the entire trip. I can immediately see that its not as developed as it was in the movie but it's there and that's a problem "You can't even claim your name."

"I never claimed that title." He argues back, shifting his gaze between the two of us

"You didn't fight very hard against it either." Thorin continues coldly "Tell me, why should I honor such terms?"

"Thorin-" I attempt to intervene

"Let the man speak, Thia." He orders without facing me, simply tucking me under his arm to mold me into his side like a baby bird. Based on his mannerisms, I don't think now is the best time to fight him for dominance "He endangered the lives of my kin and now asks for payment. I wish to hear what great reason he has come up with. Tell me, dragon slayer, why I must honor the pact."

"Because you gave us your word..." the man tries for what I know will be the last time. I think quickly to try and keep the opportunity from passing by "Does that mean nothing to you?"

"It means everything!" I shout, grasping Thorin's shirt front to keep him from turning away. He watches me critically but thankfully does not pull out of my grasp "My word; It's the only thing that kept me from leaving no matter how awful your actions were towards me."

"And what of our love?" he asks leaning into my ear to speak lowly "Did that not keep you?"

"You had a hard time showing you could tolerate, let alone love me."

"And now?"

"...Love can make me want to stay, but it can not do anymore than that." I try to make him see reason. Not on love, for its a tricky business, but on his promise to the man before us "I have given my word just as you gave yours, and no one could keep me from fulfilling it."

"You are right. I also gave my word to protect you and I will." He places a quick peck on my forehead before stepping away from me "From orcs, men, elves, and even yourself."

"Myself? What's that supposed to mean?" he waves his hand and Dwalin suddenly appears at my side, gently pushing me back into the mountain. He is careful enough not to allow me to touch his skin and gain any strength to fight him "Wha... Dwalin, stop it! Thorin, what are you doing?!

"What needs to be done, my love. Bard, Be gone!" he shouts at the shocked man, as I'm dragged deeper inside "Ere our arrows fly."
Thanks ye kindly for the reviews! I kindly read them... kindly. The story is winding tighter and tighter. **Clarification:** Thia did not know she was supposed to get pregnant but that was the Valar's intention the whole time. They basically got tired of waiting for her to get down and dirty with Thorin and decided that the Laketown scene was close enough to a photo finish. They wanted to be the ones to tell Thia first but Yvanna got super excited, went behind their back, and told Thorin anyway. They wanted to send her home but she is not willing to go. Why her willingness matters may or not be explained in THIS story but it will be addressed in the sequel. Yes, there will be a sequel. Until next time!
Chapter 74

"Dwalin, let go of me!"

"Ye know I can't do that, lassie." He responds, ignoring my struggles as we wait for Thorin to descend from the entry way. Bilbo darts to and fro in a frenzy making very valid arguments, which Thorin ignores all of "There is no need to get worked up. Calm yerself and be still."

"Calm!" I shriek at a pitch I didn't know I could pull off. Jerking my arms out of his grasp becomes my goal in life but holding on appears to be his passion "How can I remain CALM when your buddy over there is starting wars and having people drag me around the place for no good reason?!

"There is a good reason: you are safe in here." Thorin answers, finally joining our group. I glare at Dwalin's hands but he waits for Thorin's 'OK' before releasing my arms "I will not honor an agreement made under duress."

"Your biggest stressor was because you were robbing the place!" I wave my arms wildly, pointing at Kili "You only got caught because you gave a bunch of heavy stuff to the sickest guy around. Oh, the horror!"

"Hey!" the brunette calls, affronted "I wasn't THAT sick."

"Oh please, you could barely stand." I fold my arms across my chest but think better of it as it offers a pang of soreness. Dropping them instead to my sides, I continue my rant "That deal was made by your own free will, even if you all barely stayed the night."

"Do not burden yourself over such things, Thia." The dwarf might as well have said 'don't worry your pretty little head about it.' He extents his hand to grasp my own but I recoil instantly. He pauses for a moment, giving me a queer look, and then repeats the action only to receive the same result. He huffs out a breath, looking at me with a cross between mild amusement and annoyance "Will you not let me touch you?"

"My mother warned me about this. She said if you hold hands with a boy, your clothes will fall off and that's where babies come from." Granted, I was 5 and didn't believe her for a moment, but still. Oddly enough, I probably should have heeded her warning based on my current situation "From now on, you keep your hands and high flying seeds away from me."

The group is so quiet that you can hear a gold pin drop, making me think that they missed the joke. Thorin looks just about heartbroken and Balin is giving him a death stare. The first sound to break
the silence is a giggle from Bofur, followed by a cackle from Nori. It doesn't take long for the entire foyer to break out in a collective rumbling fit of laughter. 'I meant to lighten the mood but this is a little much.' I gape at them, beginning to think that they've all gone bonkers.

"It's too late for you, lass." Bofur wheezes, unable to catch his breath "His seed already flew right up into."

"Yeah, thanks, I know." I whack the vulgar dwarf on the back and he crumples to the floor, laughing

"Do you?" Balin asks, stepping up beside me. From his place, he is able to block Thorin from getting any closer to me "I am ashamed to admit that I did not see this problem earlier."

"Problem? I had a nice little visit with the Valar during my nap." Massaging my temples, I try to rub away the headache I feel coming on "They need to work on giving out clearer instructions. Congratulations, Thorin."

"It is worth more than mere congratulations." He approaches me once more but I'm having none of it and apparently neither is Balin. He literally hisses at the king to back off. I can feel Thorin's aggravation rising but I just don't want to be touched right now. As much as I desired his closeness only hours before, is how greatly I want it gone now. I sure hope this is a momentary fluctuation and not a long lasting pregnancy hormone thing. He glowers but doesn't try to come any closer again "What is the matter?"

"Nothing." I say, turning from the assembly and walking away "I just… I'm just a little confused."

"I-"

"I will speak with the lass. You have taken enough advantage of her naivety." Balin cuts him off harshly, following me as I return to my blanket pile. Why Balin is so angry with Thorin is beyond me. We settle in comfortable silence as we sit until Balin breaks it "It's alright to feel confused."

"You say that but I don't think it is." I argue, fussing with the blankets "I barely understand what's going on but I know things are going to get worse before they get better."

"I understand." He pats my knee gently and it somewhat soothes my frayed nerves "You didn't even know what was being done to you, poor girl."

"I don't like being left in the dark." I say in frustration, simply expressing my confusion "I just wish someone had clearly stated what was happening."

"And Thorin should have." I look up in surprise at the irate faced dwarf. Thorin couldn't have warned me not to make the deal, being that he didn't know, so what does Balin mean? "I know he was raised better than to take advantage of young ladies."

"I… I don't think I understand."

"Allow me to explain, hm?" Accepting that every bit of knowledge counts, I bob my head in agreement. The old dwarf settles down next to me like an old grandpa and clears his throat "When two people love each other very much, they may wish to take their relationship to a physical level."

"… Huh?"

"Do you remember the night in Lake town when Dwalin and I found Thorin in your room?"
"Yes, b-b-but Balin-"

"There was something hard in his trousers. It is called an erection. Males get them when they are… excited."

"Oh God…" I pull a horrified face at the misunderstanding occurring but it's like a car accident in slow motion " Oh my God. "

"It's alright my dear. It is natural and you need not fear it, ONCE YOU ARE MARRIED." He puts so much emphasis on the last bit that I'd laugh if I didn't want to die so badly "The story your mother told you was a simplified version of the truth. After marital vows are exchanged, the couple can become one. Do you know what that means?"

"I think so." I squeak out

"Allow me to clarify. The act of becoming one involves two very important parts of a male and a female's body." I keep telling myself not to get up and run but I think I'd really like to get up and run. NOW. This TALK is not one I ever wanted to have again "A male has a sword and a female has a shealth."

"Uh, Balin…"

"Please stop interrupting, my dear. It's rude." I snap my jaw shut with an audible click but lift my eyebrow comically as he continues with elaborate hand gestures. Shoot me now… Please "When a male puts his sword inside a female's shealth… well ahem… sparks may ensue and the couple can be blessed with a child."

"Oh…" I reply in a whisper

"Now, do you have any questions?"

"No…" I murmur, wanting the conversation to be over. I think on Thorin and my own lack of sheath diving and in my distraction, actually speak aloud "He didn't put his sword in my shealth but I'm still pregnant."

"Yes. Yes, I suppose that is true." He coughs into his hand before running his fingers through his beard "It was the Valar's will."

"Ah." He just pulled a 'because I said so,' planet guardian edition. I guess wise men know when to cut their losses and pull rank. Time for me to be a wise man and take an exit "Thank you for explaining… all that… for me."

"Think nothing of it." Ohhhhh, I plan to forget the whole thing. He smiles at me warmly, though his relief over the conclusion of the talk is almost as blatant as my own "Now, you appear to be aware of the child. Is it because of your visit with the Valar?"

"Mhmmm." I bounce my head, eyeing the bread he takes out of his coat. He breaks off a piece, offering it to me. I accept and nibble on it, just in case my stomach starts a riot "They were kind enough to explain why it happened."

"Did they now?" he wonders and I 'hm' in agreement once more. It takes me a couple of seconds to notice that he is silently watching me with an expectant look "What was the reason, lass?"

"Oh, you… want to know the reason…" I'm getting real sick and tired of giving half-truths but the whole truth is such a dangerous thing "Insurance. To further the line just in case… you know."
"In case they did not survive." He concludes with a sullen expression

"Pretty crazy, huh?"

"Mmmm. The dragon has been vanquished, nearly by your own hand. The threat is gone." I refuse to meet his eyes and wise dwarf that he is, he catches on "They are no longer in jeopardy... Lass?"

"The dragon is gone." I correct lowly

"What have you seen?" he asks with urgency but I don't answer "Thia, what did you see?"

"The Valar brought me here for a reason, that reason is here." I gesture vaguely to my stomach "Regardless of what happened or happens, ensuring the line was my task, not that I knew."

"I do not quite understand..."

"It doesn't matter anymore because I'm personally here for another reason, and that reason is my own."

"Lass-"

"Just trust me, alright?" I plead with the dwarf "Just trust me to do what I've been planning to do since before I even met you."

"...What of the gold sickness?" I'm glad he has moved on but this new topic is similarly difficult to conduct "What shall be done of it? I have already seen it in his eyes."

"As have I. I'm thankful that it is not nearly as severe as was originally intended." I sigh, rummaging through my bag for something to change into "When he hits rock bottom, he will crawl out of that hole. But he has to want to leave and... Well... I don't think anyone can save him but himself."

"I understand." I nod to elder dwarf and he offers a nod of his own before looking towards my bag "What are you searching for?"

"Clothes. I want to change."

"Would you like to bathe?"

"You guys have baths here?" I turn to him so quickly, I nearly break my neck in the process. He smiles genuinely and offers to show me them in the morning "Oh please oh please oh please. I haven't had real bath since Rivendell!"

"Did they not give you any in the elven kingdom?"

"Yeah but that doesn't count." I sneer at the memory. Taking a bath with an elf prince chained to your wrist isn't the most relaxing thing to do "Someone was always there. Rivers don't count either because I had to share with the fish."

"Your points are most valid."

He leaves me to sleep for the night and I quickly bed down, excited for a bath. Morning can't come soon enough and I'm super pumped to be clean. We climb down a large number of stairs, careful not fall down any. About 10 minutes later, we arrive at the bathing chambers and it reminds me of a Japanese bath house. It's huge, able to seat at least fifty comfortably. The water is steaming heavenly, inviting me into its depths. I sigh dreamily as Balin hands me a towel.
"How do they…"

"The forges are directly below us. They keep the water heated and the pools are replenished by a river running down the mountain."

"Lucky."

"As always, you are correct. Take your time." He walks towards the door, gripping the heavy handles to close them "I will inform the others not to disturb you. Is an hours time acceptable?"

"It's most gracious, thank you." He closes the door and I'm alone in the great bathing hall. I'm almost giddy and the only warning I give myself is not to slip or drown. Stripping quickly, I test the water's temperature with my big toe and find it a few degrees short of a hot tub. Placing my clothes a good distance away, to avoid any splashing, I walk to the edge and jump in cannonball style "Geronimo!"

Who doesn't like a good bath? I'll keep it short because I have another chapter coming out for you soon if I'm feeling up to it. Thank you for your reviews. Until next time!
DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson’s stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 75

"Rubber ducky, you're the one
You make bath time lots of fun
Rubber ducky I'm awfully fond of you
Woo woo bee doh"

I splash around the bath, exploring the corners lazily, between cleansing my body, as I sing one of my favorite Sesame street tunes. I may not have a rubber ducky but I can still sing about it. Because let’s be honest, who DOESN’T want a rubber ducky? That guy was freaking awesome.

"Rubber ducky, joy of joys
When I squeeze you, you make noise
Rubber ducky you're my very best friend, its true
Doo doo doo dooo, doo doo"

Leaning backwards, I dip my hair in water, rinsing it out. 'I'd kill for some loreal, because I'm worth it.' I doubt anything that may be in here hasn't expired decades ago and I'd rather not have my hair fall out. Plain water will have to do. My hair has grown significantly since I entered this world; what used to be tight shoulder length coils, now reaches the bottom of my shoulder blades in bountiful curls. Less messy, more work. The water dripping down my back tickles as I continue my song with gusto.

"Rubber ducky you're so fine
And I'm lucky that you're mine
Rubber ducky I'm awfully fond of
Rubber ducky I'm awfully fond of
Rubber ducky I'm awwwwwwwfullllllly fo000oooo0000ond o0oo00of y-"

"You."

A deep voice, that could never have come from me, finishes the song. Without even turning, I
know exactly who it is. I'm more than a little irritated the he didn't mention he was here. I would have at least TRIED to sing on key. I sink into the water until my shoulders are submerged and turn to the grinning dwarf.

"Thorin, what are you doing here?"

"Watching you bathe." He answers without remorse

"You can't just enter someone's bath and watch them, you perv!"

"I was here first." He retorts from his place "You snuck into my bath."

"Wha… I…” I would have heard the door open if he came in after, meaning he isn't lying. Does that make an idiot, clueless, or just plain dumb? I can't pick thus, I project my insecurities and airheadedness onto the king "You could have said something!"

"I didn't want to interrupt you lovely song." He glides through the water towards me and I quickly scramble backwards. He grins wickedly and I try not to pout. I'm a married pregnant woman for goodness sake! I can take on a naked dwarf "What is a rubber ducky?"

"A duck, made of rubber." I say hastily, not wishing to explain while nude "You had your bath now go, so I can enjoy mine."

"If you're sure?" I nod robustly and he shrugs. That was easy… too easy. Nothing has ever been easy with this guy "If you insist."

The dwarf then stands, freeing himself from the water and as my eyes go wide, I know why he gave in so easily. If there was a picture definition for sexy, this guy would be it. How he can pull of majestic while being butt-booty-naked is lost on me. *I'm not drooling, its sweat.* The fact that he knows that I know that he knows that he's mouth watering is just as enticing as any physical attraction. Confidence has always been a deal breaker for me and he. Has. Got. IT.

The water rides low on his hips like an irresistible pair of jeans that show just enough of his pelvis to be dangerous. Wisps of hair run from his belly button down to disappear into the water that is covered in visual defying steam. I don't need to guess what's down below, as my eyes trail up his ripped stomach to rest on a god like chiseled chest. My fingers itch to trace every muscle and I pull my bottom lip between my teeth while gripping my thigh to stay in place. I was never one for chest hair but my good Lord in heaven, it works really well on his stony pecs. My gaze lingers on him for a moment longer before chuckling jerks my attention to his amused face.

"You can't just enter someone's bath and watch them." He throws my words back at me and I snatch my gaze away from him completely "It's flattering to know I can make you break your own rules."

"Yeah, whatever." I snort, glaring a hole into the wall "Now shoo."

"I'd have to get out the water and I haven't a towel." I groan at his excuse, knowing that neither of us can exit the bath. Thorin would look if I did and I'm not sure I wouldn't sneak a peak either "If you really want me to go…."

"Just stay over there, ok?" I slide back until I hit the wall "We can get out when Balin comes back."

"Mmmm." he sounds, not agreeing or disagreeing. The steam is still thick and I can't see him very well but I can hear him "He gave you an hour. You have more or less a half hour left."
"Yeah. I know. Thanks." He then starts singing his rendition of 'Rubber ducky' but it's a terribly romantic version

"Thia honey, you're my One
You make bath time oh so fun
Thia honey I'm terribly fond of you
You know it's true."

"How can you remember the words, I only sang them once!" I yell at the opposite side of the tub but when he chuckles it seems like he's a lot closer. I move towards the center, glaring around.
"Thorin?"

"My sweet Thia, joy of joys
When I squeeze you, you make noise"

"Ah!" the dwarf suddenly appears behind me, wrapping an arm around my waist and giving it a light squeeze. He blows into my ear and I grip his arm tightly to will away an involuntary gasp but I can't stop the violent shiver. My back rests on his chest, similar to the way it did in Lake town but I refuse to think of all the bad things I want to do to him "You shouldn't be over here…"

"My One, Thia, don't waste time-
Stop… you're messing up the song."

"I'm so lucky that you're mine"

"Don't twist my words, I never said that."

"My One, true treasure, I'm awfully fond of…"

"…." I know what he's waiting for but I don't know if I have the right to say it. Still, I know that to not take his offering would hurt too much to admit. I can give him this much, can't I? "…You. There, I said it. Happy?"

The reaction is instantaneous. Thorin drags me backwards through the water, while I try not to trip and end up bashing my head on floor. When we stop, the dwarf lifts and swings me to sit on the edge of the bath. My legs are the only thing in the water and that's way more exposure than I'm comfortable with. I attempt to slide back into the bath but then there is the problem of Thorin stepping between my thighs. His chest burns against mint belly and I pant at the strange thrill that runs up my spine.

"W-w-w-w- woah there!" I exclaim, pushing against his shoulders with my hands. I'm not sure if I'm touching him out of need or asking him to leave. I like him, I love him, I lust for him. I can admit that, to myself at least, but sex? I just can't "Thorin, what are you doing?"

"You are unsure of where children come from." He rumbles huskily, taking hold of my wrists and using them to keep me in place as he kisses my nose. I know he is purposely not kissing me and I almost wish he would "I am going to show you."

"No, that's ok!" I shake my wrists loose but have nowhere I'd want to go. No, I-I mean, no where I can go. If I go backwards, I have my butt stuck in the air and if I go forward, I'll slip right onto
his… The temptation is so great that I go with my only option, despite its awkwardness. I clamber over his shoulder, intending to jump like a flying squirrel into the pool "I know where they come from. Besides, Balin already gave me the sex talk. Swords, sheaths, sparks, and all that good stuff."

"Good." He replies after I surface from my flying leap. He grabs my ankle, pulling me back and wrapping my legs around his waist. His hips rest beside my knees and I nearly go under, imagining how close we are cutting it here. Not liking the prospect of drowning, I've no choice but to tighten my hold on him and wave my arms at my sides to keep afloat "Then I do not need to worry of taking advantage of you."

"You're doing a lot more than that!" I sputter as water slips over my face. His rough hands slip under my back, lifting me out of the water and if it weren't for a metaphorical sword being pressed along the crack of my behind, I might have thanked him. The heated length is a source of much inner turmoil for me, as I can't figure out my need and distain for the dwarf "It's touching me!"

"It can do more than that." He smirks into my neck and I can't even say that I fight leaning my head back to give him better access "Allow me to show you."

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**THORIN'S POV**

The moment she admits her feelings is the moment my playful demeanor shatters. I was pleasantly surprised when Thia entered the bathing chambers but when she began to undress, I was stunned. Even through the thick steam I could see my One as if a beacon of the purest light surrounded her. She is beautiful, every inch, curve, and scar. My stupor lasted long enough for her to jump into the pool, slipping beneath the surface and becoming hidden from my eyes.

Even after she began singing off key, I was enchanted by her blatant joy in something as simple as a bath. When I finally touched her skin, I could barely hold my light hearted façade but once she says the words I need to hear, I can pretend no longer. I guide her to the edge of the pool and place her upon it, feasting my eyes on her bare body. I step forward to stand between her knees and nearly groan when she slides along my front.

"W-w-w-w- woah there!" she shouts, smoothing her soft hands along my chest. It is a fight that wages itself within her. Her hands both push me away and refused to let me go "Thorin, what are you doing?"

"You are unsure of where children come from." I take hold of her wrists, not able to control myself with her touching me so. I start to kiss her mouth but settle for her nose, not wishing to break my vow "I am going to show you."

"No, that's ok!" She jumps over my shoulder in a desperate effort to escape me and I find it comical as she dives under the water. Futile, but comical "I know where they come from. Besides, Balin already gave me the sex talk. Swords, sheaths, sparks, and all that good stuff."

"Good." I pull her close, wrapping her legs around my waist after dragging her back to me. The lust in her eyes is clear as she floats lightly, hair drifting wildly around her head. She looks like a goddess, begging to be ravished "Then I don not need to worry of taking advantage of you."

"You're doing a lot more than that!" she takes in water, so I lift her into my arms. The new weight causes her to slide against my member and the pleasure it brings me is indescribable. I know she felt it just as clearly as I by the way her legs tighten around me "It's touching me!"

"It can do more than that." I press my face into her throat, catching a piece of flesh between my
teeth to hold her in place "Allow me to show you."

Every 10 chapters, Thorin becomes this raging ball of teenaged hormones in a stripper's body. To put it simply: a horny toad. I don't know why and I'm sorry if you don't like it but it's like that and there's nothing I can do about it. Just take the chapter, ok? There is of course a continuation in the side chapters, have at it when I post it in a day or so. It gets bad and by bad, I mean good. Other than that, thanks the ever supportive reviewers. In response to a question, Thia won't be punished for her actions unless her plans interfere with those of the Valar, like trying to get an abortion or the like. Until next time!


**Chapter 76**

When Oin bursts through the door hollering about knowing Thorin is keeping me company, I'm grateful. Seriously I swear, but only because being alone with him makes me act... strange. Each time Thorin so much as breathes in my direction I'm tripping over my ideals like a kid who can't tie their shoe laces. It's not a good feelings once it's all said and done, especially when it only gets half done. 'Again.' And then the old dwarf just had to mention IT: War. They are preparing for war. I shake off the last remnants of arousal and quickly finish my bath without any more distracting harassment. Drying off as fast as I can, I dress and open the door to chase after the dwarves, but instead collide with Fili who appears to be waiting for me. We stumble but thankfully don't fall.

"Ah! Sorry, didn't see you there." My guardian sets me up straight, checking me over. He seems a little out of sorts. I'd almost even say guilty "Are you alright?"

