### Good Morning

**Summary**

There was a strange, tall man walking up the path. Bilbo recognised him, of course; how could one forget that tall, grey silhouette now making its way up towards her? Gandalf.

AU. What if Bilbo had already left the Shire once before? What if she had seen things she could never forget, and lived through things she couldn't speak of? In this world, Bilbo has a secret, a secret waiting for her in Rivendell, a secret that has changed, and will change, everything...

Written largely because I had a cute, weird idea and a lot of one-liners I needed to put out there.

### Notes

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**Rating:** Mature

**Archive Warning:** Major Character Death

**Category:** F/M

**Fandom:** The Hobbit - All Media Types, The Hobbit - J. R. R. Tolkien, The Hobbit (Jackson Movies)

**Relationship:** Bilbo Baggins/Thorin Oakenshield, Dwalin/Ori, Bofur/Fíli, Legolas Greenleaf/Kíli

**Character:** Bilbo Baggins, Thorin Oakenshield, Balin, Dwalin, Fili, Kili, Glóin, Óin, Bofur, Bombur, Nori, Dori, Ori (Tolkien), Gandalf, Elrond, Bifur, Azog, Radagast, Great Goblin, goblins in general, OC - Character, Beorn, The Master, Bard of Laketown, Legolas, Thranduil, Tauriel, Bain of Dale, Alfrid of Laketown, Frodo Baggins, Sam Gamgee

**Additional Tags:** fem!Bilbo, mainly because i wanted to mess around with her hair, also death, and mentions of imprisonment, oh also PTSD, but it's actually a really nice story i swear, Possessive!Thorin, jealous!Thorin, stop reading these read the damn thing, i should stop writing these, yes i should write the thing, okay im going to write the thing now, bye, AU, i know it says major character death, but it actually has a happy ending

**Stats:** Published: 2013-05-28 Completed: 2014-03-05 Chapters: 41/41 Words: 57319

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**Good Morning**

by Luckyhai5
To be updated more or less weekly, around Tuesday.
Feel free to tell me what you think - enjoy! XD
Good Morning

There was a strange, tall man walking up the path. Bilbo recognised him, of course; how could one forget that tall, grey silhouette now making its way up towards her? Gandalf. Bilbo didn’t like the sight of him - things had changed since his last visit, and his reappearance brought with it a surge of emotions which Bilbo wasn’t ready to face.

Anyway, that was too dire a train of thought for such a beautiful day. The sun was shining, the grass was green and Bilbo was enjoying a smoke. “Good morning!” She called, smiling shortly at the tall man.

His reply was less than satisfactory. “What do you mean? Do you mean to wish me a good morning, or do you mean that it is a good morning, whether I want it or not? Or perhaps you mean to say that you feel good on this particular morning. Or are you simply stating that this is a morning to be good on?”

Bilbo thought that it was far too early to be being asked such questions, and that if the wizard felt it necessary to analyse a greeting in such a pedantic way, he must have some kind of personal issue. And why wouldn’t he want it to be a good morning, anyway? Hedging her bets, Bilbo replied carefully, her tone decidedly even. “All of them at once, I suppose. Can I help you?” She hoped the wizard would go away.

“That remains to be seen. I’m looking for someone to share in an adventure.”

Bilbo felt her breath catch in her throat - it was both a wonderful and awful feeling. An adventure? An adventure with Gandalf? What a terrifying, fascinating opportunity... But no. It would not do. She was a Baggins, and Bagginses did not go on adventures. Especially not since last time. Yes, and thinking of last time, it was vital she remained here, where she could be easily contacted. “An adventure? Now, I don’t imagine anyone West of Bree would have much interest in adventures. Nasty, disturbing, uncomfortable things. Make you late for dinner.” The words came naturally, for she had perfected the Baggins persona, and if the Took in her was howling, she refused to hear it.

Gandalf looked down at her, tutting. “To think that I should have lived to be good-morninged by Belladonna Took’s daughter as if I were selling buttons at the door.” Bilbo squirmed internally at his tone, the mention of his mother harsh in her ears, bringing to the surface those same emotions triggered by the appearance of Gandalf. But she did not think of those feelings. She kept her face neutral.

“Beg your pardon?”

The wizard sighed. “You’ve changed, and not entirely for the better, Bilbo Baggins.”