"It's nothing but please take better care." He responds, watching as I half run, half walk down the hall like a crab so I can keep him in my sights "What are you doing?"

"We need to get to the weapons room, stat." I say, grabbing his arm and drag him along. After only a few steps however I stop and switch places with him, instead pushing him in front of me "I don't know where the weapons room is. Take me."

"Yes, Milady." He snorts, finally getting a move on "But for future references, it's called an armory."

"I know..." clearing my throat at the slip up doesn't stop the dwarrow from laughing at my expense "I did!"

"Of course. Of course."

Despite all the twists and turns, we arrive in good time. Fili departs from my side to join his brethren in preparing for an epic but hopefully not last fight and I stand back to watch the scene unfold. There are tons of different types of armor and even more killing devices. Bows, arrows, swords, lances, and spears to name a few. Plus some I've never even heard of or seen before. Running my hand lightly over each of them, I make sure not to cut, crush, or maim myself. Looking at my reflection as it appears on a time tested shield, I can't help but frown because... this is it. I'm no soldier but this battle is what I've been waiting for. Preventing it never crossed my mind because whether it's now or sometime in the future... it's going to happen.

I understand war; it exists because people have free will and when their wills are strong enough and opposing, they clash. Violently. People fight wars for freedom, differences in choice, and even
monetary gain. I get that and I'm not naïve enough to think they will ever be completely eradicated. That doesn't mean I have to like it. My step mother is a solider and when she left to serve her country, I was proud, scared but proud. That doesn't mean I don't notice how she jumps at loud noises ever since she came home, because it's a given. War does things to people. Bad things.

Stroking the age spots littering my reflection in the shield, I wonder just how much I've changed since I started this... adventure. Not at all and yet in every conceivable way and it's not even over. I'm not even done.

There is still so much to do so shaking my head to clear it, I stand on my tippy toes to search out my desired duo. I find them as Thorin pulls Bilbo to the side and watch as he gifts him with the mithril jacket. Leaning over the shield just enough to get a good look, I make sure that I've gotten the event correct. Of course, it tilts and tips me over the top where I land with a soft thud in a pilaf old leathers. Dusting myself off, I roll my eyes at the pile of helmets and bracers scattered around all the while keeping an eye on the dwarf harassing the hobbit into the jacket. 'He's going to need it more than Bilbo will.' That thought, just like lightening strikes me. Yes... YES, he will! Bilbo gets a head wound, not stabbed. He would do better with a- a- a helmet! Searching through the objects and grabbing some relatively small head gear, I rush over to the two.

"I look absurd." The hobbit flops his arms around wearily as the armor hangs imply at his sides "I'm not a warrior, I'm a hobbit."

"You're absolutely right!" I exclaim proudly, shoving the helmet into Bilbo's hands. He looks more than surprised at my appearance "That's why you should wear it instead, Thorin."

"Aye?" he gapes as I yank the shirt back over Bilbo's head and hand it back to him. The dwarf grasps it absently, more preoccupied with the dust covering my clothes "Did you not just have a bath?"

"Yeah and yeah." I nod, warming to my idea immediately. Ignoring his hands as they spot clean my cheeks, I continue my plan "You're the one doing the fighting, so it'd be wiser for you to wear the impenetrable shirt."

"The lass does make a good point, Thorin." Dwalin yells from the other room and I offer him a smile, forgiving him for being my leash yesterday. It's strange for him to openly agree with me- "Even if she can't take a proper bath."

"Thats not-"

"I may have made it difficult for her." the king acknowledges, much to my embarrassment "Next time will be better."

"Ah..."

"That aside" Bilbo offers loudly, trying on the hard hat and ending THAT conversation "it would make more sense for you to wear it."

Thorin contemplates the proposal but I'm just happy he isn't ranting about baths or betrayal. If I can get him to wear the vest, that's one less thing I need to worry about. I let my mind wander to the fight between the king and Azog. He was so intent on killing the orc that he willingly died in the process. His focus was that intense that nothing else mattered and that kind of dedication can be a problem in life or death situations. In addition to gold sickness, I have to cure good old fashion hard headed stupidity. 'I understand determination but come on! Who willingly gets stabbed?!' Dude watched his heir die and didn't know what happened to his other nephew but he still does it. Did he have NO interest in who would be running his kingdom? Getting angry at the memory, I begin to
grumble under my breath but stop when I feel my belly giving a low glow from beneath my shirt. 'Thanks honey, but mommy needs to be mad right now.' It makes me more efficient. I cross my arms over my stomach to hide the light in case it gets brighter and begin tapping my foot impatiently instead. Thorin pauses in his beard stroking rumination long enough to become aware of my irritation. Clearing his throat, he shakes his head.

"No. It is a token of our friendship." He shakes his head once more, trying to once more give the shirt to the hobbit "I cannot wear it."

"You remember the whole 'I'm a seer thing and you should take my advice' part of my being here, don't you?"

"I do however-"

"This is the part where you take my advice and wear the shirt for your own good."

"Your worry is unnecessary, my love. I will-"

"Reason isn't working." Dwaine calls in a bored voice "Try another tactic."

"Alright. If you don't wear that vest, I'm going to name my first born son, 'Pickleface.'" I continue as Thorin's face turns from determined to full on distress "I can see it now 'Young Pickleface is getting into the strawberries again' because naturally he'll have an aversion to pickles."

"I think it's a lovely name, Thia." Ori offers from the back of the room excitedly "It will give the child character."

"It's a wonderful idea." Bilbo play's along, much to Thorin's agony "It will be the talk of the kingdom."

"No!" Thorin shouts. We both stare at him in amusement as he relaxes his face and places both hands on my shoulders. They creak in the way one does when having to exercise restraint and not shaking since into a person. His lips press into a thin line that looks just plain painful "No. We cannot name ANY of our sons… or daughters for that matter, 'Pickleface.' It is unbecoming of anyone, let alone the child of a king."

"I see." I quirk up the corner of my mouth as if deep in thought "So you'll wear the shirt, right?"

"Yes, Thia." He concedes unhappily though I'm unconcerned. His happiness is not as important as his life at the moment "I will wear it."

"And once this whole shebang is over you'll give it to Bilbo, right?"

"Yes, I suppose will."

"Great, its settled then!" I grin from ear to ear, patting his hands "Now was that so hard?"

"Yes, woman!" he growls lightly, planting a solid kiss on my mouth. I guess the no kissing vote is done, not that I canny I particularly mind. I've come to terms with the fact that my word is the only thing that really bound Legolas and I. Though I want to keep the sanctity of my word, I'm not going to punish myself for something I did under duress. Thorin throws his head back to glare at the ceiling as I just smile before I catch on to his change of tone "Must everyone conspire against me?"

"Oh yes Thorin." Bilbo chuckles, not noticing the sudden fluctuation of Thorin's expression "Its one huge conspiracy."
"Um, Bilbo…" I try to subtly tell the hobbit to shut the heck up, even as Thorin looks around defensively "Now is a good time to stop talking."

"Do not silence him, Thia. He speaks the truth." The dwarf lowers his voice and pulls us into a huddle "I am betrayed. One of my kin has stolen the Arkenstone!"

"That isn't true, Thorin." I state clearly, hoping it'll ring some truth in his head "They are your family and they have never taken anything from you."

"Betrayed by my own kin." He continues as though I hadn't spoken, before turning to face me. My heart aches at the crazed look in his blue eyes. Before I can say anything he quickly yanks me into his arms, rocking me in place "My kin. My kith. Those bastards of the Lake. They'll take you too if I let them."

"No, uh… Thia belongs to you, as she is your One. We all accept that." I allow the statement to pass, thinking now isn't the time for semantics on ownership "However, you made a promise to the people of Lake town. Now is this treasure truly worth more than your honor?"

"My treasure?" I think something might be ringing sense in the dwarf's mind. As he looks into my eyes I feel... loved. It's such a brilliant feeling that I feel like I my heart could burst and form a million galaxies in it's wake; each of true perfection. I don't want to loose that feeling but my heart sinks just as fast as it rose as his gaze shifts. Not away from me, but away from that feeling. As he stares down at me a moment longer I feel possessed; something to be owned and showcased. Lowering my head quickly, I try not to let how very dirty that second gaze made me feel show as the conversation continues "My honor?"

"OUR honor, Thorin." Bilbo is trying his hardest but the ice in Thorin's voice does not melt "I was also there, I gave my word."

"For that I am grateful. It was nobly done. But my treasure in this mountain does not belong to the people of Lake town." The dwarf begins running his hand along the small of my back and I know what he's feeling for "Not to be shared. Neither. This gold—"

"-is cursed." His eyes sparkle disturbingly but I continue regardless, leaning out of his embrace "No one in this mountain would ever do anything to hurt you, you must know that."

"Do I?" he hisses, pulling me flush against him to whisper into my ear but I don't flinch away. He never seems affected by the sickness while we are alone and I can't figure out why. I doubt it matters now though, since we won't get too much alone time for a while now. Wars are usually fought with a lot of people around. I may not step away from him but neither do I invite him closer; instead standing stiff as a board in his arms. He backs away from me upon noticing, pacing in aggravation "How am I to know, when the Arkenstone still hasn't been found?"

"It could be buried, literally, under a mountain of gold. It could take a while to find, especially with it being small enough to fit in the palm of your hand." Not to mention Bilbo already found it but ratting out your friends is a sure fire way to get them killed "Any normal person would be overjoyed with just the gold, but you just want what you want."

"I want many things, as you very well know. Even so, all I want is already is this mountain." He approaches me quickly and runs his fingers through my hair, giving the still damp curls a light toss to show off my throat before continuing his stomp party. Bilbo looks flustered at the numerous markings displayed on my neck as I rub them absently "What need have I of those beyond these walls? All that remains is the arkenstone and it should have been found by now!"
"And I'm sure it will be." I fold my hands behind my back, nonchalantly. I give Bilbo a pointed look and tap my back, then at his pocket. His eyes grow wide upon understanding that I know what he carries before washing with relief. Turning my attention back to the dwarf, I gesture down in the direction of the treasury "If there wasn't so much gold lying around, I'm sure it'd be easier to locate."

"... What are you suggesting?"

"Oh nothing really." I feign interest in my clothes, knowing exactly what I'm suggesting "Just thinking that if you gave some gold to Laketown, you could free up the room for an easier search AND stop a war."

"This gold is ours and ours alone." He pats Bilbo and I each on the shoulder, tugging us back into an embrace "Do you not see?"

"I do and it is ours. It is ours to keep..." I look over his shoulder to exchange glances with Bilbo. He looks utterly terrified and with good reason. He blinks at me with a question in his eyes and I nod my confirmation, mouthing the word 'go.' He grimly lowers his head, knowing what he must do "And ours to give away."

"With my life I will not part with you or a single coin. It is mine and another shall never again claim what is mine." The other members of the company begin exiting the room, clad in armor and ready for a battle. Thorin barely notices them walking by as he lets go of Bilbo to cup my face. I look at him in questioning as he strokes my cheeks but don't fight because I want Bilbo to make a clean get away "Never."

"... I'm not treasure, Thorin." I whisper angrily but hold my position as he offers a frightening smile

"Oh, but you are." He crushes me to his chest in a suffocating hug "You are the greatest treasure of all and I'll never let you go."

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**BILBO POV**

Knowing what I must do, I am able to sneak out of the mountain thanks to Thia's distraction. It isn't right, using her like this, but we both understand what is at stake. Knowing that I am not alone in the burden of carrying the Arkenstone propels me swiftly to Dale. I'm able to sneak into the camp with relative ease and Gandalf's shouting makes finding my goal all the quicker.

"You, bowman! Do you agree with this?" I make my way to the large tent as the argument continues, using the ring for it's devilish purpose. The world feels all the more hideous when in my possession and I loathe to wear it. The sickening allure is all but none existent when it is in Miss Thia's possession but for now, I will endure. "Is gold that important to you? Would you buy it with the blood of dwarves?"

"It will not come to that." Bard insists as I softly step into the entrance "This is a fight they cannot win."

"That won't stop them. You think the dwarves will surrender?" The occupants all turn towards me at once and I feel very small but continue nonetheless. Miss Thia gave me this opportunity and I shan't waste it "They won't. They will fight to the death to defend their own."

"Bilbo Baggins!" Gandalf exclaims my entire name as he often does. I sometimes think he only
does it so he won't forget "It has been some time, my dear boy."

"If I am not mistaken" Thranduil looks down his nose at me coldly, sending chilling shivers up my spine "this is the Halfling who stole the keys to my dungeons from under the nose of my guards."

"Yes. Sorry about that." I borrow some of Thia's blatant uncaring sarcasm when I answer his accusation before stepping forward cautiously and pulling out the shiny stone "I came to give you this."

"The heart of the mountain. The king murmurs, gazing at it in awe as he takes it into his hands "The king's jewel."

"And worth a king's ransom." The bowman turns his head to me with a slight suspicion "How is this yours to give?"

"I took it" I answer swiftly but the answer leads to only deeper frowns. Having received Thia's blessing to take the stone, I feel no remorse at having done the wrong thing. Unlike the dwarf king, I find little difficulty in following the advice of someone with adequate knowledge of future events. Still, the room occupants look most unfriendly at my response, so I quickly explain "As the 1/14 share of the treasure we company members received. Well... 1/15."

"Why would you do this?" the Bowman questions in confusion "You owe us no loyalty."

"I'm not doing this for you."

"Well then..."

"I know that dwarves can be obstinate and pigheaded and difficult and secretive with the worst manners you can possibly imagine, but they are brave and loyal to a fault." I smile, thinking of the journey here with all its twists and surprises "I've grown fond of them, and will save them if I can... But Thorin values this stone above all else, save for his One. In exchange for its return, I believe he will give you what you are owed. Then, there will be no war."

"His One." The elf king takes in my words and I wish I hadn't mentioned the girl. His face cracks with suspicion and malice; frowning at my person as though I personally offended him with my existence "You mean Ballineth, my daughter. The wife of my son. She is a far greater jewel than this stone, even possessing one of her own."

"Indeed?" Bard shuffles uneasily from his place by the edge of the tent "I was under the impression that she belonged to the dwarf king."

"He would have it so, as she holds his heart. A king's jewel or a king's heart..." Eyeing the arkenstone in disappointment, the elf sighs deliberately "You should have brought the girl."

"I wish to stop a war, not start a bloodbath." I quake in fear at what Thorin would do if someone were to take Thia from him. "No death would be cruel enough for what would be in store for such a fool."

"So very true." He dismisses me and I take my exit even as his whispers at my back "Yet every fool has his time."

So things are moving and I plan to get us on and fighting pretty soon, so keep an eye open for more chapters! I have uploaded a couple of drawings on my live journal page for anyone who wants to see Thia as I do. I also have a drawing of the can check it out with the semi-link on my profile and
thats that. Thanks for the reviews! I read each and every one of them. Until next time!
Chapter 77

"Oh, but you are." Thorin crushes me to his chest in a suffocating hug. His hands tangle in my hair, keeping my head still as he hums contently "You are the greatest treasure of all and I'll never let you go."

"You may have to in order to ready yourself for battle." Balin calls from one of the cleared designated sleeping areas from down below us. None of the actual bedrooms are able to be reached just yet, so we've taken to sleeping in the halls and flyers for now. Refusing to look in our direction, the dwarf hefts the armor his is transporting and moves out of sight "I know not of any suit of armor built for two."

"… Yes." He admits, though not pulling away "I must go, much as it pains me."

"You don't have to." I reply heatedly, not happy in the least that he's going through with it "You're just too stubborn not to."

"Aye, t'is true." We sway in place to a deaf beat as the room empties and I'm overjoyed when I feel the tension of the sickness ease out of the embrace. He nips at my ear and I scoff without anger, flicking his own "The things I could take if I were to stay…"

"You would take nothing." I state, giving him a sideways glance, surprising myself with my willingness to flirt with the dwarf. Lucky him "But if you asked nicely, I might be inclined to give some of them to you."

"Please." He offers with a sly grin. Again and again he repeats the word and with each plea, he places a soft kiss on my lips that has me melting into a pile of goo "Please… please… Please…"

"Please stop."

We turn and notice Kili looking just about sick to his stomach. You'd think the kid just walked in on his parents having sex. I try not to laugh in his face but then Fili comes over and copies his expression for fun. Nori catches on and makes an embellished face like a petrified ghoul and I just can't take it anymore. I laugh until tears are brought to my eyes and if it weren't for Thorin, I'd be rolling on the floor. Things eventually calm down and I'm able to stand on my own, even with a few chuckles in between. The dwarf starts to leave once I am settled, to ready himself for IT, but I catch his arm.

"Wear the vest, Thorin." He looks at me in exasperation but I'm persistent "I'm serious. Your life could very well depend on it."
"I will wear it, if it will bring you peace of mind." He tugs on my bead for a moment "Agree to take my braid and become my wife."

"A pre-war proposal. Romantic." I chuckle shaking my head and covering his hand with my own "I still have Legolas and Thranduil to straighten out. It wouldn't be fair to make you a promise like that."

"I'd not like my child to be born to an elvish father nor would I have my child born out of wedlock."

"And I'd like to see you alive to meet the kid."

"... Here." He reaches into his pocket and pulls out some jewelry "Wear these instead, as a placeholder."

"Aren't these..."

"Yes, the white gems that Thranduil so desires. Though a gift for an elf, they were made by dwarves hands." He drapes the necklace around my neck, fastening the clasp. It's pretty, gorgeous even, and I'll be saddened to part with them. As of reading my mind, the king strokes my collarbone lightly "Give them to the elf whenever you wish but wear them for now."

"Fine." I agree, peeling my eyes from the enchanting necklace to the metal shirt now in his hands "Get ready. Tomorrow is a big day."

And it will be. Few notice Bilbo's absence for the afternoon and even fewer comment on it, for which I'm both grateful and annoyed. If he was lost in a deep dark hole, he'd be out of luck. I stay up half the night waiting for him, pretending I'm asleep whenever someone walks by. Thorin is missing as well but the clang of the forge tells me he's awake somewhere, working on something. When Bilbo finally sneaks in, I'm so tired that all I can do is say goodnight before conking out.

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**BALIN POV**

"Balin..." The warning in my brother's voice is all I need to hear to know that he is against my plan. In truth, I am just as against this course of action but there is no other way. We haven't the time, resources, or power "Could we not simply speak with the lass? Convince her to-"

"She will not be swayed. I have already tried."

Over and over again I attempted to have the lass impart her knowledge onto me after we found her to be with child but she is resilient. Stubborn as the dwarf whose heart she captured, Lady Thia will not give when it comes to the safety of our king. Was she not in her current state I would find her determination admirable but as she is herself in this present time... it is foolish. Running my hands through my hair in impatience, I calm myself. Letting out a heavy breath, I look towards the army filled hills. A stand off has occurred between the two armies; neither backing down or pressing forward. There is no doubt in my mind that it is temporary and all the more reason to enact this now.

"Lady Thia has always expressed a great deal of independence. Much more than I can say I've seen given to a daughter of men at any age, let alone such a youthful one."

"Aye." Thorin agrees quietly, nodding his head slowly. The fact is undeniable after spending the past few months bearing witness her numerous acts of individuality "That is true enough. However, what you are suggesting..."
"If there is another way, then please... let me hear it now." I look to my king in pleading, for I would love nothing more than to banish this strategy from my mind. He offers no alternative however, thus I press on "It is no longer just her life that she will be putting in danger."

"Her safety is always important to me, regardless of her state."

"As is yours to her," opening my arms widely, I grasp my cousin by his shoulders "She means to protect you, Thorin, from a future she refuses to share but which I think draws quickly near."

"This may be true" my brother admits stoically. Though never having been blessed with a silver tongue, his mind is just as sharp as any blade "but to suggest this... Ye take her choice. Something no self respectin' dwarf would ever do to a female of any kind."

"Would you rather she make the choice to give up her life instead?" The small counsel shifts as a whole to watch the unwelcome interruption walk through the wide entrance. Sloppily stepping over coins Nori twirls a knife between his forefinger and thumb, keeping his gaze steady on king "You made it clear to the bargeman that you'd protect her from all hurt and harm."

"My words stand true, though it should be clear how I consider the man."

"You were told, by the wife of our creator, that that girl would need protection... much more than she's allow herself to have." tossing the knife into the air and catching it without breaking eye contact, the thief shrugs in feigned disinterest "Mayhaps this is what was meant."

"... This is not something suggested lightly or without much thought." Replacing a hand on his shoulder, I pull Thorin and my head together. At the sound of the soft fleshy tap of our connection, I meet his eyes and offer a sad smile at his pained grimace "Something you have already considered, proven by your nightly project."

"I have long since considered it but... We will inform the others." inclining his head is the closest he comes to dropping in anguish. This old heart creaks in pain at watching his despair; only fueled by my own "...I do not like this, cousin."

"None of us do..." Patting him on the back, Dwalin sighs deeply "But it will keep her safe... even if it earns us her hate."

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THIA POV

I wake to the beating of hooves and quickly sit up. It appears that I'm the last one to do so, as everyone else has already reached the main entrance way on the lower level. Quickly making my way down, taking in the view of a small army as I descend. 'I guess it's large for them.' A sharp twang followed by a thump alerts me that Thorin is shooting arrows to stop Thranduil and Bard's approach as they ride towards the entry way. I didn't know he could wield a bow to be honest. I mean I did, the whole Mirkwood elk thing kind of showed potential, but I've never seen him but a mark. Still, it's nice to know you can still learn things as a kinda/sorta seer.

"I will put the next one between your eyes."

Violent much? The rest of the dwarves cheer but I only go to stand silently beside Bilbo. He looks at me in confusion as I take his hand and hold it tightly. The sound of a battalion of arrows being pointed at us isn't as calming of a morning sound as the soft drizzle of coffee or birds chirping but I'm awake now either way. We hide behind the wall Thorin had rebuild, though not as tall, it still serves its purpose.
"We've come to tell you payment for your debt has been offered and accepted." Thranduil looks past the dwarf and sees me. His eyes freeze for a moment before closing into suspicious slits. I give a small shrug and wave "Good morning, Ballineth. My son is not with you."

"Morning and um… no." I shrug again when the dwarves look back at me with 'stfu' looks "I sent him on a mission to…uh… his mother's… death location."

"And, pray tell, why would you do that?" he demands, face not betraying his anger. Before I can answer, he waves away my response flippantly "No. It is not important. I will speak with you after I finish this business of payment with the dwarf.

"You will do no such thing! What payment?" Thorin roars down at the elf with an open look of hatred "I gave you nothing. You HAVE nothing."

"We have this." Bard lifts the Arkenstone and Bilbo nearly crushes my hand. I grip it in return, showing him that I'm here "It should serve as enough."