Bilbo was beginning to resent his tone. The wizard had met her a few times, when she was very young; who was he to cast aspersions as to Bilbo’s character? Who was he to comment on perceived changes in Bilbo’s character, which Bilbo would claim were necessary and entirely for the better?

The hobbit ached for the wizard to leave. “I’m sorry, do I know you?”

“Well, you know my name, although you don’t remember I belong to it,” although the look Gandalf gave Bilbo implied he knew that was not entirely true, “I’m Gandalf, and Gandalf means… me.”

Bilbo reflected that that was a lovely way to introduce yourself. She’d never considered that before, that the meaning of your name was not simply a name, but you - the whole of you; the idea that you
actively defined your name, and not the other way around. Thinking about it, she had to swallow a frown, noting that her name had defined her for a long time now, one way or another.

“Not Gandalf, the wandering wizard who made such excellent fireworks? Old Took used to have them on Midsummer’s Eve. I had no idea you were still in business.”

“And where else should I be?” The wizard arched an eyebrow, and Bilbo had the grace to look contrite. ”Well, I’m glad you at least remember something about me, even if it’s only my fireworks. Well, that’s decided. It’ll be very good for you, and most amusing for me. I shall inform the others.”

Others? What would be good for her? Oh no, Bilbo did not like the sound of this one bit. Not one bit.

“What? No, no, no, wait. We do not want any adventures here, thank you. Not today, no. I suggest you try Overhill or across The Water. Good morning.”

Bilbo had employed her firmest tone, standing up and sniffing for effect, as she promptly made her way inside and assertively shut her door with a satisfying click. She had been very clear. No adventures, none at all. Not for her. Turning, she was greeted by the sight of an empty hall, and a sound that was the opposite of noise, but not really silence.

Outside on the path, the wizard stood, staring at the shut door, chuckling. “Yes, most amusing…” He muttered, before leaning to engrave a symbol on the door and making his way back down the path, humming softly as he went.
**A Dream**

Chapter Summary

I'm afraid that we go backwards before we go forwards, and more questions are asked than answered, but, in fic, as in life, sometimes you need to take a few steps back at the start to see the big picture later on XP

Chapter Notes

With thanks to my amazing beta Aimée, a very talented writer and wonderful friend And to you guys, for commenting and leaving kudos, it inspires me a lot and I really appreciate how kind you are XD So, enjoy...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

*The snow was crisp, white, freshly fallen. It lay over the Shire beautifully, as though a god of dreams had breathed cold clouds over the land. The dark sky was deep, fathoms deep, twinkling with quiet stars. Trees danced rhythmically in the wind, snow drifting from their branches to the ground.*

**But that was not the point.**

*There was blood on the snow. It was red and the snow was white and somehow, together, they meant death. There was more than blood on the snow. There was a body. It was lying, oozing blood and darker liquids, its hair pooled in the blood around it. It reached out for Bilbo, whispering her name, and she couldn’t think. Its hand shook in midair, reaching. She dropped to her knees beside the body, looking into its eyes, taking its hands in hers and holding them to her chest as she began to sob. She arched her back and collapsed in a heap over the body, as if looking for it to console her, which was surely the wrong way around. A great pain ripped through her, head to toe, alongside a sickening hopelessness which was worse, somehow. Her tears bit at her face in the harsh wind. This was her mummy, and she was dying in the snow, and it was all her fault. It was all her fault…*

Bilbo woke with a cold sheen of sweat over her skin. She hadn’t had that dream in a long time. Shaking, she gathered her blankets around herself, curling up. Many years had passed since that winter, time placing itself between Bilbo and its events like a sheer drop, which she fell down and often had to crawl out of. Time doesn’t heal all wounds, she thought bitterly, and nor do lies like that, which aim to make you feel better. No, Bilbo was no expert on what would heal wounds, just what wouldn’t.

Although the night in the Shire was quiet, the howling of wolves echoed in her head, and she twitched, eyes darting around. Her room was dark, but not a bad dark, just dark. Although the dark was always the same, wasn’t it; the dark was dark and the light was light and what happened, happened. Bilbo, nonetheless, ensured that her feet, hands and limbs were covered by blanket, giving in to that childish impulse that you’ll be alright if you’re under the blanket. She listened, frozen, but the hollow sound of howling abated. She was left with the familiar silence of Bag End, which was
no more comforting, somehow, but infinitely more real, which somehow made it worse. She missed
the time when she could have cried out and felt a comforting hand reach out to stroke her hair, and
two warm bodies curled up beside her, lulling her into a safe sleep. Because nothing bad could be
real if your parents were there, could it? She was bitter as she thought of her childhood innocence;
bitterness often springs from disillusionment. If one looked carefully, one would see that to be an
innocent child is something to cherish, not to be ashamed of, but, as it often does, the cruel maturity
of this world had made that seem laughable, not laudable, to Bilbo.