"They have the Arkenstone... Thieves!" Kili shouts the accusation over the wall in resentment "How came you by the heirloom of our house? That belongs to the king!"

"The king may have it, with our good will." Bilbo's hand relaxes in my own but I know it's not over. Bard tosses the stone in the air lightly, catching it and returning it to his pocket "But first, he must honor his word."

"They're taking us for fools. This is a ruse. A filthy lie." Thorin backs away from the wall, refusing to accept what has happened. Opening his arms wide, he makes a grand gesture of The reclaimed kingdom "The Arkenstone is in this mountain. It is a trick!"

"I-It's no trick. The stone is real." Bilbo slips his hand from mine and steps forward. I fight not to reach out to pull him back to my side. I'm worried for him now more than ever. This moment is pivotal to say the least "I gave it to them."

"You?" Thorin faces Bilbo with clear surprise written on his face "You could not have..."

"I took it as my fifteenth share." The hobbit admits, not knowing how close Thorin is to tossing him over the ledge

"You would steal from me? Us?" He points firmly in my direction, much to my surprise "Her?!"

"Her? Steal from you? No, no. I may be a burglar but I'd like to think I'm an honest one." He jokes but no one laughs. Coughing onto his fist, he continues diplomatically "I'm willing to let it stand against my claim."

"Against your claim?" Thorin repeats, chuckling darkly. He's one step from maniacal evil genius "Your claim, you have no claim over me, you miserable rat!"

"Hey, it wan't like that!" I cut in swiftly, trying to diffuse the situation.

I can see Thorin's rage mounting and hope that it has nothing to do with my ignorant portion of the problem. It isn't clear to me if the king intended for me to understand the implications all the way back in Rivendell or not, but I understand them clearly now. My reward for this quest was put in simply complex terms: Reward paid in the form of one king's jewel. Anyone would have taken it to mean a simple gem, like I did, because what reason would he have to give me such a gift? Of course that was before the whole One business and I'd honestly forgotten about my prize. My reward was meant to be THE king's jewel and as far as this King is concerned... Bilbo just stole it.
Waving my hands in front of me wildly, I aim to take some heat of my friend.

"I told-"

"I was going to give it to you." Bilbo stops me before I can say any thing in his defense; a huge folly on his part of he knew what we'd done "Many times I wanted to, but…"

"But what, thief?"

"You are changed, Thorin." His eyes shift to me but I can't think of any words of encouragement "You-"

"Keep your eyes off her," he growls lowly, placing a hand in his sword "lest you attempt to whisk her away as well."

"I wouldn't!" Bilbo insists quickly, gaze flickering away from mine "Still, the dwarf I met in BagEnd would never have gone back on his word, would never have doubted the loyalty of his kin."

"Do not speak to me of loyalty you traitorous wretch." He addresses the rest of the company with a voice laced with madness "Throw him from the rampart!"

"Thorin, you can't." Even as I say this, no one moves to carry out his order; all knowing that he has very clearly lost his mind. I feel terrible knowing I was unable to stop it either and may have added to it instead "Thorin-"

"Did you not hear me?!" I move forward to cut off his access to the hobbit but Bifur suddenly grips my arms, holding me in place. He refuses to let go or meet my eyes and I am forced to stand by and watch the scene "I will do it myself then."

"Thorin, stop it!" I yell as he grabs hold of Bilbo and drags him to the wall. There is nothing I can do aside from growling frustration "Bifur! Let go! He's going to- Thorin stop!"

"I am sorry, Berch Kanaag." The addled dwarf whispers to me. I grit my teeth how his face is forcibly buried into my hair as he restricts my advancement; more concerned with the events before us "It is for the best that you stay out of it."

"Stop!" I cry out, paying no more attention to his words "Please. Thorin, you don't want to do this!"

"I curse you!" the king shouts forcing my friend further and further over the edge, despite the many hands of the other dwarfs trying to keep him from doing so "Cursed be the wizard that forced you on this company!"

"If you do not like my burglar, then please don not damage him." Gandalf appears and I wait will bated breath for Thorin to release the hobbit. I'm darn near hyperventilating in worry and wouldn't mind some calming wizard magic "Return him to me."

"You want him?" Thorin asks and I know those are not the words that should be said. Before I can shout for him to stop again, he lifts Bilbo fully into the air with strength I've never seen him exhibit before "Then have him!"

I scream in panic as Thorin throws Bilbo clear over the wall. The hobbit's face is the personification of disbelief as he is flung into the air before he disappears out of sight. Bifur's grip loosens significantly due to shock and I take my chance. Rushing to the edge to look for my fallen
friend, I fear what I'll find. Mangled and mutilated; the broken hobbit paralyzed by the fall.
Battered and beaten. I'm afraid to look but I lean over as far as I can, barely registering the arms
that keep me from actually falling over. I hear Gandalf cursing lightly as he makes his way to the
collapsed form of the hobbit. Bilbo's eyes remained open for the duration of his fall and even now,
as his body lay crumpled at the end of his descent, they stare blankly up at us all. I stare into the
blank eyes of my friend with despair so heavy I think it may crush me.

One second, two, and three pass before he finally blinks and sits up, dusting himself off. I sob in
relief, throwing my head back and laughing into the sky as tears rain down my face in waves. The
wall is barely 7 feet off the ground; Azog could probably look over the edge if he stood on his tip
toes. Bilbo may be a little sore for the next few days but he's fine. The arms are snatched from
around me and I slide onto the floor, legs no longer able to support me. Resting my head on my
knees, I gulp in great breaths of air.

"You're not making a very splendid figure as King under the mountain." Gandalf huffs from below
as I give murmuring thanks to the good Lord above " Are you still, Thorin, son of Thrain?"

"Never again will I have dealings with wizards!" he calls down in Return and I just know he's
giving them a disgusted look "Or Shire rats."

I remain on the floor for a long while, barely listening to the rest of the conversation; only hearing
enough to know that Thorin has well and truly lost it. It only makes matters worse when Dain
shows up and the dwarves start cheering so loudly I think my ears may explode. I slip away
quietly, not wishing to watch them all slaughter each other and needing to be alone because… he
threw him. Had the wall been its original height, the drop could have killed Bilbo. I'm glad it
wasn't but the question remains: Would it have mattered to Thorin?

I honestly don't know and that makes me wonder if I'm helping or making things worse. I walk
further and further, eventually coming upon the golden floor that had trapped Smaug. It has
hardened into a solid reflective surface, only marred by a strange dark chain running half way
down the middle. 'I don't remember that being here.' Approaching, I follow one end deeper into
the mountain where it unceremoniously ends at the arm of the throne. Curiosity makes itself a
home next to numb relief as I begin to wonder what is at the other end and follow it back out.
Disappointment meets me when I find nothing but an empty shackle: A fifty foot chain, much like
a leash, with nothing attached.

"I see you have found my latest project. I am surprised that you came here on your own."

"Huh?" I jump and quickly turn around in surprise. My face darkens in anger upon seeing Thorin
looking as if he hadn't just thrown one of my closest friends over the great wall of Erebor "What do
you want?"

"Can I not seek you out for your company?" he walks forward but thankfully stops short a few feet
away "How are you feeling?"

"I'm pulling my hair out trying to find out how you lost your mind so badly." I begin to pace, truly
ill at ease "I mean... You THREW him off a mountain, Thorin!"

"He was a liar. A snake in the form of a spineless cretin." He spits out, matching each of my strides
with his own "He deserved no less and far worse."

"He deserved your respect for telling you the truth that no one else had the guts to!"

"The truth? Is that what you'd have me to believe?" he points to my stomach and I instinctively
place a hand over it "Is it true that you somehow narrowly escaped from consummating your marriage with the elf scum but became with child regardless?"

"... Excuse me?" I whisper, not believing my ears

"It would seem that you are well versed in the way of men. It stands to reason that between a Prince and a King" he continues, picking up the chain and running his fingers over the links delicately "you'd choose the richer one, wouldn't you?"

I can't do anything to stop myself and even if I could, I wouldn't. Without even thinking, I 'jump' to stand before the dwarf. Balling my hand into a fist, I connect it with his chin, shaking the horrible person before me in his boots. My wrist throbs painfully and I know I'm about to start a full on belly glow, but I pay no attention to it in favor of mentally clawing the dwarf's eyes out. He staggers backwards but doesn't fall, wiping the blood from the corner of his mouth.

"You have the softest hands." he taunts with a vicious smirk

Furious, I storm forward again but his arm whips out quicker than I can dodge and it snakes it's way around my middle. I strike out wildly, aiming to maim him in any way I can. But strength is nothing if used incorrectly. Before long he has locked my arms in place, trapping me against his torso as I gnash my teeth in fury even as the defensive glow spreads from my stomach to cover my whole body. The monarch finally sees what I've been hiding since lake town, causing him to run his free hand along my side in amazement. He grins in my face and tries to kiss me but I jerk my head away before head butting him in his big, fat, dwarvish nose instead. He grunts in discomfort but the lack of a crunch tells me I didn't quite hit my mark as well as I'd wished.

"I'm sorry, Thia-"

"You can take your 'sorry' and shove it!"

"There is nothing but joy in my heart for you and our child."

"Well you could have fooled me!" I jerk violently in his arms when he places a hand on my stomach, knocking him in the nose with my head again. Taking the hint he raises his hand to protect his nose from any further attacks "Hands off, you dead beat dad!"

"...Is this his doing?" He murmurs behind his hand, ignoring my insults. He gestures to the origin of my glow but I don't bother answering. I'm exasperation he sighs, almost regrettably, prior to taking his hand from his face "I know that you are faithful and that the child is mine."

"Then why!" I glare at him, happy, confused, and livid all at once "Why would you say those... Those awful things?!"

"Because I knew you would not allow me near you but I needed you to be close to me," He responds smiling sadly as I continue to seethe "so that I might save you from yourself."

I can't ask what he mean to do because I'm suddenly falling. Thorin's leg trips mine from under me and we both collapse on the floor. He has the foresight to slow my descent, as not to let any harm come to me but uses his weight to pin me. Once on the floor he sits on my legs and pushes a gentle but firm hand onto my chest to keep me from getting up again. He twists his body around, ignoring me as I rain threats and punches at his back. The familiar sound of a chain brings me up short as he drags it over and I know he intends to use it on me. 'Not again. Not again.' Bucking under his weight doesn't help and all the kicking in the world doesn't stop him from attaching the chain to my ankle.
With a soft 'click' I know I'm trapped and that's unacceptable on every level. I lay on my back, panting in exertion and cursing the dwarf for his actions. He makes calming sounds and wipes wet tears from my face that I didn't even notice were there but accept because I know. I know that i haven't changed enough and still way too much for this adventure to end well. I know he means well because I'd take a sword to the chest for him and he can't allow that. And I know that if I don't save him... he's going to die.

"It had to be done." He poorly attempts to comfort me as we sit in silence "Especially now that I know our child is just as unique as his mother."

"Why?" I weep, not caring that he has designated the child with a sex. Not or girl, I can't save my child's father. He won't let me "Why are you doing this to me?"

"Because I love you." He answers as he always does. I snatch my face from his grasp but he doesn't seem to mind "I already told you, I will protect you from all. Even yourself. Even from me."

"You can't keep me here!" I 'jump' away from him but just as when I woke up from my fight with Smaug, I only flash in place. This time however, the very mountain shivers around me as if it was trying to 'jump' with me. I try again but with the same results "What... What did you do?"

"You are attached to the chain, the chain is attached to the throne, and the throne is attached to the mountain." He slides off my legs, tracing the chain before I kick his hand away "Over time I've learned that your gift takes with you everything you are attached to but... a mountain is very large. Too large for even you to move."

"Thorin..."

"I gave my word that I'd protect you."

"This isn't protection, not do I need it as much as you do!" I scream as he stands up. I ignore his offered hand, standing on my own. Stomping my foot, I wince at the soft tinkering it makes "Take it off!"

"You will find blankets behind the throne."

"Thorin, if you-"

"Make use of them."

"Listen to-"

"Feel free to sit upon it as well." He gives me the once over before backing away "This is for your own good."

"How?! How does this help me at all?!" I follow after him as he walks back the way I came in "Its confinement! I can't help you like this!"

"There is also a weeks worth of food and drink, but I will return before then." He walks on, ignoring my shouts "You will come to your senses in time."

"You're the one who has lost their mind! How much time is enough time? Do you plan to keep me here until I see what you call reason?" my foot snags, causing me to be unable to walk after him any further. I pull at it in distress as Thorin gets further and further away "You can't just leave me here!"
"When the war is won, I will return and the chain will be removed. I simply wish for you to stay put for once." He smiles sadly once more as I flicker in place again, shaking the mountain on its very foundation "It is for your safety; nothing will harm you in here."

"Wait! Please!"

I call to his retreating back but he doesn't acknowledge me anymore. I look around the room and find myself rapidly becoming frantic. The mountain is cold and dark and quiet and... lonely. Like a crypt and I fear to imagine how very soon Thorin will be lying dead within it. I quickly turn back to the direction he went in but panic upon finding the hall empty. I'm well and truly alone. All the knowledge I have means nothing if I am unable to put it to use. Failing in holding back a sob, I cry out as loudly as I can but the only response I get is an echo

"THORIN!"

So this is a long one. It's that way because I both combined and split a shorter chapter between two chapters. It's also why its a few days late. Lots of editing. The break was between Thia's POV and Thorin's but then Thorin's was too short so I made it longer but then it was tooooo long so I just put everything together and split it where I thought best. Thorin will be punished for chaining her up... WITH DEATH! Or nah, but I don't want to ruin the moment. So, surprised? It's my own little take on the whole scenario and I hope it meets your expectations. Thank you for your reviews. Until next time!
Chapter Notes

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

**MY VERSION OF THORIN'S GOLD SICKNESS WILL BE EXPLAINED AT THE CHAPTER'S END. READ IT FOR CLARIFICATION.**

CHAPTER 78

THORIN POV

The clenching of my chest is nearly more than I can stand as I listen to Thia's desperate cries fade away. I wish I could blame my choice on the sickness but I know my decision was made with a clear mind. Had I not found a way to keep her in place, the girl would have followed me straight into battle and that cannot happen. I cannot have her life or that of our child, put into needless peril... even if it costs me my life. My cousin, Dain, has long since arrived and once I return, we will join the battle that will soon begin. It was with heavy hearts but my kin and I all made the choice that this was the best way to keep her safe. 'Hopefully she can forgive us.' Approaching my kin, I address their silent question as the mountain gives another silent quake from what I know to be her struggles.

"It is done."

"It should not have been." Bifur announces from a corner, nursing the arm I nearly broke when I found him holding Thia. His lips were inches from her throat and his body was pressed against hers more closely than was needed. I had thought his obsession with her had been dealt with but clearly it has not. Were we at war, I'd kill him for the offense "It is wrong to chain her like an animal."

"I need her safe." I reply, accepting his scornful truth "Even if she is not happy about it."

"May Mahal forgive you," Bifur sullenly looks toward the direction my One resides in "for I do not believe she will."

"She will." I insist, though there is no surety in my mind "... She has to."

The mountain shakes again but this time it is not from Thia. Making our way to look out over the battle field a strange sight greets us. We watch as the war begins only to be spun on its axis almost immediately. Massive creatures that could only be described as giant worms leap from the ground. They feast upon stone, dirt, and tree alike as they make their way towards the battle field. Orcs and goblins swarm from the holes left behind like black ants and I begin to worry for my kin. I shift my gaze around, hoping to catch a glimpse of pale skin but to no avail; Azog is nowhere to be seen.
"I'm going over the wall" Kili shouts suddenly, the thirst for battle entering his young heart "Who's coming with me?"

"Aye!" my kin shout in return

"Come on!" Fili cheers, beginning to tear at the wall "Lets go!"

"Stand down." I order, surprising both myself and the rest of the company.

"What?" my heir questions, appearing more than slightly perplexed "Are we to do... nothing?"

"I said stand down!" I turn away from the wall, intent on finding a reason for my delay in intervention.

I come up with the only answer: Thia. My One is safe from herself but is she safe from others? How will she be protected from all while I am at war? I head for my throne but think better of it, knowing it will only cause Thia more distress to see me once more. Instead, I find my way to the forges, staring at the great provider of my people. We are miners, every one of us, at heart. No matter our profession, precious materials always bring us the greatest joy. 'And then there she was.' Thia; my greatest treasure. She means more to me than a thousand Arkenstones and I secretly thank the burglar for not taking her instead. I know if he had asked, that she would have gone and that fact was enough for me to throw him from the rampart. For to know that anyone other than I has that kind of sway on her, is more than I'm willing to accept. I need to keep her safe from... everything.

"Since when do we forsake our own people?" Dwalin's voice penetrates the fog I did not even know had crossed my eyes "Thorin, they are dyin' out there."

"There are holes beneath this mountain, places we can fortify. Shore up and make safe?" Despite my wish to listen to my kin, I cannot halt my train of thought "Yes. Yes, that is it. We must move my treasure further underground to safety."

"Did ye not hear me? Dain is surrounded." He catches my arm as I aim to leave, spinning me around to face him "They are bein' slaughtered, Thorin."

"Many die in war, life is cheap. But a treasure such as her cannot be counted in lives lost." I would sacrifice as many as possible if it meant that Thia would be unharmed "She is worth all the blood we can spend."

"Do ye believe that the lass would have ye if ye left yer kin to die?" my arm tenses under his hand as I hear his words and I try to calm myself. I reacted poorly when last met with the idea of Thia leaving my side and do not wish to fight my cousin as I did my nephew "You sit there spoutin' of yer love for her and as great as it has made ye, ye are lesser than ye have ever been."

"Do not speak as though her love has tarnished me! How dare you even suggest that I am less because of her? She is the sun in my sky of a thousand moon filled days; the drink of never ending plenty to my parched soul; the treasure that not even two worlds could contain! She knew me as I was, as I am, and as I will be. Made me better than I could have been on my own and I thank her for it!"

"I do not mean that her love has made ye any less!" he shouts as I tear my arm from his grasp "We can all see that she has brought ye happiness beyond measure but this is not healthy, Thorin. It is only once ye entered this mountain that ye-"

"Do not speak to me as if I were some lowly dwarf lord. As if..." I think back to my long time
wielded shield and how Thia returned it to me but it is not enough anymore. It could not protect me from Azog either time, nor from giant spiders, thus I left it in that forsaken forest. But now I have something better. I brush my hand over the chainmail that she insisted I wear. She is always protecting me and I have become better because of it. Lived longer. Learned more. I shall protect her, but an oak branch is not enough. I need to be more "As if I were still Thorin… Oakenshield. I am your king!"

"Ye were always my king. Ye used to know that." The dwarf I grew up with looks upon me with pity that burns my soul but I do not back down. I cannot. Seeing this, my opponent bows his head in defeat "She will never be yer queen if ye cannot see what ye have become."

"Go." I order, having heard enough from the defeated dwarrow "Get out, before I kill you."

He looks taken aback, tears springing to his eyes but never falling. He swivels away, leaving me to my devices. It is impossible to accept, that any change I have gone through has not been for the better. Am I not stronger? Wiser? Richer? I have achieved my goal, reclaimed my home, and found the person every dwarf dreams of being with. She carries my child, is protected by my own means, and shall be well cared for. I have everything I have ever hoped for and yet, all I hear is 'less.' My mind wanders as my feet lead me down to the Gallery of Kings. I tread softly, as I know at the other end of this path, Thia rests. 'Lesser now… sickness… grandfather… blind ambition… Thia.' I shake my head as the words bounce inside my memory but they persist. 'Hoard… desire… mad… death… grandfather… honor…love… I am not…'

"I'm not my grandfather. I'm not..."

I clutch my head as my One's drowning image appears beneath the golden surface. Sinking to my knees I try to reach her but the gold blocks my path. She calls out to me, breath escaping her mouth, but I cannot get to her as she begins to drift away. Taking off my crown I smash it into the floor repeatedly, trying desperately to save her from drowning beneath the weight of the gold. The image suddenly reverses and the one drowning... is me. I pound at the surface as scorching gold burns my lungs. She reaches forward to grab me but I toss my head, not wanting her to come near and suffer, but she continues anyway. Pressing through the liquid, she grasps my cheeks and lifts me from the golden depths as though I am as light as a newborn babe. In an instant I feel freer than I have in years. I sputter and gasp as she makes shushing noises while rocking me in her arms."

"It's alright you... you... big... stupid... horrible dwarf." She insults me but it doesn't matter as she runs her hands over my back "You're safe. I've got you."

"All this time... I've been trying to keep you from harm..." I pant, leaning my face into her chest as my past actions come rushing back to me with clarity "when it was you who was doing all of the saving."

"Silly dwarf." She scolds lightly petting my hair "Of course I have."

"Why?" I ask, choking down a sob "Why would you do that for me?"

"Simple, though I've had a hard time admitting it. It's because I love you." She smiles shyly before grinning out right "I guess you could say that I knew I loved you before I met you."

"I think... I dreamed you into life." I continue, not sure where the words come from, as they taste foreign on my tongue and strange to my ears but from her elated expression, I assume they are the correct ones "What do those words mean?"

"They mean you need to tell me exactly what being Ones are because you're a dwarf truly after my
"heart." She head butts me lightly, grinning brighter "This is way better than finishing each other's sandwiches."

"You always say the strangest things."

**AZOG POV**

I look upon the scene of carnage, searching for Oakenshield but the coward is no where in sight. I saw him peek over his pathetic wall before the battle started but he has been absent ever sense.

"-He is holed up inside his mountain, hiding from you.-" a foot solider suggests

Slitting his throat for speaking out of turn, I ponder the prospect. The dwarf seeks my head just as I seek his own, he would not let an opportunity to do battle with me slip by so easily. Suppressing a huff of disappointment in his spinelessness, I think critically of what could keep him. 'The girl.' His breeding woman. She is no doubt what has kept him within the mountain. They are both within, quivering in fear. I gesture for a few of the orcs to follow as I make my way up.

"-If they will not come out. I will go in.-" My prey awaits

**THIA POV**

I honestly don't know what happened.

*I'm upset. I'm angry. I'm furious. I'm livid. I'm sad. I'm worried... I'm scared. I've been in chains before. I've been alone before. I've been in unfamiliar places before. I've never been alone while in chains sitting in an unfamiliar place though. It's not a fun feeling. After God knows how long of yanking at the tether and deciding that it only hurts me, I sit on Thorin's throne and seethe. Simple waiting unfortunately gives me time to think and I horribly begin to see the dwarf's point. He wanted to protect me and the only way to do that was to keep me from following him to all the hazardous places he is heading for. Does that mean I'm alright with being chained like a dog? NO. I'm going over torture plans in my head when a horrendous shrieking interrupts me. Without thinking I bolt toward it, finding a withering Thorin on the ground in obvious pain. He shouts and gags at the floor and I wish to approach him but the chain does not allow me to. The problem is solved when he suddenly spots me and darts forward. Before he can reach me though, he collapses again and appears to be having trouble breathing.

"What... are you doing? Is this a joke? Thorin?" I call in confusion. When he starts to turn an angry shade signal lack of oxygen, all anger and confusion disappear "Thorin!"

His eyes meet mine but I don't know what is wrong. Sliding into a sitting position, I lay on my belly and shimmy towards the dwarf. He has stopped breathing all together by now but he still shakes his head to tell me to keep away. Not listening, I grab his hand and pull him closer to the throne, so that I may attend to him without tugging the chain. I slap at his cheeks but he is unresponsive, his breath failing to reach his lungs.

"No gold sickness is taking you out before I can give you a piece of my mind."

Inhaling, I place my mouth over his and begin breathing for the dwarf. I thank my father for forcing me too take that CPR class and hope I can remember the steps correctly. Placing my hand under his chin for better support, I try my hardest to bring the dwarf back. I must have done something right because even before a minute is up his color returns slightly and his eyes snap
open. He looks so confused as he sucks in great gulps of precious air. I offer nonsensical sounds in an effort to soothe him, swaying back and forth to ease the tension from the moment.

"It's alright you... big... stupid... horrible dwarf." As glad as I am that he's ok, I'm still not happy with his treatment. I rub his back anyway "You're safe. I've got you."

"All this time... I've been trying to keep you from harm..." he leans onto my chest, still breathing hard but at least he's breathing "when it was you who was doing all of the saving."

"Silly dwarf." I pull on his hair gently "Of course I have."

"Why? Why would you do that for me?"

"Simple, though I've had a hard time admitting it. It's because I love you." Even as I say the words aloud, I can hardly believe them yet I know they are true without a doubt. I wonder when that happened. Laughing, I think it may have been like that since I saw his larger than life poster in a train station "I guess you could say that I knew I loved you before I met you."

"I think... I dreamed you into life." My eyes widen in surprise before I smile like a goofball as he continues the song with the correct words. I'm even more surprised at how familiar they sound to my heart "What do those words mean?"

"They mean you need to tell me exactly what being Ones are because you're a dwarf truly after my heart." I suppose he must have said them in English and that makes me happier than it should. I place my head against his own, thankful that he is alright "This is way better than finishing each other's sandwiches."

"You always say the strangest things."

Folding the dwarf into my arms, I let the moment be. I haven't forgotten the war, my mission, or the senseless chain around my ankle but I let them all temporarily fall away from my mind. There will be more than enough time to worry about them later, and I'm sure I will, but for right now I'm relieved and I just want to stay that way. I don't know if Thorin's gold sickness is gone, or if it can ever be truly removed at all. All I know is that it's not showing itself and no one is dead. That's enough for now.

"The garment that you wore across your chest in Laketown." Thorin's voice penetrates the quiet hall and I'm grateful that it holds no tremor "The outlandish binding, what was it?"

"I married an elf to save your life, got magically pregnant to ensure your line, killed a dragon to get your home back" I count each instance on my fingers to make sure I've gotten everything down "and you're asking about my bra? Get your priorities in order."

"You also freed my mind from a generational curse." I search his face and hope the statement is true as he continues "You are always my priority. That also extends to your underthings."

"Tough luck, buddy, because after the stunt you pulled, you aren't getting anywhere near my under garments." I leave out the part where I mention that I don't have any. The elves stole my underwear and the dwarf himself shredded my bra. I've been riding solo beneath my clothes for longer than I'd like

"I did this for you."

"No. You did this for you." before our disagreement can become an argument, the floor shakes pugnaciously. Thorin lifts his head from my lap and we exchange worried expressions "Is that
what I know it is?"

"I fear that it is. I must take my leave." He offers a hand to help me stand and I take it, without only a little hesitation "I am needed in battle."

"I know. But the chain…"

"Will you follow if I remove it?"

"Yes." I answer, not hesitating to tell the truth. There would be no point "And I won't forgive you if you leave me here until its convenient to release me, TWICE."

"I know. I know. However... I hid the key deep within the mountain in a bout of paranoia." He explains sullenly "It will take much time to retrieve it…"

"More time than we have." His head bounces slowly. I wish to be freed but I don't want anyone to die so that I can get what I want. A thought springs to my mind "You go to battle, leave Fili here to unlock the chain."

"Fili?" he questions, brows furrowing "He is your guardian but he will not wish to miss the battle."

"That is true but he gave his word to protect me even before you did." The king nods, but still seems uncertain "I know he will want to fight at your side but he must be able to also keep his word."

"Unlike myself, you mean?" I say nothing because the pressure will compel the dwarf to leave his nephew. I want them to live and I'd keep Kili too but he needs to save Tauriel and a whole other stuff. In reality, Fili dies first so he does less "Can he not free you and then join-"

"I'll follow you." I say softly but in a firm voice "I'll follow you and trouble will follow me. You know this."

"Of course I do."

"Then leave him here." I plead, looking into his eyes "His very life could depend on it."

"… Alright." Thorin sighs but accepts what he must do "Alright. I will tell him it is for his own-"

"No. Tell him nothing of it." Thorin gapes at me in confusion again and I rush to explain, knowing we are running out of time "It is best to have him think he is staying to protect, rather for his own protection."

"You are wise, my love."

"I know. A-a-and watch out for Kili." I smile thinking of the reckless dwarf "There is an unbridled strength running threw his veins and I'd rather not see it spilled."

"… It was not very astute of me to bring my heirs on such a perilous journey." FINALLY, he has some sense. He laughs at his own self "Neither could I have kept them away."

"Very perceptive, now go." I retort with whimsy before I sense the heaviness of the situation "And… come back. Alright?"

"I will return to you." He promises, placing a parting kiss on my forehead "Always."

"I hope so." I whisper as he rushes away. The mountain shakes as I make my way to sit on the
throne once more. Plopping down, I stare out the massive hole where Smaug escaped from nearly a month earlier "I really do."

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**THORIN POV**

I re-enter the pathway where my kin await restlessly. They watch me approach with trepidation and I deserve each glance of unease. Kili, being the youngest one here, is unable to hold is his frustration anymore and rushes to face me.

"I will not hide behind a wall of stone, while others fight our battles for us." He appears near desperate to make me see what has already been shown to me "It is not in my blood, Thorin."

"No, it is not." Ah Thia, your words are the epitome of truth. I can see the strength in his eyes, his stance, and his very spirit. I can see it in all my kin as they agree with his words "We are the sons of Durin, and Durin's folk do not flee from a fight."

"I knew the lass would knock some sense into ye." Gloin puffs up in pride "She's a fine lady."

"Yes. Yes she is... I have no right to ask this of any of you," I touch my forehead to my nephew's as his smiles in relief "but will you follow me, one last time?"

"Aye!" the call out as a single mass

They begin to create a device that will knock the wall down with ease. Fili moves forward to assist them but I catch his arm. He questions me silently but I drag him away without saying anything. When we reach the forges, I direct him to the top. It will take him at least a half hour to reach the top and return down before he can get to Thia. I tell him so as he continues to look upon me, not understanding.

"It is safer for her to stay there." He argues, and though I agree it cannot be left as such "We all agreed. Why are you doing this now?"

"... We protect her from nothing if we all perish and she remains in chains." I place my hands to his shoulders "However we can try. It is why I am leaving you with her once you have freed her."

"Uncle, no." he shakes his head in disbelief "Thia will be fine as she is. I wish to go into battle-"

"You gave your word to protect her with your life, would you see your honor tarnished?" I inhale deeply as he meets my gaze with frustration "I could not keep my word and we have all seen what has happened because of it."

"I know, Thorin, but I desire-"

"As a prince of Erebor, you will learn quickly that what you want must sometimes come second to what you must do." I firmly nod up to the location of the key "Now climb."

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**THIA POV**

I wait impatiently to be freed. The familiar sound of a blaring horn followed by tumbling rocks alerts me to the fact that my dwarves have finally joined in the battle. Will Fili even come? Maybe he'll be so annoyed that he'll just leave me here; sneaking off to battle anyway. I bounce in the seat, with nothing else to do but worry.
"That is the seat of the king, you know." Fili's voice rings out from a distance away and I've never been so happy to hear it "Are you keeping it warm for Thorin?"

"Yeah sure, whatever. Get me out of here!" He chuckles, making his way slowly over and I have a feeling he's drawing it out on purpose 'I know you're not the happiest camper right now, but put a little pep in your step."

"What will you name the child?" he asks suddenly, keeping his sleepy pace "If it should be a boy, what would you name it?"

"Why all the concern about it?" I ask, giving up on making him move any quicker "I'll give the child a name when I know what it'll be."

"You can't just give him any name." he continues and I know that he is punishing me for having to miss this war. If only he knew it'd be his one and only, he'd thank me "The crown prince must be named something fierce."

"The crown prince is named Fili." Which is something adorable actually but I doubt the dwarf would appreciate hearing it

"For now."

"Well yeah." I give, as he finally gets close enough for me to see his face clearly without my glasses. It's been so long since I wore them, I surprised I'm not dead "I suppose when you become King, Kili will be the new crown prince."

"Your son will become king before I." he grins and I know he isn't broken up about that fact "Please hurry and give birth."

"Oh no you don't!" I jump up from the seat and place my hands on my hips "You're becoming king and that's that! Don't go shoving your title at a helpless infant!"

He laughs fully and I'd have joined in if movement from the corner of my eye didn't catch my attention. Looking again, I rub my eyes with the hope of seeing a bit clearer. It happens again and this time I'm sure that something is moving. I can't see it clearly but I could have sworn it was-

"Fili! Behind you!"

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**Thorin Explained:** Thorin did have gold sickness but it surrounded Thia and not the gold. He desired her the way his grandfather desired gold. It's why it never manifested itself while they were alone, because if he had his desire than he had nothing to worry about. His breaking out of the sickness won't affect his love for Thia, it will just stop blinding him to everything else. He will still want to break someone's neck for touching her inappropriately but he'll know exactly whose arm he is breaking and will have the option not to. Thia did pull him from the sickness, he wasn't really drowning. It was an hallucination created by his mind.

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Oh no! What could it be? Will Fili be alright? Will Thia be freed? Will the baby actually be a boy? Find out eventually on **AN ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME!** I'm sorry guys. I had a moment and I didn't curb it. I got some pretty nice reviews from you kind folks and as always, I'm thanking you for them. Until next time!
"Fili! Behind you!"

My warning comes just soon enough for the dwarf prince to avoid being beheaded by a rusted blade. An orc has somehow made it inside the mountain and is duking it out with him. I stumble back to stand on the throne, knowing that I'm out of my league and just trying to stay out the way. It wouldn't do for Fili to die for my sake, not when I'm doing my best to keep him alive. He seems to be holding his own, even going the upper hand, but then two more orcs enter the hall and I know things are about to get ugly. I'm proven right when the lumbering form of Azog steps into my sights.

My breath freezes in my chest as he enters the hall like he owns it. Dressed for battle, the orc looks all the more fierce and terrifying. His towering frame is supported by equally enormous feet that are encased in thick metal. Despite the material, all I can hear is my heart thudding with each step he takes. His bare thighs seem hardly fazed by the nip of the autumn air, clothed just enough by his torn leather skirt. If not for knowing just how sharp and capable his weapons and armor are, I'd laugh. There is little humor in me as the defiler gazes around in mock curiosity, admiring the golden floor in mock amusement, before advancing on the youngster on my charge.

"Fili, run!" I call out to him, even as it brings the attention of the orcs to me "Please, get out of here!"

"It is not in my blood." He repeats his brother's earlier words while dropping into a defensive stance "I shall not leave you here and abandon my duty."

"Fi-"

"-The little rabbit cannot flee without her guard. -" Agog taunts maliciously, calling his goons silently to subdue the prince "-Poor. Little. Rabbit.-"
"Stay away from her!" Fili shouts, going to town on the orcs and attempting to block the path to me. "Back!"

It takes some time and I'm proud to say that Fili fights well. However three orcs against one dwarf is an unfair fight and soon he is face first on the ground. Alive thankfully, though he spits words of venom at his captures that I care not to repeat. They quickly grow tired of his struggles and knock the feisty dwarf unconscious, though it takes more than a few hits to his rock head. Now able to finish his approach, the pale orc marches forward with confidence in his stride. Stumbling off the chair to stand behind it, I wince when sharp teeth flash as Azog catches sight of my chained foot.

"-Are you being punished, rabbit? Trapped in a... golden cage. A sweet little treat, ready to be devoured.-" he grabs the chain that is lift over from when I doubled back to the throne and tugs on it. It lifts my foot painfully slowly into the air, forcing me to follow unless I want to be pulled onto the floor "-Oakenshield does not know how to discipline his female. You have much to apologize for.-"

It's a crawling snail's pace but I never simply give in; my leg always remains just low enough for me to keep my balance but I never give him the satisfaction of coming by my own will. By the time he is within reach of me, the muscles in my leg are cramping up violently but I can't care. The spitting image of evil lifts his arm and I think he will strike me down right then but instead, he threads his fingers deeply through my hair. Gripping the coils tightly, he tugs with such venom that I think he might actually tear the delicate strands out. Not one to allow myself to be mistreated, I reach up between his armor and grab the miscreant's pale bare wrist. Using his own strength against him, I begin to crush it before he wrenches the appendage out of my grasp. Glaring daggers at the orc, I back away until I am as far as I can be without deserting the dwarf prince. Flexing his wrist roughly, Azog snarls down at me.

"-I'd forgotten your adaptable strength.-"

"Your mistake." I spit back

"It shall be of no consequence-" To my dismay he walks over to Fili's prone body and lifts him into the air, positioning his limb-sword at his back. My eyes dart between the dwarf and orc, debating what to do "-You will behave yourself, rabbit.-"

"Let him go!" I can not move forward but neither can I sit back and watch. Without thinking, I aim to 'jump' to the pair. Shaking the mountain in it's base not only reminds me of the chain holding me back, but also the orc of my attempt and he is not pleased. Taking his arm turned sword, he slashes down Fili's back in an arch. Blood pools down from the wound but not enough to be life threatening "Stop it!"

"Try that again and I will bathe you in this dwarf's blood.-" licking the blood off his weapon, the mutation shakes the dwarf roughly before repeating his command "-You will behave.-"

"Put him down." I growl out lowly. I refuse to let even a single hair be harmed on his head. I can't. I won't "Just leave him alone."

"-Beg.-"

"I will no-"

"Beg." pointing the sharp blade at the dwarfs neck, the orc gives me little choice in the matter "-I will not tell you again.-"
"...Pl..." Its like fire on my tongue, begging anyone for anything. If I don't however, more than my pride will be at stake and that is not something I can allow. Ducking my head and gritting my teeth, I force the word out "Please."

"-Good rabbit.-" He coos sickeningly as he drops the limp dwarf and approaches me once more. It takes all the strength I can muster not to turn tail and run as he comes to stand before me. Petting my head roughly before pulling on my hair again, he bends down to sneer into my face "-Take your punishment, tarnished queen. You have earned it.-"

He pushes on the top of my head, forcing me to bend or risk snapping my neck under the pressure. It becomes painful quickly and in a matter of seconds, I am on my knees. I scowl up at him, wishing I could shatter each of his bones but the swords pointed at Fili stop me from doing anything rash. Azog releases my head and I don't know what he is doing until he shoves his fingers into my mouth. They taste to be a foul mixture of filth and blood, making me gag around them and then again when he presses them further down my throat to jab at my tonsils. I react instantly, reaching up to force his hand away but his growl stills me before I can do him any harm. I'm forced to remain relatively still as he scrapes his nails along my tongue, prodding the back of my throat painfully. Refusing to cry, I offer him a hateful glower, clenching my toes in my shoes so I don't bite his fingers off.

"-You do not apologize well, rabbit, but there is much more of you to tarnish.-" He snatches his hand from my mouth and I immediately spit out the taste. Dry heaving only makes it all the worse as my stomach clenches violently "-... Perhaps I should try your other mouth?-."

"No!" I yell, having a clear idea of what he is speaking about. I am not quick enough in rising from my place at his threat. I yelp as he grips my shoulder to half drag/half carry me over to the throne and bend me over the arm. Falling forward, I have to use my hands to keep my weight off my belly or risk doing damage to the life inside. There are too many things I want to protect and I can't do anything. Yanking my pants away from my hips, the demon presses his wet fingers against me as I shake visibly. I begin to glow significantly but the orc doesn't seem to notice or care and I wish to the high heaven for some saving grace. I shriek in distress, twisting like a snake in trying to escape but I can't "Stop! Don't!"

"-This way I can hear you beg. A much better apology.-" he purrs into my ear as he slides an impossibly thick finger into my body. My fear causes me to tense, making it nearly impossible for him to get very far but the half inch he has is enough to make me cry. It isn't nearly enough for him though. He pushes the side of his blade into my back to keep me still as he withdraws only to shove the single digit further in. I think I may be sick as I shake with disgust "-Innocent tarnished one, you feel almost untouched... but we know that not to be true."

He places his blade against my lower stomach I can't help but thrust my elbow back into his own belly. He grunts in both pain and annoyance, forcing his finger deeper still as penalty and coercing a whimper out of me. It's painful to say the least and I don't know how anyone can find the act enjoyable. 'It feels like I'm being stabbed with a blunt knife.' He does take his blade away from my stomach and for that I am thankfully but the grateful feeling is short lived when his hand is joined by something much bigger. It sits at my entrance and I begin to scream anything I can to keep him from entering. I don't know what I said but whatever it is, it catches his attention. The defiler suddenly stills his hand as he bends to his knees, withdrawing his finger from me and replacing it with his nose. When I attempt to cover the place with my hand, he simply captures it in his larger one. The urge to die is so fierce that I actually contemplate what I'd have to do to make him angry enough to kill me quickly. He sniffs at me and I only hope he keeps his teeth away from the delicate, and now sore, setup.
"-You are untouched, yet breeding. How very interesting.-" he almost seems curious as he stands and turns me to face him. As glad as I am that the ordeal is over, hopefully, I have a feeling it is going to get worse. His malicious sneer confirms my suspicions and he is kind enough to tug my pants back into place. Stroking his thumb cross my mouth roughly, the orc drags his tongue along his teeth "-Are you not relieved?-"

"..."

"-You will behave-" he reminds, stepping up to me and crowding my body against the throne "-or have you forgotten so quickly?-"

"N-no..."

"Shall I remind you?-" I shake my head violently as his hand creeps up my side. Wrapping his arm around my waist, the orc presses his flat nose against mine "-Then?-"

"I-I-I'm relieved" I don't fully understand what I'm being asked but I doubt it matters anymore. I just want it to end. I could take the dragon but this... I can't do this... What I can or can't do doesn't matter as my shaky answer has the orc's eyes flashing in demand. Controlling my breath as best I can, I blurt out a steady answer to satisfy him "Relieved. Yes"

"-... I will not take you here.-" Dropping me roughly back onto my own feet, he explains further as I hug myself "-It will be much more enjoyable to fill your body for the first time as the dwarf watches.-"

"I can't wait until you die." I whimper under my as he wrenches the chain in half, freeing it from the throne and using it as leash to tug me along "I am going to dance on your sick face."

"-You offer me such sweet words, tarnished one.-" he replies with a rough chuckle, providing a testimony to his sharp hearing, but does not punish me for the comment. I scoff in revulsion at both myself and the orc. Never have I felt such distain for anyone, I didn't know it was in me to do so. I'll make an exception for this dirt bag. As for myself... such helplessness... I've never felt it and I want to cry that in the middle of this battle I want nothing more than to curl up in Thorin's arms and bawl my eyes out. He'd probably laugh... How pathetic of me. My self loathing is cut short as the orc turns to me with a pinched expression "-Do not attempt to flee. I can still fuck you without your limbs.-"

He walks out of the mountain, gazing around at the slaughter with delight as I silently panic. I think of calling to my friends but I know Fili will be killed several times over before they can get here. So I clench my fist and remain quiet. The defiler lifts his head into the air and eventually points to where this story ends: Ravenhill. Winding the excess chain around his arm above the sword portion, until I only have a foot of room, he nods to it.

"-There.-" he orders cruelly and without context "-Show this power within you and take me there.-"

"Thia don't..." Fili finally rouses from his forced nap. I'm glad he didn't bear witness to what happened and if I can help it, no one ever will "I-"

"-Gag him.-" Azog orders pitilessly and his minions are quick to comply. He turns to me once more "-Your little guardian shall come as well, lest you think to depart.-"

"Fine." I agree, waiting for him to take hold of a struggling Fili before dismissing his thugs "I'll be glad to attend your funeral."
THORIN POV

Its takes longer than expected but I make my way to my cousin. There is a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach but I know if I focus on it now, it could be the death of me. Slicing through an orc, I am finally able to get within calling distance.

"Dain!"

"Thorin!" he returns, happy to see me "Hold on! I'm coming!"

"Ah..."

"Hey cousin, what took ye so long?" He knocks an orc to death with his helmet as we embrace quickly "There's too many of these buggers, Thorin. I hope ye've got a plan."

"..." I notice Azog atop the mountain and wonder how he slipped up there without us seeing him, the weasel. Still, it solidifies my plan "Aye, we're going to take out their leader."

"Azog." I nod in the orc's direction before quickly hopping onto a large ram "Are ye sure?"

"I'm going to kill that piece of filth." Dwalin and Kili appear at my side, ever the support I need

"Then I shall come as well." Dain responds, giving commands to a nearby soldier and I am grateful for his company "Make it a family affair!"

"Lead on!" Dwalin shouts. He and Kili find rams of their own and we move "To Ravenhill!"

We ride at full force, intent on doing away with Azog soon as possible. I plan to see him suffer for all his crimes against me and my own. I wish to see the light fade from his eyes as he stands at deaths door. He beheaded my grandfather. I lost my father and brother because of him. 'Thia.' He touched her, twice. A shiver runs up my spine and the feeling in my gut returns, forcing me to urge the ram faster. I don't know what it is but something is drawing me to that peak and I do not think it is Azog. Arriving and quickly dispatching the orcs, we look around the quiet area for any other signs of life.

"Is Azog even here? I cannot see him." Kili cautiously walks forward but I pull him back to my side, heeding Thia's warning "... I believe he has gone."

"I don't think so." The area needs to be scouted out, but I am reluctant to part ways "Kili, scout ahead with Dain. Keep low and do not be reckless. Obey me in this."

"We have company. Goblin mercenaries." Dwalin announces and I curse under my breath, hoping it will not take long "No more than a hundred."