Belladonna Took had died because Bilbo had been stupid, going outside to see if she could find
elvës in the snow. She had found a pack of wolves instead, which had crossed over the river into the
Shire and chased her. They had been beautiful, their thick fur shimmering with snowflakes, white on
white, their eyes wide and dark. One had sunk its teeth around her side; instinctively Bilbo placed
her cold fingers on her stomach, tracing the stretched, shimmering, crescent-shaped scar. It was
puckered, obscenely beautiful, silver in the moonlight. The wolves had looked no less beautiful in
death. Bilbo knew now, that only the bad parts of the fairy tales came true; the big bad wolf would
kill you, unless someone you loved came along, and then it would kill them instead.

Sometimes, Bilbo wished she had died instead of her mother. In fact, she didn’t even wish it
sometimes; she wished it all the time. She knew she had killed her parents; she had known as she,
but a child, had seen her father grieving. When he succumbed to heart-sickness, she knew that she
was not even of courting age and yet already a murderer. It had not hardened her as she expected;
no, quite the opposite. Instead it had ripped the protection away from her young heart like skin when
scraped, and every moment had been painful, and unthinkable, and she had been alone.

And there was what that had led to. What had come next. A few years after her father’s funeral,
when she had started to be invited to courtship dances and the like, she had decided to leave the
Shire, to go on an adventure… In her mind, she recalled a dark, dank, dungeon, and how everything
had changed… But that, she really didn’t think about. Never. Not even in her darkest dreams would
her mind wander there. Unthinkingly, she traced the alphabet scarred into her forearm, tears
springing up in her eyes. She traced each letter individually, remembering someone else’s hand
there…

No. She did not think on that. It unsettled her; even now she felt herself falling into the familiar vice-
like grip of panic. She felt its fingers at her neck, the cold fingers of fear and terror, squeezing and
clawing. She began to struggle for breath, burying her head under the blankets. It would be alright,
she told herself. She just needed to wait for news from the Elves, and then it would be alright.

It was going to be alright.

Curling up and convulsing, cocooned by blankets, Bilbo screwed her eyes tight shut and wished to
sleep, without dreams. Only one part of the wish was to be fulfilled.

Chapter End Notes

So, I'm sorry that was fairly short, but it's hard to really flesh out an internal dialogue... I
did my best.

Allow me to take this opportunity to say that I own all Tolkien's works. No, I'm kidding,
I own nothing except for the characters I'm going to make up.
Also, I'm not an expert on Middle Earth, I did a fair amount of research but please flag
up any inaccuracies. Although this is AU and I will be messing about with geography, among other things...
Oh yeah, and in this Bilbo is 25, so a bit younger. Just imagine that's when hobbits come of age.

The next one should be up soon XD And guess who we meet...?!
**Dwarrows, Dwarrows, Dwarrows!**

Chapter Summary

Bilbo is confronted by some very unusual (and very uninvited) dinner guests...

Chapter Notes

So, we finally get to meet the dwarrows XDD
Just quickly: my use of the word 'dwarrows' is a bit funny; I tend to use it as a plural, but I refer to them individually as a 'dwarf', because I think it's nicer that way. Thank you if you're still reading, and thanks to Aimée, as always.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The day had begun as per usual. Bilbo had woken up, carefully not thought about how she’d slept, plaied her hair into one long braid running down her back, put on her breeches and green waistcoat (the one with the silver buttons, after some deliberation, because gold buttons are a tad gaudy for a Trewsday), and gone about her business. The sun shone, as it often does, and the grass was, as ever, green. Everything was in its place.

When, eventually, the sun began to droop like a flower, fate dipping its quill and dripping dark ink over the skyline, Bilbo presented herself with a fish and an assortment of roast vegetables. Two twists of salt, one of pepper. She wouldn’t want it to be too fiery.

The stars were emerging from their slumber now, twinkling above Bag End, winking. They knew.

The moon swung into focus, bright and clear. If Bilbo had looked outside, she would have seen that this night was not quite right. It held within it a promise. It was waiting. It was waiting for a knock on her door.

The knock came.

Bilbo tilted her head. Who could that be, at this hour?

The knock came again.

There was definitely someone at the door. Grumbling, Bilbo rose out of her chair and started towards the door. Reaching into a chest in the hall, she pulled out a big stick, and rested it beside the door, just in case. She opened the door, and was frozen.

There was a dwarf!

He was toweringly tall and bulky, built like a rock. Gulping, Bilbo absorbed that each of his shoulders was about the width of her torso. Behind the door, her hand tightened around the stick, the dips where her fingers were bent going white.

“Dwalin.” He said, his voice low and gravelly, “At your service.”
Bilbo fought to regain her composure. “Bilbo Baggins, at yours. Do we know each other?” She could not imagine she would forget such an imposing mass of dwarf.

“No.” His eyes seemed to widen slightly as he took her in, his words confirming her thoughts but doing nothing to assuage her spirit. “Which way, laddie? Is it down here?”

“Erm, what? Laddie? Where?”

“Supper.” The dwarf elaborated, as though that were a satisfactory explanation. “He said there’d be food, and lots of it.”

Bilbo felt with a sinking feeling that this might just be Gandalf’s doing, as the dwarf pushed past her and entered her home, walking to the kitchen, as if he could sense where the food was.

Of course he could. He had a nose. Bilbo shook herself. And had the impertinent dwarf called her ‘laddie’? No, this would not do, this would not do at all…

Letting the stick drop and following the dwarf into the kitchen, Bilbo had to suppress a shriek when she saw the massive creature consume her fish in one snap. “Very good, this. Any more?” He looked up at Bilbo, expectantly. It was all she could do not to implode. “What? Oh yes, yes. Help yourself - it’s just that… It’s just that I wasn’t expecting company.” She watched in a kind of horrified awe as he consumed three scones in a row, crumbs catching in his dark beard. Oh dear, she felt rather faint…

There was a knock at the door.

Not again.

“That’ll be the door.”

Chapter End Notes

Well, that was fun, but short; don't worry, the next chapter should be up within the evening! XD

Yes, also, last chapter I was asked about Bilbo's age, and I just wanted to explain that I didn't lower it to make her more attractive or anything like that, it's just that I've had to plot her life out carefully for this AU, so I couldn't make her any older; I'm sorry to have to ask you to just pretend that she's older than she actually is (just don't think about it too closely and it won't be an issue, her age isn't really important).

So... what did you think Dwalin? I'd be interested to hear your opinions (especially when we meet the rest of them next chapter), although I know the story isn't that different from canon at this point.
Eleven dwarrows, one wizard and half an hour later, Bilbo wasn’t sure how long she was for the world. She wound her hands around her plaits, pulling on them in distress as she watched her home being ransacked by the invading group. There was the big one, Dwalin, who had come first. He seemed to have noticed she was female now, as he was calling her ‘lassie’; following him had been Balin, a little, white-bearded man; then there were Fili and Kili, who Bilbo had decided were either closely related or married… And then there were the rest of them. Bilbo couldn’t really remember their names, or particularly remember being introduced. She recalled the one with the axe in his head, Bifur, and knew that some of them had names ending in ‘-ri’, but that was about it. Now, hobbits are homely creatures; they do not enjoy having their space so abruptly disrupted.

Especially by dwarrows.

Gandalf had made his appearance with the last batch of dwarrows, with not even the decency to wilt under Bilbo’s ire. It was sort of like being in a dream, a very bad one. That was when she spotted one of the brutes manhandling the good china.

“Those are my plates!” Turning, she was faced with another affront. “Excuse me, not my wine. Put that back. Not the jam please…” She paled at the sight of one of the tubbier dwarrows making off with a block of cheese bigger than she was. “A tad excessive, isn’t it? Have you got a cheese knife?” Her words rang ridiculous in her own ears, but this whole situation was ridiculous!

One of the dwarrows looked at her, a twinkle in his eye. “Cheese knife? He eats it by the block.”

Bilbo paled.

She went to the front door, leaning against the frame and putting her head in her hands. This wasn’t happening… Looking up again, she watched as one of the dwarrows approached Gandalf and asked to ‘tempt him with a cup of chamomile.’ This was a farce. No! It was worse! It was a dystopia! With dismay, she observed as they drank, slamming the mugs on the table in unison, belching loudly.