"We'll take care of them." I look to my nephew, praying that I will see him again alive "Go! And whatever you do, STAY TOGETHER!"

The two make haste into the towers to carry out my orders as Dwalin and I make quick work of the mercenaries. One by one they fall and before long, we are surrounded by nothing but corpses. I do not know how much time has passed but I am beginning to grow impatient waiting for the two dwarves to return. With each minute, my heart thuds louder against my ribs until I am sure that Dwalin can hear it over his pacing. Soon it becomes too much and my cousin breaks the silence.

"Where is that orc filth!?" he kicks at a wall when suddenly the hobbit shows up
"Thorin!" he yells, seeming elated to see me. I had not thought it possible after my actions toward him

"Bilbo… I apologize for-"

"There will be time for that later. We have to leave here. Now!" he prances from foot to foot, looking extremely out of sorts "Azog has another army, attacking from the north, this watchtower will be completely surrounded, there will be no way out."

"We are so close. That orc scum is in there." Dwalin begins to walk toward the tower, eager for a new battle "I say we push on."

"No! That's what he wants, to draw us in." my mind races and I know exactly what is happening "This is a trap. Find Dain and K-"

"Here we are Uncle!" Kili calls, exiting the tower with Dain close behind him. I am relieved to see them safe "Someone is here but-"

"Oh no…" Baggins interrupts with a shuttering cry

Following his gaze, I see Azog. In his hand is Fili. His mouth is gagged and his arms bound but he looks to have put up one hell of a fight. My heart leaps into my throat as he places his bladed arm to my nephew's back.

"I planned to have this one die first. Then the brother..." I forced myself to learn the basics of black speech long ago, though I never let a single word escape my lips. Each utterance is like a blade to my ears "Then you, Oakenshield, would die last."

"Thorin!" Fili shouts after freeing his mouth but I know he isn't begging for himself. If he is captured, where is- "He has her! He has her!"

"I believe this will be more amusing." Azog drops Fili at his feet and yanks a familiar chain to bring forth the last person I would ever want him near "Watch as I take your virgin breeder and end your repulsive line."
Chapter 80

It's not my best idea and it's more than likely going to put me in a world of hurt but it's the only plan I've got. Looking down at the dwarves below me, I watch the sorrow and despair float across Thorin's face. He can't help me now. He knows it. I know it. We all know it. Azog places a large hand on the crown of my head, gripping my hair as he begins pushing me toward the ground as he did before. There is nothing anyone can do to help me, but... I can still help them. Lifting my hand to my head, I use it as if I am struggling when in truth, I just need to touch the disgusting orc. Quickly, I drop to knees faster than expected and grab Fili by the back of his shirt.

"Thorin!" I yell, before Azog can catch on and ruin everything "Catch!"

With that, I throw the dwarf prince as hard as I can. The group below gasps at my actions, scurrying to ensure Fili's safe landing. He literally flies through the air from the force of my throw but I can't watch him land. No, I've got more important business to take care of. If I'm going down, I'm going down swinging. Turning and rising as fast as I can manage, I swing my foot back and kick Azog between his legs as hard as his strength will let me.

"No means no." I growl so low that I'm not even sure he heard it

My foot connects and a sickening squelching noise like pop can be heard as his face transforms into pure agony. With a wail, he throws me toward a wall and as I smack my head against the hard surface I am happy to see the orc's blood on my boot before I pass out.

THORIN POV

The girl has lost her mind. I had not thought that half a day chained to a throne would be all the time needed to ruin her but clearly she has gone mad. Not only throwing Fili from a tower but also kicking Azog the defiler in such a place when she had no escape. If the sound of his cry is anything to go on, the orc is now a eunuch and his name sake is forever ruined. My pride over my One's reckless actions is short lived as the degenerate tosses her into a wall. She strikes the surface solidly and when she doesn't get up, I know she is in serious danger.

"We have to help her!" Fili shouts, as he is freed from his bonds. We watch in agony as the orc flees, dragging the woman by the chain I placed upon her. I will never forgive myself if any harm befalls her because of my actions "He'll kill her!"

"There is no doubt in my mind that those words are true." I search for a way up to where the orc is heading but find multiple passages and not enough time to search them all "Dwalin, you and Bilbo
stay with the boys. Dain you are with me. Come on!"

"Aye. We are with ye." Dain replies, keeping pace as we split up "But... I hate to be a stickler cousin, but... who is this lass?"

"She is… she is… everything." I kill anything that gets in my way, nothing shall keep me from her "Thia. Her name is Thia and she… she is my One."

"... Then why aren’t we movin' faster?" Dain offers a battle cry before charging forward. A large number of enemies intersect us and I growl in frustration "Go. I will take care of this lot, ye need to go to her!"

"Dain…” we share a nod and I rush forward, finding a smeared trail of black blood and knowing it will take me to where she will be. An orc jumps into my path but is quickly eliminated by an elvish arrow. Snapping my head to the side, I see the elf prince watching me silently. We share a moment before each going our separate ways.

AZOG POV

How dare she! I limp in anguish due to the wound she inflicted by deception and as good as my own hand. I ignore the ache for as long as possible, paying no attention to the trail of life's fluid I am dragging the wicked woman through. She will pay dearly for this humiliation. DEARLY. I'll skin her and pluck her eyes from her head. I'll have her eat her own body piece by piece. I'll set her ablaze and mount her on a spike, flying it like a banner with her screams for death ignored. The master, he can make it so she will never die; forever destined to live in a state of torment and anguish. After serving the dark necromancer for so long, such a thing will be a tiny reward.

"-You will pay. You will suffer. You will wish for death and tarnished will be the cleanest you'll ever be again.-"

Arriving at an ice covered river, the pain becomes unbearable. Setting myself on a rock, I lift the leather loin cloth away, hissing upon finding the area covered in thick blood. Closer inspection confirms my suspicions; the orbs have been crushed beyond recognition, leaving only fleshy pulp in their wake. My fury rises at having been maimed once more and I direct it at the prone figure of the woman. 'She did this. She did all of this.' Storming toward her, I am seconds from wringing her thin neck when Oakenshield arrives.

"Keep your hand from her, Azog." He snarls, pointing his sword at me and approaching with caution "She is not yours to touch."

"-Nor yours.-" I retort, remembering the uncharacteristic tightness of her passage. I will cut the entire orifice from her body and have the wargs make a meal of it. After I pull her teeth from her skull, I will make use of her mouth instead of her cunt anyway. The dark thoughts bring a maniacal curl to my lips "-She felt like an untried babe when I took her. Begging me to stop. So tight that nearly tore her."

"... No. " the dwarf denies shaking his head, his blade lowering slightly "Be silent, filth."

"-I made use of her mouth first.-" I toss my head in laughter at his horrified expression "-It was the only slickness her little body offered. My luck you were unable to try her first. Your breeding innocent was so easily... ruined."

"No… no, you lie." He whispers, but raises his sword. I delight in the misery so vibrant on his face
as he rushes forward. It is almost enough to make me forget the sting between my legs. Almost "AZOG! YOU SHALL DIE!"

THIA POV

My head feels foggy, like someone filled it with cotton balls that soak up my thoughts. They sop up all my feelings, leaving me to lay on the icy ground like a hollowed out raisin. I can hear faint sounds around me but opening my eyes seems... near impossible. Not worth the work. But I have to. I need to see this though. Forcing my eyes open, I watch with blurred vision the silent battle between orc and dwarf. There should be sound... I know there was once, yet nothing reaches my ears. I pat around for the remote to turn up the volume but it must have fallen.

"It's so life like." I mumble

I can almost feel the tremor of each clash as the blades connect. The sparks seem so much more vibrant than before, dancing on the edge swords like little red ballerinas. My stomach spasms at every close call but I don't dare look away. I never do. The orc slips under the water and I want to tell the dwarf not to stand so close beca- and his foot just got stabbed. Yelling at the tv was never a habit of mine but I can't help it this time. It just... feels so real... I open my mouth but nothing comes out. It's like a nightmare where you can't run fast enough to avoid the murderer or scream for help. The ice shatters as the orc leaps from the water and I shiver as I can almost feel the spray on my face. He pins the dwarf to the ground with his weight and I wait with agonizing breath for the stab I know is coming.

"Don't die..." I cry out finally; my voice a harsh whisper. The dwarf turns toward me... no... the camera... and looks almost like he is calling my name. Despite myself, I call out to him "Thorin... don't die again."

"You won't let me." he responds just before releasing the orc's blade. I intake a breath so quickly that the icy air chills my lungs but the wound the dwarf should have sustained... lacks penetration. The pointed edge doesn't sink into his chest like it should and he is able to recover his footing. Falling into an offensive stance, he calls over his shoulder "I will not leave you again."

"That's not... right but..." I watch as others quickly join the dwarf's team and help him stand against the pale orc. Elves, dwarves, and even the funny hobbit all stand together as a united front "It's not wrong either."

My mind begins to fall back under the fog as the orc turns toward the camera, almost as if he's looking straight at me. 'This was really directed well.' His fast approaching glaciers are the last thing I see before I fall back asleep.

THORIN POV

She saved me again. My One knew I would need this vest and she ensured that I wore it, saving my life. One by one I am joined by my kin. Finding strength in numbers, we band together to stand against the orc. I do not even shun the appearance of the two elves. Though I have always wished to take Azog's head on my own, Thia has taught me to sometimes depend on others. The thought of the girl has me turning my face to her direction once more, unfortunately drawing the orc's attention to her as well. He is much closer to her than any of us and there is no way we can reach her before he does. Our cries shake the river as he raises his sword to end her life, however silence reigns when a golden light flashes and the orc is simply... gone.
"What…" the burglar stutters from beneath his large helmet, still waving his letter opener in confusion "What was that?"

"It was I," an airy voice answers before any of us can theorize further "One would have thought it obvious."

Standing beside Thia's unconscious form is a shimmering dwarf. His dark hair is wild, flowing unchecked in an invisible river. One blue and one brown eye watch us with mild interest. He is tall for a dwarf but not so tall as the average man. The absent members of the company clamber up the peak, loudly interrupting the scene. Upon catching sight of what has captured each of our attention, they quiet significantly. We all collapse to our knees, knowing exactly who he is. Even if his coloring has changed, there is no mistaking him for anyone else. I have seen his face in many tomes and on countless statues.

"Durin…" I murmur

"I have been called as such many times." He responds and I barely notice as the wizard hobbles his way over to us. The voice of the dwarf is soundless and yet almost so loud that you wish to cover your ears. Yet, his mouth does not move but his voice does not come from our thoughts. The experience in itself is mind boggling "Amongst others."

"Indeed. During, we meet again." Thurkun lights his pipe as if he weren't being graced with the presence of the Father of Durin's folk "You are a bit early it would seem, hm?"

"Early?" Balin wonders, eyes glazed in amazement "You knew of his arrival?"

"I was informed while in Rivendell of the circumstances surrounding Miss Malcolmson's task." He returns his face to the dwarf, eyeing him strangely "Though he should not have arrived for quiet some time."

"My mother was in danger. I could stand by her suffering no longer and her untimely death, I could not allow." He puffs out his chest, refusing to be cowed and I gape in surprise as he turns to gaze at Thia "Will no one lift her from the ice?"

We all rush to obey, having been so blind sighted by the turn of events. I lift Thia into my arms even as my body creaks under the pressure. We form a place for her to lay and I set her upon it gently. Oin checks her wounds as we focus once more on the golden image of our forefather. Never have I been so shaken but even in my surprise, I have heard his words. He called Thia his 'mother.' Could that mean…

"She is the woman who will birth my soul into this world for the last time." He answers my unasked question and we all murmur at the possibilities. The elves are silent, seeming to have accepted the situation with the ethereal grace they are annoying known for. It is of little consequence as my One carries the body of my son who will possess the soul of my ancestor. Thia once described a feeling of being so overwhelmed that one feels as though they should run around like a headless chicken. She called it 'freaking out' and I now know what she meant. This is simply all too... much "She was in dire need, therefore I came to her aid."

"Azog… what happened…" Dain asks, unusually mild mannered "He just disappeared."

"I spread the pieces of his body at a great distance, returning his soul to the darkness it was spawned from." While I think it is good, the golden dwarf bows his head in shame "He will return when he has gathered the missing sections, even those he lost long ago. He will come with a complete, almost new, body but harboring the same ill will. If not greater."
"For the last time, you said." Balin, ever the scholar, tries to gain a little more information "This shall be your last life. Will you be there to battle Azog when he returns?"

"I will be there. However that is not my fight. Nor my mother's, no matter her insistence, for she will insist." Durin begins to look tired and dims in luminosity 'I have stayed too long. Now, I must go.'

There is no stalling the dwarf as his form loses shape and he becomes a mass of light. It floats toward Thia, sinking into the skin over her belly and disappearing completely. We are all silent, unable to comprehend the actions that have just occurred. I collapse onto the pile of clothes, pulling the girl into my arms, and just... staring at her. 'Amazing. Simply amazing.' Every time I think I know everything about her, she surprises me.

"I knew the girl had to be special to have caught yer eye but…” Dain shakes his head before offering a booming laugh "This is a lucky break. Especially for you, cousin."

"You'd be surprised." I say, taking the offered key from Fili and unlocking Thia's bruised ankle "You'd be so very surprised."

Everyone gets a chance a be heard, even molesting orcs. I hope it didn't throw you off. I hope this chapter makes up for the horrors of the last. If it doesn't... well... aren't you hard to please? Thank you for the reviews. The Valar are jerks but they DID tell Thia that her part was done. They probably feel a little offended and unhelpful which prompted Durin to just say "Forget you all, mom needs me." I realllllly hope you guys liked this chapter. I worked so hard on. Until next time!
"When will sh-"
"Thia"
"… rest and time…”
"Her health-"
"…awoken…”
"Thia…"
"….child…dwarf… man…”
"Soon…”
"Thia. Please. Wake up."

Little voices swim around my head as I fade in and out of consciousness. It's hard to focus on any of them but one is always there, no matter how many times I fall back to sleep. In one of my dreams, I meet a dwarf. He looks so familiar but at the same time, it's apparent that I've never seen his face. We talk for hours upon hours but I can't remember a single word exchanged, only feelings. I do know that he somehow told, for lack of a better word, me his name didn't fit anymore. He begged me to give him a new one, saying that he wanted one of his own. I remember giving him a few that I liked and his face lit up, letting me know that they would be perfect. No words were exchanged as he left me but I know I'll see him again, but at the same time, I won't. The voices suddenly get louder and I groan in displeasure.

"It's too loud." I cover my eyes with my hand as the light filters through my lids "And bright."

"Dim the lights. Quickly lad." The sounds die down and the light hurts less. Peaking through my fingers, I notice a very welcome sight. Fili and Kili stand at the foot of the bed, looking excited for whatever reason. And Thorin. Thorin sits by my side, looking at me like I'm the best thing since sliced bread "Is that better, lassie?"

"Uh, yeah. Yeah, thank you." I offer my appreciations, smiling when I notice the healer on my other side "Is everyone… are they alright?"

"The company made it safely from the battle." He answers reassuringly but I know a few battle
wounds aren't even worth mentioning amongst dwarves "Ye were the worst off with that knot on yer head but now ye are awake. Both ye and yer son's lives are safe. In a few days time, ye'll be good as new."

"That's really really REALLY good to hear." I sigh, placing a hand on my stomach and smiling as Thorin presses his larger hand over mine. I decide not to argue the whole 'son' thing anymore because it really doesn't matter. A healthy baby is my only priority "I was worried."

"You!?!" Kili nearly shouts, getting a stern look from the other occupants. Unable to take the distance any more, he runs around the edge of the bed, collapsing by my side and snatching up my hand "We were so worried. You wouldn't wake. Nothing we did worked."

"Nothing." Oin agrees

"We even laid Gloin's socks by your head-"

"Ye what!?"

"You sacrificed yourself to save me." Fill interrupts with a sigh from the end of the bed and hangs his head "Even though I failed repeatedly in protecting you."

"I'd do it a thousand times over if it meant that you could live." His head bounces in acceptance and I gesture for Kili to give him a brotherly hug. "Now stop looking so depressed. I didn't throw you from that tower just for you to feel guilty about being alive."

"That hurt, if you were wondering."

"I'm not. I'm just glad everyone is alright."

"Aye, they are. Thorin will fill ye in on anything ye have questions about." Oin forcibly ushers the reluctant boys out of the room "Call if ye need anything."

As the door closes I turn to Thorin, wondering what I could have done to warrant such an awestruck expression. He tells me how sorry he is and how much he loves me, to which I return in terms of my own. At random times he will just stop and stare at me before attacking my face with kisses. He explains the appearance of Radaghast, the eagles, and Beorn. Even Who and Duke showed up! I laugh at some points and grimace at others.

"Durin." He says suddenly, to which I cock my head in confusion "Our son, that should be his name."

"... What are you going to do if it's a girl?"

"I would be delighted to have a daughter, however this child with be a lad."

"What's if it's twins. Our triplets?" I look around frantically and whisper "Quadruplets?"

"Quad-... Multiple births have never been record amongst dwarves and it is collectively accepted to never occur." He nods to himself, totally disregarding the possibility "You shall birth one child in the coming months and he shall be a boy."

"Why is everyone so sure it's a boy?" I shake my head trying to rid it of the sensation of 'unfit" "It's driving me bonkers. You are totally convinced it's male.""

"I am." He insists with confidence. I couldn't care less either way but he is adamant "Durin is a fine
"It's a powerful name." I admit, rubbing my ring that somehow found its way back to me. Silly Bilbo, this is unfortunately your problem now "It's very old. Has a long and proud history. Anyone would be honored to have it."

"...but you do not wish to bestow it on our son." he finishes and I silently commend him on his ability to read between the lines "Why?"

"Honestly, I'm not sure. I had a weird dream about a dwarf and he told me to give him a name of his own." I laugh at the silliness of the whole thing "Not that I'm sure he was a he. We even picked out one or two that he/she adored. I just don't think that Durin is the right fit for him anymore."

"Anymore?"

"Yeah." I rub my head as the memory sits just out of reach "I don't know where that came from but yeah."

"... What name did you decide on?"

"I know it's the father's duty to name his children, or at least his sons here, I guess it's kind of like that back home too, and I don't want to take that away-"

"If our son felt it necessary to come to you and tell you his name," he places a hand on my knee "then who am I to deny his request?"

"... Oh but if I wanted to name him 'Pickleface' it's a problem." I grin at the plain look he gives me "Alright alright."

"Well?" he asks, prompting me to give up the names "What did you choose?"

"After careful deliberation, we narrowed down the names to two choices." He nods and I take the moment to let the suspense built "If he was a boy... we couldn't decide between Theo and Thor. The second takes after you so I thought you'd prefer it, that's ok with me."

"You put much effort into this." He leans forward and places a kiss on my forehead "I will do the same."

"Take your time." I insist, waving the butterflies from my stomach. It was just a head kiss, doesn't warrant such a response "He only has to live with the name for the rest of his life. No pressure."

"No pressure." He repeats

"As for the girl-

"He'll be a boy."

"Thorin, can't you just accept the possibility-"

Thorin surprises me when he suddenly rises to his feet and climbs into the bed. I hadn't noticed before but we are inside the mountain. The room is furnished and not a speck of dust lays anywhere so someone must have cleaned really well. 'It begs the question of how long I was out this time.' A quick peak at my belly while the king gets situated shows it hasn't rapidly grown all of a sudden so it couldn't have been for too long. My attempt to ask Thorin is cut off when my mouth is covered by his own in a random kiss. It's soft and sweet and his beard tickles my face. It's
always tickling. Closing my eyes, I try to enhance my sense of touch. I relax little by little, testing out the experience for what it's worth. It's not the first time he's kissed me but it's my first attempt to explore it. When he silently asks for permission to gain entrance to my mouth, I grant it immediately, repaying the favor. I taste him, all of him that my tongue can reach, and I can feel him doing the same. He tastes like mint; spicy but with a cool sense as well. I finally can't hold my breath any longer and pull away from the make out session for much needed oxygen.

"Are you alright?" he asks, half amused and half concerned "Have I hurt you?"

"No… I uh…" I place a hand over my chest to help catch my breath "I just needed to breath."

"You held your breath the whole time?" he asks perplexed

"I'm not supposed to?" he shakes his head, blinking at me in wonder "Well this is news to me! Why didn't you say anything before?"

"It has been said now." He snuggles closer and gently pulls me down to lay beside him. Placing a hand under my chin and raising my face to his once more, he grins "Just relax and BREATHE."

And off to the races we go. Thorin's tongue darts out the gate quickly followed by my fleshy appendage. They are neck in neck, or more appropriately put, throat in throat. I quickly grow tired of my inner monologue and focus on the moment. He nips at anything he can while I take his advice and relax, though the breathing is a bit harder. Still, every couple of seconds, he puts an inch of space between us, so I can breathe freely, before pressing forward again to devour my mouth like a starving man. 'I guess he'd be a starving cannibal.' I don't know how long we go at it; a minute? Ten? An hour even? Time doesn't seem to exist, as if it not freezing or flowing around us but both. I could live in this blip of time forever. That is, until the hand that had been rubbing tender circles on my hip brushes over the waist band of my pants. I don't even think it was done on purpose but I noticed it.

"No!" I shriek in terror, slamming my hands into his chest. The bombshell is so great that the dwarf tumbles backward, falling from the bed. I scramble to the edge but can't help him up as I am shaking too much "I-I-I-I'm sorry. It's just Azog-"

I cover my mouth with my hands to hide the rest of my sentence as well as pat down the urge to throw up. 'Don't throw up. Barfing after a kiss is not cool. Thorin isn't Azog. He's not.' Even as I tell myself that I can only imagine Azog and his hand. What more he would have done had he been given the time. I'm suddenly struck with the knowledge that no one has told me his fate. I look to Thorin for answers as he finally rises but I can't open my mouth to offer anything other than a whimper. Without having to actually voice my concern, Thorin knows what I want to know. He slowly tells me of the epic final battle between him and his arch nemesis, only stopping right before the crucial detail I'm looking for.

"... And then... after everyone arrived..." I duck my head, catching his eye "you all killed him together... right?"

"... Together."

"You killed him..."

"... Yes. He is dead and will trouble us no longer." the fact that Azog is dead has me breathing a sigh of relief but something makes me think that that isn't all there is to it. I let it slide as Thorin's face suddenly crumbles. I let out a questioning hum "I wish to ask you something..."
"Thorin, what is it."

"Before we began to do battle, Azog said something that... disturbed me."

"Anything that comes out of his mouth is disturbing." The dwarf nods distantly, causing me to worry about what was said. I never wanted anyone to know. This shame of mine, I never wanted to share it and I hope I am wrong about what topic the dwarf is alluding to "Thorin… What did he say?"