A knock came from behind her, ratting the door frame. She yelped, jumping forwards. As she righted herself, she noted that the dwarrows had frozen, silent, all their eyes trained on the door. She
looked too, wondering who could be behind it. And hoping they weren't hungry, although that was unlikely.

“He’s here.” Gandalf’s words permeated the silence, as Bilbo shuffled quietly away from the door, in the interest of self-preservation. The dwarrows, on the other hand, were gravitating towards it, forming a veritable crowd before it. They watched in silence as Gandalf swung it open, but Bilbo couldn’t see the figure on the other side.

“Gandalf.” A voice came, “I thought you said this place would be easy to find. I lost my way twice.” The voice was low, rumbling with authority and warmth. If Bilbo had assigned it a colour, it would have been gold. “Wouldn’t have found it at all if it weren’t for that mark on the door.”

Her eyes widened in alarm, her nostrils flaring. “A mark? What do you mean, a mark? I had that painted last week!” She jostled her way through the crowd of dwarrows, brushing past the mysterious figure to inspect the door. There was a mark! What new insolence was this?

Gandalf did not seem nearly contrite enough. “I put it there myself. Bilbo Baggins, allow me to introduce you to the leader of our company: Thorin Oakenshield, King Under the Mountain.”

Bilbo sent a cursory nod in the direction of the new dwarf, inspecting her door in horror. A mark! It was big, as well - noticeable! There would be tattle of this rattling around the Shire for days to come…

“So, this is the hobbit… Tell me, what is your weapon of choice? Axe or sword?”

Irate, Bilbo snapped her head up from inspecting the door. “Well, I have some skill at conkers, but I fail to see how that’s relevant.” She replied tersely, still paying more attention to the mark on her door than the dwarf.

Thorin laughed, his tone derisive. “Thought as much. She looks more like a grocer than a burglar.”

Bilbo’s eyes narrowed. This was too much. They plundered her pantry, spoiled her antiques, marked her door and insulted her! No, this would not do. A red mist rose up into her vision along with the hammering of her heartbeat in her ears.

“Now look here!” She yelled, taking a step towards Thorin, who was so surprised he shifted back a little reflexively. “You may be King Under the Mountain, whatever that means, but I, Bilbo Baggins, am Queen Under the Hill, alright? You are unbelievably rude, and your company have eaten all my tomatoes! So if you could refrain from likening me to a grocer, which is a very respectable job, I will have you know, it would be much appreciated.”

Turning on her heels, she whirled to face Gandalf. “And you!” She bellowed, wrapping his beard around her fist and pulling his head to be level with hers (he was so surprised that she got away with it), “I don’t know what you mean by inviting yourself and thirteen dwarrows to Bag End with no warning or details! I didn’t have enough time to prepare a proper meal and now I have no food left in my pantry. This has all been rather inconsiderate.”

She released him, even now beginning to regret her outburst, as she had the pleasure of being faced by a roomful of shell-shocked dwarrows. Well, not all of them. One (Master Oakenshield himself) was glowing rather magnificently.

For the first time, she paused to take him in. All the dwarrows were imposing, but he was something else. His hair was streaked with grey, tumbling down but held back at the front in two braids. They ended in silver clasps, inlaid with beautiful blue stone, but Bilbo wasn’t really taken with jewels. His
eyes, bluer than they jewels, were glacial and bright. He was not as large, physically, as some of the others - Dwalin came to mind - but he seemed to exude strength and authority. It was in the way he held himself, in the stoic way he stood. Of course, there was also his rather impressive glare, which she had the pleasure of bearing the brunt of.

But she was staring; quickly, she looked away, so as not to seem rude.

Gandalf had straightened up. “Well, I’m sorry to have inconvenienced you, Bilbo,” he began, an amused twinkle in his eyes as he stroked his beard semi-reproachfully, “But I was rather hoping to proposition your help in another matter.”

Bilbo was listening, begrudgingly.

“Far to the East, over ranges and rivers, beyond woodlands and wastelands, lies a single solitary peak. The Lonely Mountain.”

Thorin cut in there, his voice thunderous. “We journey to reclaim our home, taken from us by a vile beast.”

“A beast?” Bilbo squeaked, despite herself.