"Did he touch you?" he blurts out and I flinch at the suddenness of the question. He looks apologetic at my reaction and tries to calm me "I just would like-

"If he is dead what does it matter?" I ask, physically turning away to avoid the question.

"Thia..."

How can I tell him the truth when… My eyes burn with tears as I can see everything crumbling around me. Thorin will hate me if I tell him. He'll take my baby and the Valar will force me to go back home where nothing will ever. Be. Ok again. My family will think I've gone insane. I'll be institutionalized and maybe I am crazy. Maybe none of this ever happened and I lost my mind long ago. Its possible because I must be crazy for wanting him to be ok with this. Maybe I'm out of mind for wanting this ever deserving king to know that the mother of his child was... was... tarnished... defiled... sullied... by his most hated enemy and still wanting him to love me. My voice leaps and jumps and twitches as I try unsuccessfully to keep my breathing steady.

"How would you feel if he didn't?"

"I would be relieved that he is nothing but a liar." He answers swiftly and my stomach drops

"A-a-a-and if he did?" my voice cracks as I stutter out the inquiry

"If he did?"

"Mmm."

"Thia..."

I'm going to throw up. I couldn't take if he... If after everything... all this... if he hated me. If he turns away from me now and never looked upon me again with a kind eye, it'd be too much. I'm weaker than I've ever been... This love has truly ruined me if just the thought of his disappointment is enough to throw me into conniptions. My logic tells me that he would never be so awful and my heart begs that to be true, but my self loathing screams that I will be left bereft and alone for even thinking I could be accepted. That screaming part that always kept my heart tucked safely away from others, never letting them close enough to hurt me, punishes me now for daring to go against it. If I knew the pain in my chest would have been strong enough to tear me in two, I never would have- I never should have... should have never signed that contract. I should have never loved this amazing dwarf because now he... he...

"I would be humbled by your strength."

'... Wha...'

"To withstand such an incident"

'... What?"
"and still have enough love in your heart to put Fili's safety before your own"

'WHAT?'

"makes you a woman who is more than I could ever deserve."

"… Really?" my voice is a whisper as I dare not hope for his words to be true "You wouldn't be mad at me or hate me? Y-y-you wouldn't make me go away?"

"No, Thia." He gathers me into his arms, making me feel more wanted than I ever have before "I would love you all the more, how could I not?"

The relief is so much that I think I may start floating from the released weight. Laying my head on his shoulder and pressing my mouth into his ear, I whisper about everything I couldn't say until now. Things I'd been afraid to say because I didn't know how he'd react and things I just never had the time to share. We laugh over the time my siblings and I made candy soup for my mother when she had a particularly bad cold. He comforts me when I share with him the story of the twin sister I barely got to know. I tell him what panties really are and we poke fun at the misunderstanding before I hold him as he cries for his kin when I explain how his story originally ended. When I have nothing more to say, I tell him of Azog. The whole time he embraces me as though he wants us to share our very skin. He shivers in rage and pulls me closer as I tell him everything but never, not even once, does he let me go. And for that I am eternally grateful.

"When you are well enough, we will see the elf king." He states as I am lulled by his heart "I will not spend a moment longer than I have to being unable to call you my wife."

"… I think…" I bury my face deeper into his chest, using it like a pillow "I think I'd like that very much."

Woah! The story is nearly done. Don't worry though, I've still got about 5 or so chapters to do. Still, I'm going to miss it when it's over. So much so... that I'm totally writing a sequel. Prepare yourselves, just because the war is over doesn't mean we have nothing left. The whole forgetting to breathe thing while kissing actually happened to my mom when she was young. She doesn't read this so Ha ha, mom! Until next times!
Chapter 82

After Thia has fallen asleep, I tuck her beneath the blankets and leave the room. She has provided me with much information and I am thankful that she trusts me with it, but now I must think. Shutting the door behind myself, I wander the ancient halls of my youth trying to walk off the rage within. 'He put his hands on her. IN her. He hurt her, she who I have sworn on my honor to protect.' If the orc still had a body I would chop it to bits, set him aflame, and then burn his ashes to nothingness. With a roar of frustration, I aim my fist at a crumbling wall.

"Whatever is the matter, Thorin?" the voice of the healer sounds from up the corridor as my target collapses in on itself. He stands with his brother and Dori, each exchanging glances before facing me once more "Has something happened with the lass?"

"Yes…. No." I quickly change my answer, not thinking the woman would want me to share the information so freely. Yet... I would not be able to forgive myself if she was suffering and I could have helped "Yes."

"Well which is it, lad?" he asks impatiently. My eyes dart to the two accompanying dwarves and they immediately leave the vicinity, understanding my silent order. Oin gives me a queer look before asking once more "What has happened?"

"Thia… Azog he…"

"Ah, yes. I know what the defiler did to her." He answers before I can even finish the thought. I glare at him for not telling me immediately as he sighs and leads me to sit on a nearby stone bench "Her trousers were torn when we found her so I suspected and had the she elf check."

"You had another see her without my permission?" I try not to growl but my voice vibrates with tension

"Your One she may be but until this matter is resolved she is the wife of another. I asked the elf Prince and he granted me permission to conduct the examination." I grind my teeth at the reminder but know nothing can be done as of yet "I would have prefered a dwarf-dam to perform the duty but as none are within requesting distance, the elf had to do."

"And?" I ask impatiently, hoping the woman is alright "The child is fine, you've told me as much, but Thia? What of her in... all of this?"

"It could have been worse. The filth did not take her as he was known to do but there was some swelling. That should have gone down by now; it has been 2 days already." He sighs once more,
wringing his hands "It is her mind I fear for."

"I imagine the ordeal would take its toll on anyone." I clench my fist, forcing myself not to break anything

"Aye and from the looks of it, it was her introduction into that portion of the world." He faces me with a stern expression and I nod in confirmation. The healer closes his eyes and sets the back of his head against the wall "She could very well dread all contact of that sort."

"I fear you may be correct in that." I groan, remembering her explosive earlier reaction to the smallest of touches "She has already shown as much."

"Have you told her of Azog?" I start at the sound of Dain walking up the hall. There is much to do before Erebor is inhabitable but with the help and Dain and his men, we have cleaned out quiet a few rooms in the past week. Unfortunately, they are all close in proximity and it is difficult to find privacy. Thia is the only one with a room to herself and even that is not so as I am constantly by her side "It may ease her mind some."

"Eaves dropping, cousin?" he snorts, crossing his arms and staying put. Rather than going back to previous subject, I press on "I told her he was dead."

"Thorin-"

"Is he not as good as such?" I question in defense. I have told her what she needed to know and she will be nonethewiser as any threat he may ever pose again will be eliminated before she can become aware "His body is gone, he cannot hurt her."

"For now." He says with an air of finality that I do not agree or disagree with "And Durin? From what I have heard from the others, you have been blessed many times over. Did you tell her of his comin' return?"

"Not… fully." Oin shakes his head and bows, leaving us to finish the conversation alone

"What did you tell the wee lass then?" he asks stroking his beard, seeming deep in thought "I wonder: Will he be a half breed if his mother is from the race of men?"

"I am unsure of the child's race but it matters not."

"True enough! Durin is Durin, whichever body he is born into!"

"... I told her that we should name the lad 'Durin' as is his name." I stand from my seat, thinking over what had occurred "However she has expressed her opinion that the name does not fit and has instead offered several alternatives."

"He is Durin and should be named thusly. A dwarf she may not be," he watches my face for a reaction "but surely, even in settles of men, the father names his sons."

"She is aware of the tradition however she is not from-" I halt in my speech before I reveal the small detail that Thia is not of this world. Most members of the company were not even made aware of that fact, though I'm sure they have been able to guess something similar. Bofur once expressed in jest that she is too opinionated to have been born to any peoples of this world and he was not far from the truth "I must take my leave. G'day cousin."

Not waiting for an answer, I depart his company. Thia is not of this world. I have known this striking detail since I met her however the knowledge has been pushed aside numerous times. She
misses her home, as I did my own, but I find that I hope she never returns to her birth world. 'Selfish.' Despite the unfairness of the feeling, I cannot help but wish her permanency. If given the choice, would she go? Have I offered enough to make her stay? She saved my life and the lives of my kinsman, but what has she received in return? 'Pain.' The pleasure brought about by creating a life was even taken from her and I cannot show her because she is too afraid to have me near. Another consequence of her sacrifices. I have to find a way to make her want to stay, I simply must, and I will start with her newest fear.

THIA POV

During the next few days, I am met with... well... everyone. Each of the company comes to visit me, staying for hours on end until Oin finally shoos them away. Fili and kili often sneak into the room and climb onto the bed like little puppies before someone spots them and kicks them out. Beorn stops by with Who and Duke and he makes horrible jokes while Thorin grumbles in the corner. I even get a visit from Dain and his top dwarf generals. Upon entering the room he comes over to my side and places his ear right up to my stomach whispering 'I know you're in there' in an overjoyed voice that comes off as just really creepy. He's loud and obnoxious and seems to share an inside joke with Thorin that I'm not too excited about being left in the dark about. And Thorin... he's being strangely watchful, as if he's waiting for something. Or looking for something. I'm not sure what it is but he rarely leaves my side, saying it's for my health. 'I get a lot of tongue exercise though.' Luckily, just as predicted it only takes 3 days for my body to start functioning like clock work again. No concussion is going to keep me down! I can even eat without ruining every surface around me, not to mention I'm able to get up and greet Gandalf before punching him in the arm when he finally makes an appearance.

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I thought you were aware of it, my dear girl." He responds with a chuckle, rubbing his arm "You did agree to the task, did you not?"

"I'm from a generation that doesn't read the terms and conditions before agreeing to anything!" I frown deeply, not happy about finding out that Gandalf knew my true mission before I did "If it's not face value, I don't see it!"

"Well then I hope you have learned something, hm?"

"Why I outta-"

"Stop assaulting the wizard and return to bed." Thorin interjects before I can wring the wizard's neck, sounding very much like a mom "You are still recovering."

"I'm fine. Better than fine, I'm BORED out of my wits." Being cooped up in a room is no fun when there are caverns to explore and walls to climb. I was truly disappointed when I was denied the right to wander. 'Too dangerous' they said. They just want me barefoot and pregnant. I look down and wiggle my visible toes. I won't let them win! Gotta find me some shoes "I'm ready to get up and out. Isn't there ANYTHING I can do?"

"No, Thia. You need-"

"Of course there is." Gandalf speaks over Thorin which isn't that hard when you think about it "Thranduil has offered to make a treaty with the dwarves of Erebor, if you are willing to be the liaison between the two."
"That sounds-"

"-like a terrible idea." My head snaps in Thorin's direction in mild irritation "I will not allow it."

"Sure you will." I ignore him in favor of grinning up at the wizard "I needed to speak with Thranduil anyway. Gandalf, when do we make a break for it? I need to find my shoes first."

"Make a... we will leave at first light tomorrow." He bobs his head and I do the same vigorously as he exits the room "You are a daughter of men, not a hobbit. Therefore, coverings for your feet would be essential. I will see you in the morn', my dear."

"Bye Gandalf!" I hum lightly, tapping my foot and looking at the closed door. The other presence in the room is a failing damper on my mood "Nice guy. Now! Shoes. Shoes. Shoes."

"I do not believe that you are ready to meet with the elf king." Thorin denies, and I hear him kicking my shoes beneath the bed "It is too soon."

"And I do believe that I am." I swing around to face the dwarf, but not going to the foot covers since I have some time "I can't hide up in this room hoping he'll just stay in his kingdom and forget he ever met me. I have to get out there and straighten this out so I can get on with my life. So Legolas can get on with his. So you can get on with yours. Don't you want to get on with your life, Thorin?"

"You know that I do." He loops his arms around my back and we just stand in each other's arms "I wish to start a new life with you. One that is free of pain and suffering. Where we can raise our children in peace. A new life."

"Every new beginning starts at some other beginning's end." I secretly smile at the incorporation of the song "Let's end this, alright?"

"So that this" he lightly taps his temple against mine "may start."

"Gah." I roll my eyes in amusement "You're such a hopeless romantic. You know that right?"

"Hopeless?" He suddenly swings me into one of those super dancer dips that you think only happens in the movies. I expect a flower suddenly to appear in his mouth but he licks my nose instead. I sputter in confusion as he chuckles maniacally. I'm starting to really like his silly side "How about now?"

"Now?" I reply, forcing him to bear my weight as I let go of his arms to wipe my nose clean of his spit "Now you're just grossing me out."

"Then I shall remedy that." He bends his head to kiss me but halts at a harsh whisper

"Shhhhh!" a voice rings out from behind the door, startling us both "It's finally happening!"

"What's he doing?"

"I can't hear, move over!"

"If I move any further- Ouch! That hurt!"

"Sorry, lads, but I am not missin' this."

"Put that thing away, ye pervert!"
"You want to do it too, do not lie."

"What's happening?"

"Shut up, would you?"

I blink up at Thorin and he blinks down at me before we right ourselves. We seem to have some guests who are looking for the middle ages version of porn. Thorin quietly makes his way over as the voices grow louder, arguing over who should move where. Snatching open the door most the company, Dain, and a few of his men fall through the archway. 'Well THIS is embarrassing. For them.' They all lay there groaning like a bad orgy before noticing the king.

"Nows a great time to start running." I offer as they scramble to their feet.

"Excuse us." Thorin says to me before closing the door, separating me from the large group. Dain waves like a mad man and I can only offer an awkward smile before the door closes. I count the seconds 1…2…3… "Are you all addled?!"

I can barely hear them pleading for their lives over my own laughter.

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Yes, there will be a sequel. I'm glad you are all excited for it. I'm sorry if you wanted deep details about about Thorin's reaction but I felt that would put too many sad emotions into one chapter. If I ever feel the burning desire to write a side chapter for it however, I will let you know. The baby was not hurt in Thia's ordeal, and even if it was it'd still be Durin. Another chapter closer to the end! I will accept your praise now. *Crickets* WELL then I will thank you for past praises! Until next time!
Chapter 83

"Wake up, dear heart. It's time to prepare for the day."

"Mmgrhh."

"Do not be that way. This trip was your idea, was it not?"

"Humrghffth."

"Thia. It's time. To. Get. UP!"

The blankets I am cuddled under are ripped from my body and I let loose a whine of discontentment. Curling tightly into a ball, I continue throwing nonsensical sounds at Thorin before he finally comes over and squishes my face between his palms. 'It's hard to pout with your lips puckered.' I refuse to acknowledge the dwarf in the least; shutting my eyes so firmly that I begin to see stars behind the lids. We sit in silence for a moment before he shifts with a grumble.

"If you aim on staying in bed all day," he begins as I make fake snoring sounds "I will simply have to stay with you."

Without further a due, the dwarf snatches my shirt up to expose my belly and begins blowing raspberries on it. I make a totally unattractive noise before laughing hysterically. It's been years since I've been purposefully tickled, let alone receiving a full on belly blowing. His arms circle around my back, holding me in place while his mouth tickles me half to death. His beard prickles the now sensitive area, making the sensation even worse.

"St-sto..Ah! Stooooop!" I gasp between breaths, pushing at his head to try and get him off "I can't…. I can't… stopstopstopstopstop!"

"Are you awake now?" he nips around my belly button as I lay trying to recover "We can stay a little longer if-"

"No! I-I-I mean yes! I'm awake!"

"Wonderful." He kisses my pouched stomach and stands "Then let's go visit the tree shagger."

The battle field is still littered with bodies when we depart. No one ever mentions the aftermath of war. The stinking corpses, bloated and rotting, are being feasted upon by countless scavengers. They won't be left forever, however the clean up is slow moving even as we leave. My large group of friends trudges around the ruins of lake town and through the forest with a plethora of
conversation darting between us. The group consists of 2 elves, a skin changer, a dog, an owl, a hobbit, a wizard, and four dwarves. Oh, and one human girl. Legolas put off his trip of finding himself until after we got this marriage thing sorted out and I'm glad I don't have to face Thranduil all by my lonesome. I know Kili is only here to walk the lovely Tauriel home. 'Dwelfs!' The trip moves a lot smoother, quicker, when we aren't being chased by orcs or warns or spiders. We arrive in Mirkwood by Midday and I'm a little sad that we brought Bilbo along. Not that I don't enjoy his company, it's just that… he's leaving. After this meeting is over, Gandalf plans to take him back to the Shire. Beorn will see them past the forest, but promises to leave Duke with me. The sweet dog has yet to leave my presence since hearing the news. Still, I'm going to miss Bilbo when he goes home. 'Home. I do miss it terribly.' An ache forms in my chest but I squash it down, not allowing myself to be distracted.

"Lord Legolas and Lady Ballineth." A voice calls as we approach the entrance and I look up with a hum of question "Welcome back."

"Addasser!" Legolas and I greet at the same time. The prince's greeting is calm while I yell happily and hop down from my pony, disregarding Thorin's glower at the elf. He refused to let me ride a horse in my 'state' and Oin agreed saying it would be too high if I were to fall "It's been forever! Well, more like a month but it feels like forever. What are you doing out here?"

"I have been tasked with fetching the young prince and princess, as well as their," he looks at the rest of the group and lifts his nose. He can be so prissy sometimes "guests."

"Well you couldn't have asked for a better task." I pay no attention to the title as I'm here to get it revoked anyway "Let's get this show on the road, shall we?"

"This 'show,' as you call it, will take place inside, not on the road." He furrows a brow but I just raise my own with a knowing smirk "After you have refreshed yourselves from the trip, you shall meet with King Thranduil."

"How long?" Thorin asks but it sounds more like a demand "I do not wish to stay longer then needed."

"We would not wish to keep you longer than we must. In two hours King Thranduil will be in the throne room." He doesn't bother looking at the dwarf, instead giving me a bland expression before continuing "Please do not bake any cakes this time."

"Would I do that?" I ask in mock offense

"Yes." The entire group responds as a whole and I throw my arms in the air. So what if I cooked in every location I've been at? I like to eat. I scoff and move toward the entrance "Come on. We don't want to be LATE!"

For the third time, I enter the elvish kingdom. 'Please let the third time be the charm.' My experiences get significantly worse with each of my visits and they always have shackles involved. I just can't take anymore chains, especially not after the pale monstrosity fiasco. I shiver at the memory, pushing it to the back of my mind. I'm soon directed to a washroom where I can clean up and get ready to meet Thranduil. I go over countless scenarios but they all end up with beheadings or more chains. My stomach is twisted into knots and I just hope I can leave this place no more wacky than I came in. Too soon Addasser returns, about an hour too soon if my internal clock is working, and like many times before, he leads me to a place I'd rather not go. Upon entering, I find the room relatively empty, save for a few people. Thranduil and Legolas are here of course, but my dwarves aren't. I glance around looking for Thorin and Kili but they are nowhere to be seen. Neither are Gloin or Nori, and the rest of the group was never really expected to be in attendance in
the first place. 'I guess it's just a woodland royal event. Saves them from dealing with dwarves. Sneaky.' Addasser pushes lightly on my back and I move further into the room, careful not to trip on the dress provided for me.

"Ballineth, you have returned." Thranduil opens his arms to air hug me from across the way "It is good to see you are well."

"Thanks. I brought the gems you wanted." I walk forward and give him the pouch of white stones before remembering the beautiful ones around my neck "Oh! And these too."

"Stop." He commands as I go to unclasp the necklace "Keep them."

"... Why?"

"Do you find them undesirable?"

"N-N-No but you've wanted them for God knows how long." Why he would want me to wear the jewelry is most perplexing. He was literally ready to go to war for them just a bit ago "I'm sure you would want them."

"It would please me for you to have them. They are a wedding gift."

"About that…” I shift from foot to foot, looking at Legolas for support. I'm glad he decided to stick around for a while. He offers a small smile and I hope it isn't similar to the kiss of death or something "I…. We've decided that we aren't really married."

"I am aware, though at one time you believed yourself to be. As such, you may still have them." He stares at me, waiting for a reaction

"It's just that… wait. What?"

"Father, I do not understand." The prince says from his place "You are already aware?"

"Nothing is secret from me within these walls and I knew of your baking plan just as soon as you did." holding up the bag of gems he does intend to keep, the elf king tilts his head in my direction "It served me well to allow it to play out."

"That… you mean this whole time-"

"Yes. In addition, a little bird brought me a trinket of yours, young seer, and it had your birth name on it." I guess I'm back to the pet name "It tells your name, birthdate, address. Um... All the things that make up a person."

"Most peculiar. Another piece of evidence that supports your… other worldliness. Take this item as well." I gape like a fish at having been found out so easily and nearly fall over in shock when the Arkenstone is plopped into my hand "Now that I have what I desired, I have no need for this rock."

"Really?" I ask, not believing it to be this easy. Not to mention what I'm supposed to do with this pretty mineral. I mean, it's mine. Thorn gave it to me as my part of the treasure but I'm sure he'd at least want to see it back "I mean... really really?"
"I believe one 'really' is enough."

"Who…"

"That is the bird's name." Addasser adds from his quiet spot "Peculiar thing."

"I would also like to give you these." Thranduil dumps the fuzzy S&M chains that shackled Legolas and I together over my shoulder like a boa. I nearly drop them in fear but remind myself that it's alright now. Azog is dead and everything is going to be ok... everything will be ok "I have no need for them any longer."

"What am I supposed to do with them?!" My arms begin shaking under the weight of so many objects

"The same thing that you do with this odd hat I suppose." He then extracts my panties from his pocket and fits them onto my head as I stand frozen in disbelief. Thank the good Lord in heaven above that Thorin isn't here to see him elf manhandling my underwear "You left it here when you went on your trip. Please take it with you as you leave."

"Um… Ok…That… Oh gosh that's great." I cover my mouth with my hand as Addasser gives me a little bag to carry my prizes. I'm too… everything…. for words "Cause, I didn't think you'd let this marriage thing slide without cannons and threats. I'm totally surprised that you... faked the whole thing... I just... what?"

"You are also pregnant with the dwarf's children." He responds blandly, ignoring most of my part "It would not do for you to give birth to them while tied, legally or fictitiously, to my son."

"Who told you that?" this explains a lot

"No, this came from the wizard."

"Uh. Right." There seems to be more to Who than I thought and I begin to question what his goal in all this was but then... "Um… Children? As in plural?"

"Yes. Twins to be exact."

"I knew it!" I pump my first into the air, silently commending myself on my deductive skills "I told Thorin, you know. I said it could happen and he was all 'Nooooo, it's only one. It can't haaaappen.' Shows what he knows!"

"... Are you quite alright, little seer?"

"Yes but these gems and the Arkenstone-"

"As I said, Consider them a token of good measure for your wedding as well as the future treaty." He waves his hand and I'm pretty sure he's shooing me "Your dwarves have the contract. Sign it and return it at your leisure. Good day Balline... Thia."

"Yeah…" The sudden emotion that splashes across the elf's face catches me off guard but his defensive walls roll up just as quickly as they fell. It leaves me feeling like I've seen a part of him that wasn't meant for me and we both know it. With nothing left to say, I blink at Addaser and Legolas as I walk out. The older elf just shrugs and Legolas offers me a bow "Yeah, good day. Have fun on your trip, Greenleaf."

My buddies and I barely get a quick meal before the elves usher us back into the woods. It's
probably for the best since they are raving mad at the trick Thranduil pulled. Everyone is more or less confused as to what happened but a quick recapitulation of the events is enough to have them whooping for joy. I leave out the most of the part with the presenting of gifts, thinking it's not the best idea to mention it. While every one is feeling happy to be done, I on the other hand, am feeling quite down as I make my way over to Bilbo. He gives me a soft smile upon noticing my approach, offering up his hand for a shake. Giving him a queer look, I pull the hobbit into a hug, laughing at his indignant huff.

"I thought you didn't care for touching." He grumbles half heartedly

"I don't but I'm just so happy."

"It's over." He concludes and I wish I didn't have to tell him otherwise "And I shall return home alive, just as you said I would."

"You will. But..." I remove my ring and press it into his palm. He reacts immediately, shaking his head but I hold fast and refuse to let him give it back "There is still more to come."

"Thia... Thia, I can't."

"And you won't." I reassure, kneeling to speak with him at eye level "There will come a time for another battle to be fought, but it won't be yours to fight... No matter how much you may want to defend those who will."

"... You sound just like him."

"Like who?" I ask confused but a throat being cleared behind me stops the hobbit from answering "Ah, hello there Thorin."

"Thia." He helps me stand, not that I need the assistance yet, and holds me to his side. I also neglected to tell him of the double trouble coming our way but we have time. That's all we have now. The group breaks in half and I watch as my friend prepares for his journey home, half wishing I could do the same. The ache in my chest returns but I ignore it again "Master Baggins, I wish to part in friendship and to take back my words and actions at the gate. I am sorry to have brought you into such peril."

"I am glad to have been able to share in your perils, Thorin." He smiles and I'm too happy to mention for the difference of reasoning for this conversation "Every single one of them."

"Farewell, Master Burglar. Go back to your books and your armchair. Plant your trees, watch them grow. If more people valued home above gold, this world would be a merrier place." Thorin then surprises even me by dipping into a low bow "In you I have found not only honor, loyalty, and a willing heart, but also a friend. I am proud to have met you."

"Hm. Well, yes. I-I-I am proud to have met you too Thorin." I grin at the exchange between a King and a gentle hobbit as tears threaten to fall down my cheeks. I'm just so happy "And you too, Thia. I am most glad to have met you."

"Mmm. I'm glad I got to meet all of you guys as well. You've no idea how much. We should do this again sometime." I peer around at the group members, trading my tears for a vicious snicker "Anybody know where we can find another fire breathing dragon?"

"Good bye, Miss Malcolmson." Gandalf sighs, climbing onto his horse and starting away "I look forward to meeting your children."
"Sure. And Bilbo!" I call with understanding that the wizard knows more than he should. Wizards. Twisting from Thorin's embrace, I rush over to whisper into Bilbo's pointed ear "Don't lose the contract and take the treasure from the troll hoard. And just a heads up, the other hobbits are auctioning off your stuff and Lobelia has taken your silver."

"That no good- Gandalf! We must go!" I've never seen the little guy so annoyed. He orders the wizard forward and he surprisingly complies "Thank you kindly, Thia. I shall not dally!"

"See that you don't! But do come back and visit sometime." I call in return, relaxing into Thorin's presence at my back "I'd hate for you to have another adventure so soon."

Almost. Almost done. I'd say... 85-87 chapters will be the total. Oh oh oh oh oh, its ending. I'm mostly excited to start the next one, though first I have to go over what I wrote for my brother. I refused to let him read this one and wrote a much shorter story on why Azog hates the line of Durin so much. It's posted here but it could use a nice clean up. Thank you for your reviews. Until next time!
"Well... This is really nice. I'm enjoying this immensely."

"It is good that you are. You are no longer tied to an elf." Gloin converses pleasantly from his pony a few paces away "Who wouldn't be happy?"

"Aye, that's true enough." Nori answers before winking at me "Though I wouldn't mind joining you two lasses between the sheets."

"That's just disgusting." Kili shoves Nori's shoulder roughly but he just rocks slightly in the saddle "Truly."

"Have you suddenly grown tired of living, thief?" Thorin asks rhetorically with a heavy drawl in his voice "There is an empty spot on the edge of my sword if you would like me to remedy that."

"No, thank you Majesty." The star dwarf replies cheekily "Maybe if you had given your sword to the lass, she wouldn't have run off and married an elf."

"Nori!" I hiss as he urges his pony forward and away from Thorin's striking range "I swear, something is wrong with that guy."

"I will go teach him manners, lassie." Gloin answers and gives chase, Kili going along for the ride

"This is nice." I repeat, because it is "No dragons or orcs or imminent death lurking in the corner."

"Mmmm. Yes. It is a good feeling." Thorin turns to me and I tilt my head in question "It is time."

"To du-du-du-du- dudududu- duel?" I stutter, mimicking the theme song from Yugioh

"I'm going to say... No."

"Ouch."

"It is time to begin our life together." He reaches over and runs his hand along my stomach "I wish to wed you before our son is born."

"Ah." I really think everyone is jumping the gun here. I personally think it's a girl but I'm not getting a vibe that 'boy' is wrong either. Twins make the possibilities... possible. We will simply have to wait and see "I'd like to not be an unwed mother as well but..."
"But what, Thia?"

"There are things people should know about each other before they get married." We sigh at the same time but I'm sure the reasons are different "Yes, love is a big part but there are plenty of other things that go with it. Sure, you love me but what do you know about me?"

"You are from the city of York where over 8 million people live. You have 7 brothers and sisters, of which you are the second oldest totaling an impressive eight. You are closest to your eldest sister, Leah. Your favorite color is pink, you believe in a single god, you play a large number of instruments, and you speak several different languages. Most of which have never been heard in this world." He pauses, seeming to think for a moment "Your mother's name is Chrysanthemum and your father's name is Malcolm."

"How…What…" I blink at him, leaning away and looking around to make sure I haven't fallen into the twilight zone "Who told you all that?"

"You did." He says plainly, grinning lightly "I listen when you speak, Thia."

"...Its NEW York City..." I grumble "I told you all that?"

"Except the bit about your father." Nori cuts in, happily ruining the moment "I told him that part."

"A thief AND a spy." Kili rolls his eyes in a very American fashion. Guess he's learning "Wonderful."

"My thoughts exactly." The prince and I start to get into a conversation but I don't forget the one between Thorin; turning it back to him after a moment "You know all that stuff about me, but I barely know anything about you."

"Do you not?"

"All the things I knew before don't count." I pull a straight face as he raises an eyebrow "Like your mom, favorite color, childhood love, deepest darkest fear. You know. That kind of stuff."

"Grandmother's name was Disen." Kili provides and I'm ecstatic to know another female dwarf's name "Mother says I have her eyes."

"That's how your mother got her name." I smile, leaning over to whisper to Thorin "Dis is the only female dwarf given a name in... all of this. It's in honor of her... sacrifice."

"... Thank you for saving her from that." He genuinely answers before falling back into the conversation "I prefer the color brown. Particularly the color of you eyes."

"Hazel. You won't score any points for saying that though." He shrugs his shoulders as our companions chuckle around us "Childhood love?"

"I was much too busy for love." His answer is swift and... I believe him. Guy had an entire lost kingdom to establish "I am glad I waited for the best."

"... I'm glad I did too."

We lapse into a quiet stroll and my mind wanders to my new found freedom. 'Freedom.' I hadn't expected Thranduil to give it to me so easily. I just keep going over how great it feels as we make our way back to Erebor. The day started with nerves and is ending with complete and utter relief. Not even paying much attention to anyone else, I make my way back to my room with the intention
of kicking back. I throw open the door, walk in, and collapse on the bed. Duke runs off somewhere, finally exploring, and I'm left to my own devices. Placing a pillow over my head, I scream all my delight into it. I kick off my shoes and jump on the bed higher than I ever did back home. I leap off and grab my bag, dropping the chains, yanking my phone out and turning it on. My one and only intent is to start a pumping 'Me party.' You know, a me party. A party by myself.

I forgot about the phone in Mirkwood and haven't turned it on since. The battery is only at 15% but I'm just happy it survived the trip. 'Unlike my poor glasses.' Putting the device on shuffle, I begin blasting music, not caring if I freak out anyone who passes. My songs starts playing and I dance like I haven't in months. Glad that Thranduil returned my underwear I strip and put them on, singing in falsetto like an angel at the familiar feel, followed by my custom 'made in Rivendell' pjs. All the while not missing a beat. I bounce. I wiggle. I do a jig. I sing along and loudly. My dance fever refuses to cool even as the songs become a bit slower and faster and slower again. 'Show me' by Usher comes on and I whoop to the beat as it pick up again.

"The night is young, you know
We've just begun
Let's have some fun until the moon turns to the sun
Look out the dj's got this party jumping
It's easy to let loose when you sipping something
Relax, it's what you deserve
There's no need to be reserved, no
Show me what you're made of
You'll be going, going all night can you stay up?
Show me what you're made of
You'll be going, going all night can you stay up?
Show me, what you came here for"

The line repeats a couple of times and I momentarily start doing the electric slide. I jump back onto the bed aiming to touch the ceilings, the sky, and eventually the stars. The odds of that are so slim that a hair is thicker than they are but it feels good to try. I just want... to jump!

"Telling you can't control what you can't have
You're here, to enjoy yourself
But time, in the back of your mind
Spend what left of it on the floor
Have another round and just enjoy this party
Put your favorite sign, go head and grab somebody
Ain't no limit, no such thing is too much
And if you cause a line in the V.I

I'm waiting on you to show me"

I cartwheel off the bed and start doing the Carlton followed by the new age running man. I have no idea what I'm doing anymore but I'm sure that there is one person I'd sure like to grab. 'Thorin.' My heart races at the thought of the dwarf but even the desire to seek him out will not stop this personal dance dance revolution.

"Show me what you're made of
You'll be going, going all night can you stay up?
Show me what you're made of
You'll be going, going all night can you stay up?"

All the twisting and jumping is starting to tire me out but I want to at least finish the song. Slowing down, I begin a lazy hip sway that takes little to no effort but has tremendous results. I don't twerk, because I'm pretty sure my butt will fall off if I make a habit of it, but I can sway. Even gyrate if there's some good reggae on. The song makes a soft 'tick' noise that I don't remember happening before but it drones on without further interrupts so I get back to my twist and jive.

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THORIN POV

The strange sounds coming from Thia's room drive me to quicken my step to her door. What I am greeted with is nothing like what I expected. In the middle of the room is the shy woman I have grown to know and love, swiveling her body in the most provocative display of dance I have ever seen. Fearful that someone else may lay eyes on the captivating display, I quickly shut the door and watch as a little metal device magically creates sound while the woman sings along.

"Show me, what you came here for
If you find yourself not knowing what to do
Just lift you hands up high improvise
And don't you worry about what they think of you
All you can do is just live your life
Wo-ah, now it's the time
Now it's the time
So come on show me what you're all about
Right here, right now
There is the perfect time and place"

She twirls lightly, eyes closed shut in concentration and I greedily take in the sight. She barely wears anything; bloomers and an undershirt that comes just short of her belly button. It shows off the early roundness of her stomach beautifully. What really captures my attention are her legs. The slender but toned limbs are smooth and I immediately remember the feel of them wrapped around
my waist. The music brings both Thia's hips and my heart beat to quick tempo. I feel as though it is prompting me forward and if it continues, I may just show her the effect.

"Show me what you're made of

You'll be going, going all night can you stay up?

Show me what you're made of

You'll be going, going all night can you stay up?

Show me, what you came here for"

I can listen to the taunting words no longer. Approaching swiftly, I grasp the girl's slim waist to still the swirling movement that is rapidly driving me mad. Snatching up the device from her hand, I shake it in an effort to make the music cease but it persists. After a moment however, it stops and I relax until some evil sorcerer begins screeching and I drop the item. Thia's quick reflexes save the metal box from falling to the floor and she thankfully stops the noises.

"I'm sorry about the skrillex. Secret joy of mine." she shrugs and presses a raised lump, causing the item to cease glowing "Did the music startle you?"

"It was not the music that left the impression" I return to her side after the chanting has been stopped "but rather what it made you do."

"Dance? I know for a fact that you guys have dancing around here."

"I have never seen someone move as you did." I walk around her predatorily, taking her in with my eyes "It was extremely… sensual to say the least."

"Mmmm, yeah. I suppose it was." she moves away from me to put away her devices, bending low and causing the ache to grow harsher within my trousers. Moving forward to assist her in retrieving the items from the floor, I still as she recoils violently "Oh. Oh, I just… Thorin-"

"There is fear in your heart." It is as we expected. I back away from her lowly "Azog put it there and I have failed in removing it. Now you fear me as well."

"That's not your fault, Thorin."

"Is it not?" I nearly shout but lower my voice, hoping she knows I am cross with myself and not her "My kin failed. I failed. Now you, the one who least deserves it, suffers."

"If I suffer it is the fault of the one who caused the pain." She tries to comfort me but I can still see the trembling of her hands. Hands that pulled both me and my kin from the grasps of death numerous times "If you could have stopped it, you would have."

"But I could not! I could not…" I fall to my knees before her and press my face into my One's stomach. She grips my shoulder with a shaking hand, holding me tightly. Even now in the midst of her fear, she cares for others "I nearly lost you and all you'd have ever received is pain."

"I don't blame you." She whispers

"You should." I circle my arms around her hips, careful not to squeeze her too tightly. She has experienced enough pain for countless lifetimes "Let me pleasure you."

"Let you… as in… I mean…"
"I wish to bring you pleasure in whichever way you choose." She stares down at me, clearly taken aback by the offer "I understand if you would not wish for me to use my fingers, I can use my mouth inst-"

"Ahhhhhh no." she fans her face as I can see it visibly heating but I refuse to retract the statement. I need her to want to stay with me for me. Not for our child or convenience but because she wants to be with me "I um, thank you for the offer but I, mmmmm, I'm not ah, nope. It wouldn't be fair."

"Not fair?" I ask, eyeing the woman curiously "My pleasuring you would be… unfair?"

"Yeah! Because it's what you want to do." she bounces her head, twirling Mahal's bead nervously "If you're trying to do something for me, shouldn't I decide what it is? What if I wanted to p-p-p-pleeeasure you?"

"... Would that make you happier?" I inquire seriously. As intriguing as the prospect of her pleasuring me is, I am unsure of what she aims to get from it

"It's more likely to happen than the other way around." She mumbles under her breath, turning her face away but I can hear her clearly "I already told you that you weren't allowed near my underthings."

"This is true." I contemplate the new perspective as she coaxes me to stand "If... that is what you truly desire?"

"I'm warming up to the idea." She suddenly holds up a pair of delicate bangles "But you have to wear these."

Alright people. Next chapter is a chapter i'd usually place in the side chapters but its too important to the story line to cut out, so it'll be included. It's got some stuff in it, I'm telling you now. Good stuff though. I hope. Until next time!
Chapter 5

DISCLAIMER: I do not own the characters or happenings of middle earth. They belong to J. R. R. Tolkien and sometimes Peter Jackson's stuff might fall in too. I only own my OC. Please, feel free to leave any comments and questions. Follow the story in which ever way you would like, but make your thoughts known. Thank you!

CHAPTER 85

So, I've never really tried S&M but if the start of this first experience is anything to go on, I might be willing to give it a try. It was tough finding a place to loop the chain but thankfully the bed has a few spots that would serve well enough. Thorin lays on the bed after removing his heavier clothes, and raises his arms over his head as I instructed; willingly preparing himself to be used as my new toy to secure him in place.

"As I have absolutely no idea what I'm doing, I suppose your punishment for everything that has happened thus far, that you're stupidly taking the blame for, would be letting me test out everything on you." I shuffle from foot to foot as he stares at me and tries not to laugh "This is serious business."

"Oh, I am sure."

"Uh huh. If I hurt you, the safety word is 'Pickleface.' Please use it if needed."

"I would not like to think of our son's false name during what may happen next."

"Exactly."

Taking a deep breath, I start by pulling off his boots. 'Shoes do not belong in the bed.' A knife falls to the floor and I pick it up, absently admiring the craftsmanship before another bad idea comes to my head. Trailing my hand up his torso, I use the knife to cut through his undershirt to reveal his... ah... perfect chest. I have to take a mo,eat a just sigh at it in admiration but God must truly love me. Letting the blade drop under the bed, I move the shreds for a better view. I trace the hard edges and soft crevices of him before brushing my fingers down to play in the hair below his belly button.

"Thia..." he warns and I look up to make sure I haven't hurt him "You do not have to do this."

"I'm not doing anything I don't want to."

Returning my focus to his torso, I lean up and begin to place kiss lightly on his neck. He's done it often enough to me for the knowledge that its important to imprint itself on me. Straddling the dwarf, I slide down his body, leaving bites and hickies in my wake. I'm not good at the sickies and it takes a bit of practice before I can get them how I want. When I come to his belt, I pause to think whether or not I'm really ready for what I'm about to do. It's not all the way but it is a substantial step. 'I am.' The real question should be, is he? Unhooking the ties, I open his pants before looking up to meet Thorin's eyes. His face is as calm and collected as ever but the rapid rise and fall of his chest tells another story. Watching his face, I slip my hand inside and curl it around his heated
length. He hisses loudly, breaking eye contact to stare at the ceiling.

"There is nothing on the ceiling." I say, massaging the flesh lightly. Never in my life have I wanted someone to watch me so badly "I never turned from you. You don't have that option either."

He takes a few deep breaths before lowering his face to give me the attention I want. Tilting my head in a silent question, he nods and I proceed. Pulling him free, I let go and simply... look. I've had sex ed classes. I've changed a diaper. I've even seen a bit of porn. None of them quite compare to what I'm seeing now. The color is a few shades lighter than the rest of his body, which is honestly expected because this part isn't in the sun. He's uncut, which is another expected condition. Curiosity gets the better of me and reach out my index finger; dragging it down from tip to base. Its silky smooth, both hard and soft, and about as hot as burning coal. Rising my finger again, I continue to push until his member lies flat on his belly. It extends slightly further than his belly button but it's the thickness that catches most of my attention. Like most thing dwravish, it would seem that this part is meant to be more stout then tall but Thorin appears to have both. 'Cheater.' It's impressive and more than a bit intimidating but I'm not afraid. Nervous and anxiety ridden but not afraid. Wrapping my hand around it, I test out my nonexistent skills.

"Seriously though. Tell me if I hurt you."

"Mmmm." He hums and I'm pleased he is enjoying it so far

Wrapping both my hands around his length, I kneel between his legs and lie flat on my stomach. Opening my mouth slightly, I bring my mouth close enough to kiss but flick out my tongue across the head and revel at the reaction. The shackles clank loudly as Thorin jerks in the position. He meets my wide eyes and I slowly begin to grin. Keeping him in my sights, I lower my head once more and drag my tongue up the underside before pulling the tip into my mouth. Sucking gently, I carefully debate what to do next as Thorin takes his time trying to control his trembling. I don't look forward to choking and I think slower would be better. Working my hand, I begin to slowly take more of the dwarf into my mouth. Ever so slowly, I'm extra careful of my teeth as I'm sure that's important. It takes longer than I expected, nearly ten minutes by my estimate, to get the length to touch the back of my throat. Just my luck it's not all of him, but it's all I can do. The constant rattle of chains is my evidence that Thorin has no qualms with it. I slide the slick rod from my mouth and blow on the head for good measure before grinning up at the dwarf.

"Are you ready to start?"

"Start?" he asks, panting from exertion "My One, I am ready to finish."

"Don't worry, I've got it all under control."

Without waiting for an answer, I swoop down and retake as much of his member into my mouth as I can. I pretend that I'm bobbing for apples, while listening to the strain and creak of the chains as well as Thorin. Just for the sake of seeing if I can, I attempt to gargle. I can't of course, but the attempt is enough as Thorin bucks suddenly. I barely have time to gasp a breath before he slips deeper down my throat but retracts immediately after. My eyes dart up to the dwarf who looks apologetic for nearly asphyxiating me with his penis. Instead of getting upset, I pull the foreskin away from the head and keep going. This time I'm prepared, placing a hand at his base to keep from drowning. I continue like this until with a shuddering pant, Thorin begins to make a request.

"Thia... Thia, my love, my life, my all. I can not take much more of this." I believe him, as the salty taste on my tongue is evidence of an approaching finish "How much longer must I endure this?"
"Umnt I em piiniffed wif boo" I mumble around him before freeing myself "But if you're so eager to be done. I'll just have to comply."

What has made me such a sexy, teasing, vixen I doubt I'll ever know. But right now I want to bring pleasure to the dwarf and seeing each passionate expression passing over his face makes me more excited than I've ever been before. I'm not scared that I'm doing something wrong or worried that I'll regret the action later because I know I'm not and I won't. I suckle at him before pulling the entirely into my mouth and quickly working towards his finish. His soft groans rapidly turn into fierce growls and I mentally cheer. I wait until I feel it, a hurried pulse like throbbing to signify that his release is seconds away, before I add pressure with my thumb on the spot. Thorin bolts nearly upright as his orgasm is suddenly halted before it can even really begin. Rising, I let his painfully stiff member slip from between my now aching jaw and look at the dwarf who is gaping at me in disbelief. Tucking him back into place, I laugh nervously.

"... It's the only trick I know."

"Wha..."

"You told me to finish."

"... What?"

"I'm done now." I yawn into my fist, actually feeling tired "It's late. We should head to bed."

"Thia... don't..."

"Don't what? Sleep?" I pull the covers over us, fighting not to grin as he tents them "We all need sleep, Thorin."

"Do not leave me like this!" he hisses, rattling the chains as I throw an arm over his chest and snuggle down. All his moving has me giggling in my throat as I'm sure he was to head-butt me right now "Thia... at least let me out of these chains that I may..."

"...Hm." I take a moment to think about but I already know the answer "Nope. Night."

"N-night? Wake up and fix this, woman!"

"If you wake me, I'm going to do it all again."

"Alright but-"

"With just as unhappy an ending."

"Wha..."

"So you'd best start thinking of Thranduil naked and get some rest."

"You... are truly a cruel woman."

"You said I could do what I wanted. You said you wanted me to finish." I blow out the candelabra beside the bed and patting his dusty cheek "I'm not cruel. You just aren't specific enough. Night."

"It shall be a long one." He groans in return

"Oh Thorin." He sounds so dejected that I can't keep up with my joke anymore. Openly laughing, I hug him tightly while burying my head into his chest. He does not find the same amusement as I
do but at least he doesn't tell me to hit the road "I'm kidding. Kidding. I didn't enjoy you locking me up, and doing it to you wouldn't sit well with me."

"... I apologize." I hum in acceptance as I unlock the dwarf's arms, freeing him from his confinement. Dropping the shackles on to the floor, he pulls me into a tight embrace as we simply lay beside each other "The choice was yours to make, yet I took it from you only to be met with even worse consequences. I knew it was not right and yet... knowing you would be in endanger, I could think of no other way."

"Your heart was in the right place, even if your actions were not." stroking his arm lightly, I let go of any remaining anger over his less than ideal actions. I've done plenty as well in our time together and as we fade into the night, I know that none of it matters. We are both alive and well, what more can I ask for? A little nugget of desire wiggles it's way into my thoughts and I decide to just go for it "Thorin?"

"Hm?"

"You love me?"

"You know this to be true." he presses his lips into my hair, kissing the crown of my head lightly "I have long since given up trying to ignore that which cannot be denied."

"... ok."

"And you?" he lifts my chin so we are eye to eye. It's the moment of truth and no lies are going to be exchanged here "Have you any affection for me?"

"I... How do I explain it?"

"With words when possible."

"Heh. For you... I feel... like... its..." frowning at my lack of words, I lean forward and brush my lips against the king's. Ever so lightly, I try to think of a way to convey my feelings. Giving us a breath of space of space, I try again "I feel for you... much more than love... if that makes sense. Love is the simplified word to describe the ... thing... I feel for you... This is... I can't do this right..."

"You are my One and it would appear that I am yours." I frown in confusion, silently asking for more information "Your feelings mirror my own because they are my own. As is the way of being One."

"Would you still love me... if I wasn't?"

"Would you miss breathing if you never had?"

"I'm pretty sure I'd just die."

"Precisely. I could not exist as I am without you. You were born to complete me and I, you."

"Ones." folding our hands together, I examine the differences "Will you explain it to me?"

"Certainly. As is was explained to me, Ones are two sides of the same coin. Removing one side, changes the over all function of the coin itself." Lining our hands together, he traces the deep life lines that seemingly meet together "One cannot be without the other and still remain itself. Without you being my One, I would not have love for you because I would not be myself any longer. What
we share is more than common feelings and desires that change in the moments of time. We share thoughts. Experiences. Strengths and weakness... A very being."

"Like... when you finished the words that song you shouldn't know?"

"Yes. You knew the words and they resonated within you. You are a part of me and I, you. Thus, on occasion there will be some... cross over." he tugs on the braid holding Mahal's bead, looking at it with a strange expression "Once a pair have become a One, they will never be fully alone ever again and none can come between them on this plane or the next."

"Hey... Thorin?"

"Hm?"

"Will you marry me?"

"... Will you marry me?"

"I... just asked that."

"As did I."

"Siiiiiiigh. You want the be the one to ask, huh?" shaking my head lightly at his stoic silence, I run my fingers through my hair "Alright, alright. Ask."

"Thia." sitting up and pulling me along, the dwarf gives me his undivided attention "If the sun ceased to rise and the moon crashed into the sea, I would only hope to have spent what time I could with you because I now can exist without you as easily as one without skin."

"You'd die."

"Slowly and painfully."

"... Me too. How romantic."

"Hopeless is what you called it."

"Skinned alive or married. Hopelessly romantic indeed."

"Will you give me the honor of keeping my flesh on my bones and living a moderately pain free life by becoming your husband?"

"I'd love to."

"As would I." sliding his hand behind my head to bring our foreheads together, the dwarf pins me with a loving stare "As would I."

THIS originally ended with a happier sexy ending after the suction cup... but it got accidentally deleted and I was not in a sexy happy mood to rewrite it... Sorry sorry sorry. I hope this will compensate for it. Next chapter is the last chapter. Be prepared!
Chapter 86

Two days. I am able to convince Thorin to postpone our mad dash into married life by two days. I'd have been happy to become his wife at that very second but if we are doing this, we are doing it right. We signed the elf contract and sent it back with the news of our wedding and a request for Tauriel to be in attendance. 'I need another bride’s maid if I don't want Sigrid to be lonely.' I'd have had Tauriel be the maid of honor since I have no female friends but then she would have had to march down the aisle with Dwalin and that's... not a great idea. It was hard enough convincing Thorin to let her attend in the first place.

The attending request was granted by the elves and they even sent Addasser along with the reason of him being a clergyman of sorts, with a few witnesses. He shares the position of reverend with Dain, who insisted on being the one to join Thorin and I. Although Balin is just as qualified for Dain's position, he is standing in for my father so he can't be the reverend too. Dwalin is the best man, so he's out too. Thus, Lord-talks-to-belly is next best. I didn't think everything would be done in time, but looking down at my silken dress, material provided by the elves, I know not to underestimate the power of persistence.

Most of my help comes in the form of Dori who, in addition to tea making, is also a fantastic wedding planner. After explaining how a wedding back home is conducted, he jumped right into the task. I didn't even have the chance to turn into a bridezilla, he did everything so well. He even took my bag to see my 'personality' so my dress would be perfect. 'And yes, it is.'

Thorin spends most of the next two days with Dwalin and his nephews, doing God knows what. In addition to Sigrid, I kidnap Tilda from Bard to be my flower girl. The child is so excited having never been to such a 'royally royal' event, as she called it.

"You're going to be a Queen, Ms. Toothfairy!" she shouts with such enthusiasm that I think she may pop "It's just like a fairy tale. So dream like."

"Oh yeah, but you're already a princess so we can be royal together." Her mouth drops open before she lets out a high pitched squeal of delight. I guess I am becoming Queen. Straightening out the dress, I wait for the precession to begin. I feel all fancy now "I guess I am becoming Queen."

"Are you not excitd?" she questions, bouncing on her feet "I am excited!"

"We can tell." Kili smiles at the child before commencing to exchange kissy faces with Tauriel when Dwalin isn't watching "Thia's just good at being calm. She didn't even bat a lash when she threw my brother off a tower."
"You did?" she asks wide eyed "Amazing!"

"Not by her own strength!" Fili protests as I roll my eyes "She'd have had a hard time getting rid of such a formidable protector if I had not have been tied up!"

"Yeah alright, Captain Obvious. We all know you're strong but still, I saved everyone's life so stop complaining." I scrunch up nose and continue in silly voice "If there is a key, there must be a door. No duh!"

"You weren't even there!" he pouts

"You are excited for this though." Sigrid asks softly "Truly?"

"Of course I am." I wave off all the worry as Dwalin captures Sigrid's arm and with surprising gentleness, guides her through the doors. Turning towards Tilda and Balin, I continue "I never thought of all the other stuff. I know Thorin is king. He's a strong leader and standing beside him is an honor, though being Queen never crossed my mind when I accepted his proposal."

"Then what did?" the young girl asks, as Kili holds up a hand for Tauriel and they leave the room "Huh? Huh, what did?"

"You are a curious little thing, aren't you?" Balin chuckles, resting a hand on her head to still her movement "Though I am curious as well."

"There was really no way I could say 'no.' I thought of my life before I met him and how much it would hurt to return to that if it meant he wasn't by my side." My heart gives a jerk at the very idea of being away from the dwarf. I have the little girl stand beside Fili as I collect myself. The pair shall be playing the little bride and little groom, as well as flower girl and ring bearer. Though, I don't know where the prince put the rings or if we even have any for that matter "My heart brightens at the thought of him and the world seems a little sadder when he's away."

"How romantic..." Tilda sways dramatically and Fili just rolls his eyes before moving towards the door "Will you marry me, Master Dwarf?"

He groans and gently pushes her forward without a response. With the rest of the wedding party walking down the aisle, it's just me and Balin. Though the mountain does have a wedding chapel type of arrangement, it has yet to be fully cleared. Therefore, we will walk to the end of the golden spilled hall and be married in the broken archway. I haven't seen Thorin since the night of the proposal, but I often heard him bellowing about anything that seems out of place.

I grin at Balin as he offers me his arm. Taking it, we leave the room and begin toward my future. My nerves get the better of me though, and I find myself staring at my toes, rather than the three hundred or so dwarves, elves, and men in attendance. I decided to go barefoot in honor of Bilbo's absence... and because none of the shoes provided matched. I begin to whisper to Balin as we go. "Everyone is staring at me." It's overwhelming but turning around isn't an option. I'd rather faint on the aisle than turn around now "Its nerve wracking."

"Aye, I suppose it is. They are all looking at you." His straight forward conversation doesn't help me relax "Where are you supposed to be looking?"

"Everyone watches the bride." I recite the explanation of my world's version of a wedding that I gave to the dwarves "But the bride only has eyes for the groom."

"Then why are you staring your toes, lass?" he lightly chastises
Lifting my eyes, I look past the dwarves on my left and men on my right to find Thorin at the end of the hall. A suit would have been impossible to create, let alone find, but I think he looks great anyway. He looks just as he did when I met him, fur coat and all. The only difference is his missing shield and the new spark in his eyes. They always blazed with the raging fury of a dwarf with something to prove but now... now there is a spark of life. Something new and unexpected. All throughout my life, I'd been content with any comfortable situation and never strived for anything better. And then, I found him. Thorin. My little bit of perfection and I'm so glad I held out for him.

So intent on reaching the love of my life, I barely notice Balin departing from my side to 'give me away'. The king takes my hand and I stand beside him, giddy and ready to begin. The words around us drown out as I fall under the sea of his brilliant blue eyes. Each time he blinks, the shadow cast from his lashes is like the night approaching only for dawn to come moments later as he returns my gaze. 'Beautiful.' I get so lost in the dwarf that I nearly miss my chance to say my vows, and when it's time to exchange rings and braids, I almost drop his as my fingers slip a jillion times.

With a bit of help on his part I place the ring on his finger, catching a glimpse of the material. A closer examination is available when he slips mine onto my digit. While his is made with only gold, my ring seems to be infused with mithril, the Lasgalen gems, and... bits of the Arkenstone. Dori must has given it to him and rather than horde it... he gave it to me. Again. I press my lips together to hold back the tears that threaten to ruin my dress.

"Mithril for protection; Lasgalen for your beauty that is deserving of war; The arkenstone" the dwarf traces my finger lightly but his eyes never leave my face as he explains "for I have found my right to rule with you."

"By the power given to me by Kings Thranduil, Thorin, and Bard-" Addasser announces only to interrupted by Dain "Yer married. Just kiss the lass already!"

"With pleasure." Thorin answers and the room hoots

Swooping me into a dip, I giggle as our eyes meet and for the first time in a long time I think of how much I want my Disney ending. Reaching up, I hook my arms around his neck and pull my husband into smoking hot kiss. The room cheers and I try not to laugh as Fili, Kili, and Tilda groan in childish disgust. Trying to keep the wedding tactful, I break the kiss slowly, content to just let the moment be. The world falls away, leaving just me and Thorin and I wonder how many people wait their entire lives to find the moment that I'm experiencing right now.

"It is time."

Our private world is broken and we look to the reason. The appearance of Mahal is not what I expected to happen upon the completion of our kiss and his appearance seems anything gleeful. The hall goes silent as the dwarves' personal guardian makes himself known. I'd think he was here to offer his congratulations but his sullen expression tells another story, making me fear the implications of the spoken phrase. Even as the dwarves bow in reverence of him whom they perceive as a god, I step forward to confront the Vala.

"Time... for what?"

"For you to return to your home world."

A collective gasp rushes through the crowd. If anyone was on the fence about my alien status, it has been confirmed now. That is the least of my worries however. I stand like a statue, refusing to
believe my ears. 'Return? I'm going... back?' I always expected it but now that it's time... I turn and blink at Thorin's presence at my side. I don't want to leave him. Not now. Not ever. Never.

"That's not possible." I announce turning to Mahal and lifting my chin in rebellion "I have to stay here. I literally just got married."

"Of that, I am aware." His rumbling voice causes the ground to shake but I find comfort in Thorin's unmovable form "It is one of the conditions."

"No. No, I fulfilled those already." I'm two seconds from stomping my foot in irritation "I fell in love, got married, and now have a baby on the way, who is going to need a father."

"A father he shall have. As for the conditions, you indeed fulfilled them" I nod tensely but frown as he shakes his head "however you unfulfilled them once again."

"What, if I may be so bold to inquire," Balin thankfully steps in, head lowered in respect "is the ultimate problem?"

"Thia Malcolmson was brought to this world in order to continue the line of Durin."

"You said 'save' every other time we had this conversation." I hiss, trying not to outright growl at the guy "Now it's continue?"

"It would have ended if not for your intervention." He indicates to my belly "In order to complete that task, three smaller requirements needed to be completed: find love, marry, and bear a son. These stipulations have been met."

"Like I already said. They were met nearly 2 months ago!" I step forward angrily, ready to plant my fist in the small giant's face. Thorin's arms keep me from murdering his creator "Not that they were ever 'stipulated' in the first place."

"What I think the lass means," Balin tries to smooth out the tension in the air "is that if what has been asked of her has been completed, why must she leave?"

"Fate has already been written and the direct line of Durin has been broken in this world. It cannot be reborn into it."

"But Durin shall return to fight again!" Dain interrupts and I'm lost as what his statement has to with anything "How can that be if you take the lass?"

"Durin will return as he has been deemed to. However he cannot be born to this world." He looks to me again as I shake in silent fury "You must leave, your duty can not be finished here."

"Why now?" I spit out growing more worried by the second "Why wait until now and not when your big magic implantation happened in the first place?"

"Thia, be calm." Thorin whispers but I feel everything but calm

"You expressed your desire to satisfy an undertaking of your own and it brought a problem to our attentions. We respected that wish however the elf King Thranduil had no intention of truly validating your marriage to his son. Thus a condition was unmet. Had you not been stubborn, we would not have caught the deception." he crosses his thick arms, looking as formidable as he is "Our work was undone which is unacceptable."

"Your work is so half done it's still raw." I bite out, refusing to give into this injustice without a
"I fixed everything that you and FATE deemed to be well enough the way they were!"

"You know not the implications of your actions!" he roars, and the mountain itself shudders. Thorin pushes me behind him in case things get violent even as I all but bear my teeth at the giant "Do not tell me of the righteousness of your actions when you have not even seen their effects."

"Mighty Mahal, there is no reason to take her." Thorin announces, his voice cool as ever. It wraps around the raging heat I feel in my gut, attempting to soothe the fury hidden there "She has completed her duty and even changed fate, showing it can be done. Can you spare her this punishment and allow her this much?"

"Yeah!" I agree with a bob of my head "So you just… go on back to your big dinner table."

"You misunderstand. AGAIN." With a sigh that can be felt through my very chest, Mahal folds himself into a seated position. So large is he, that the entire entrance is filled with him "You were always meant to return to your home. This is not a punishment."

"… Then why?"

"I have said as much, the line of Durin cannot be born into this world." I open my mouth to refute his argument but he holds up a large hand "Later generations shall be broken from this fate, but not the first. The first must be born elsewhere."

"WHY?" Thorin questions in a voice that is starting to sound demanding

"Because fate has written death on your line and until it is amended" he jerks his head in my direction and I take a defensive step back "demise awaits all your children."

"... You mean they'll die." pressing a hand into my stomach, Thorin gently grasps my hand "If she stays, our child-"

"Children." he corrects swiftly, but the twins I'm carrying are not all he means "All future children she or any other will birth for your line will meet an early death. One way or another..."

"It is too much to ask…" Balin murmurs in denial "Too large of a burden to put on one person."

"And yet it is her own."

"She is my wife." Thorin engulfs me in his arms and I let myself be cradled in his arms, trying to wrap my head around the whole situation "My One. My all. I cannot simply…"

"She will be all those things regardless of which world she resides in." the Vala rises from his place and looks off into the distance "Say your farewells."

"No!" I cry out but it's muffled by my face being pressed into Thorin's chest "No. Nonononon."

I feel a strange sensation in my body, and looking at my limbs, I gasp at finding them fading. My eyes go wide as I try and fail not to start hyperventilating. The company calls to me frantically while the other guests watch on in strained awe. My friends attempt to grab hold off me, but it's no use as their hands pass through my body as if I weren't even there. The pollution of the land of milk and honey filters into my lungs, mixing violently with the uncontaminated freedom of Middle earth dispelling any doubt of what is rapidly occurring. I look to Mahal to beg him to let me stay but his stony face is purposefully turned away, empty of all emotions save for resigned pity. I pray to God for stillness but the fading feeling persists and I helplessly let out a desperate cry of sorrow.
"Please! Let me stay!"

"Thia…"

"No." I wail, tossing my head at the accepting sound of Thorin's voice "No… no I-I-I-"

"Thia, my love…"

"I can't. I won't!" I suck in large gulps of breath as I press my hands into my eyes, willing myself to wake from this nightmare "Don't... I don't want to go!"

"My beautiful One."

Finally, I look to Thorin. Cars and light posts dart across his image making me grit my teeth as I focus on only him. There are no words to describe his face in this moment. It is not angry or sad or happy. No grief or worry rests on his beautiful features. No. Across his face is the picture of love that only we could ever experience. In his eyes, I can see the future he wanted to share with me. In his smile, there are a thousand granted wishes. And as he reaches his hand out to cup my intangible cheek, I can feel our own little world at his fingertips.

"It's going to be alright."

"Alright… You always, ALWAYS say it will be alright." I try not to but hot tears slip from my eyes, fueled by the warmth of his hand slipping away "Thorin. Thorin, I love you. For all your faults... for all of mine... I love you so why… WHY isn't that enough?"

"You once told me that love wasn't enough to make you stay." The world grows foggy and I have to strain to keep his face in focus... to keep the purity of his voice unmarred by needless technological machinery of my old world "Let it be enough to bring you and Theo back."

"You chose Theo…” I smile at the name but it only lasts a moment before the world darkens around me and all I have is his voice "Thorin? Thorin! Mahal! God! Please! Please, don't make me say goodbye. I can't, I can't!"

"Neither can I." Thorin's voice fades, quickly turning to dust in my ears "I love you, Thia. My One… My treasure… Until next time."

A short epilogue is all thats left and I'm putting it out tomorrow!
Epilogue

I do not know how long I spend wallowing in the darkness: An empty void were my tears are all that exist, falling into an endless abyss. There is no me... or him... or us. There is just sorrow, greater than eternal suffering, resting on a chest. It tears at my soul and I vaguely wonder if I was sent to the underworld instead of my former home. Former because without him... home is nothing more than where I rest my head instead of on his chest. It feels like a short eternity and an instant all at once.

I don't remember much of what happens next. My mother. My family. Our home. Pain. A sharp pain in my chest, worse than Smaug's claws could ever be. Clutching my chest, I sit up and look at my mother. I know she is there, she always is... was... is. We are on the front porch, and I wear the same pink hoodie I departed in; my dress gone. Like everything else. Gone. The only evidence of my trip are the braids in my hair and ring on my finger.

"It hurts so bad, mommy." I cling to her with a childish hope of her making it all better "It hurts so... so bad."

"... That's because you left your heart behind." She answers, soothingly stroking my head "The pain will never disappear while you are apart but it will become bearable with time."

I don't know how she knows but she does. Looking at her in question, she taps her finger where Bilbo's ring once rested and it all clicks. 'She knew. This whole time, she knew.' I gape at her as she explains her position in this whole adventure, which isn't much but it's enough. What starts as hurt and betrayal transforms into wonder and curiosity. When I ask why she never told me, she can only answer that I would have been changing the world enough without the preparation. Then, she holds me and I cry until I think my soul is trying to leak out my eyes. I tell her everything and she listens just as she always has.

"I got poisoned, fell off a mountain, put in chains THREE times, forced into a marriage, killed by a dragon, and was molested by an orc." I list off all the bigger hardships I've had, realizing that there were more of them I realized "Oh, and I'm pregnant. Twins."

"Pregnant?" she asks, startled "You were supposed to be saving a king!"

"I know, right!?" I agree, wondering why the Valar give such bad instructions before my mind floats to my father "Daddy is going to kill me." I shake my head before my mouth gapes open "Oh my good Lord. Daddy is going to kill me!"

"He won't. He already knows... for the most part." She hushes me as I look at her askew,
wondering if we are talking about the same man "He'll kill Thorin for marrying you without his permission."

"I think the whole different worlds thing will deter him."

"You think something so simple as the space/time continuum will deter your father?"

"No… but how did you know about the marri-"

"Ring."

"Ah." I twirl my wedding band, watching as it glitters in the winter light. My chest aches again and I bring a hand to it, surprised when it comes away spotted with blood. In place of my mark is a bloody scrape, as if the imprint had been perfectly scratched off "Mom?"

"You left it with your love until you can be reunited."

"Reunited… mommy… I can go back?" she laughs at my hopeful face and nods as I jump into the air, overjoyed "When? Mom, when?!"

"When you are meant to." She cryptically answers and if she was anyone else, I'd strangle her "Congratulations, my child."

"So much has happened." I respond, placing a hand on my stomach "I don't feel much like a child anymore."

"You will always be my child." She eskimo kisses me like she hasn't done in years, not since touching made me balk at the action. But it doesn't happen now and for that I'm glad "Now tell me more of your trip. I want to hear it all."

"It was amazing. I found friends, love, and… and… and adventure. It was…" words like 'perfect' and fantastic' go through my mind but they aren't right. I draw a blank on how to define such a major part of who I have become "It was…"

"A once in a lifetime opportunity?" she supplies

"Not if I can help it." I reply with a grin. I'm going to return to Thorin, if it's the last thing I do "No. It wasn't a once in a lifetime opportunity but rather…"

"What was it!" my youngest siblings suddenly burst out of the doorway, having been listening the whole time "Tell us already!"

"It was…" I lean my head back and laugh until my tears are from joy and not pain "An adventure of a life time." 

FIN

Thank you for sticking with me through this whole adventure! It took a while but we made it! Yes, there is a sequel and yes, it's already out. It's titled 'A(The) lady, a(The) shield, and a(The) ring.' I have one in the hobbit fandom and one in the LOTR but they are the same story. You can find it on my page of course. I'm taking a break to edit the first couple of chapters, but I won't be removing them so feel free to go right now if you like. Please, leave your comments on this story for the final time. Thank you.
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!