“Well, that would be a reference to Smaug the Terrible.” Another dwarf piped up - the same one who had informed her that his friend ate cheese by the block. Bofur? “Chiefest and greatest calamity of our Age. Airborne fire-breather, teeth like razors, claws like meat hooks. Extremely fond of precious metals.” The tension in the room dissolved as the dwarrows resumed their positions around the table, Thorin somehow managing to position himself at their head, helping himself to the food still on the table.

“I’m not afraid!” The dwarf who looked youngest shot up, declaring. The others shouted him down.

“But we will need stealth, someone with courage.” Gandalf managed to proclaim over the fray.

“That’s why we need a burglar!”

“An expert!”

“Yes, yes, a burglar!”

“Indeed, I should think so…” Bilbo commented, as all eyes fixed on her.

“And are you?” One asked her.

“What?”

“Here, she says she’s an expert!”

“What? No, no, no… I’m not a burglar!”

Dwalin cut through the gabbling. “The wild’s no place for gentle folk who can’t fight nor fend for themselves.” His voice held a note of kind finality, almost pity.

Bilbo rankled at that, but said nothing. Gentle folk, indeed.

“Enough!” Gandalf banged the table. “If I say Bilbo Baggins is a burglar, then a burglar she is. You must trust me.”
“Fine, we will do it your way.” Thorin acquiesced after a long moment, and suddenly there was to be no more discussion of the matter. Well, not from the dwarrows.

“Look, I’m really not sure about this…” Bilbo protested, as Balin handed her a contract. “It’s just the usual summary about the pocket expenses, time required, remuneration, funeral arrangements, so forth.” He said in a tone far too matter-of-fact for Bilbo’s liking.

“Funeral arrangements?!” Bilbo squeaked, disturbed by this new suggestion.

Thorin turned to face Gandalf. “I cannot guarantee her safety.”

“Understood.” Gandalf nodded.

“Not will I be responsible for her fate.”

“Agreed.”

Now this was too much! Gandalf was not her guardian, Bilbo was responsible for herself… But upon reading the contract, Bilbo felt there were more distressing issues which demanded her full attention.

“Present company shall not be liable for injuries inflicted by or sustained as a consequence thereof, including, but not limited to, lacerations, evisceration… incineration?” Oh dear…

“Oh, aye. He’ll melt the flesh off your bones in the blink of an eye.” The words came from the same dwarf who had told Bilbo about the cheese and the dragon. His name was definitely Bofur. She was becoming steadily less of a fan of his. “Think furnace with wings.”

“I-I-I need air…”

“Flash of light, searing pain, then poof! You’re nothing more than a pile of ash.” He was getting on her nerves.

“You alright, lassie?” Balin asked, looking at her with concern.

“No.”


“I’ll be alright.” Bilbo lied. “And there’s no way I’m signing this.” She waved the contract at the wizard. “No way; never, ever, ever.”

“I thought you’d say that.” The wizard smiled, looking down at her for a long moment, as if evaluation her. He looked far too pleased with himself for Bilbo’s liking. “We’ll be passing through Rivendell.”

Her head snapped up. “Do you have a pen?”

Chapter End Notes

So yeah, that was even more fun to write than the last chapter, although the next chapter was very enjoyable to write as well (it’s from Thorin’s POV). I hope you liked that.
TBH, I'm trying to make sure the fact that Bilbo is a woman doesn't dominate the story, because the only reason I made her female was for her hair, which is weirdly important in the plot... So yeah, Thorin is really only concerned by how weak she is, not her gender, just like in canon, because dammit it's my AU and I'm tired of all these fics where she's protected because she's female and not because she's helpless (and Bilbo in this AU isn't quite so helpless as in canon anyway, but we'll get to that).

So sorry about that.

Yes, sorry in general, I'm afraid I will be messing about with a lot of Middle Earth before I'm done. If this is horrbily out of character and unbelievable, well, I'm sorry :/ but it should all be worth it and I don't think it's terrible *fingers crossed* see you next time
The wizard was looking down at the halfling with an odd, and not entirely friendly, glint in his eye. “We’ll be passing through Rivendell.”

Her head snapped up instantly. “Do you have a pen?”

Thorin was incensed. “Mahal!” He leapt to his feet, nearly overturning the table. This furniture was ridiculously delicate; like being in a doll-house. “We will not be passing through Rivendell, Gandalf.” He fixed the wizard in his cold glare.

“It would be wisest.” Gandalf spoke, presuming to advise him on the sagacity of his actions. Damned wizard!

“We will not be encountering those tree-shagging traitors!” He slammed the table with his fist.

The halfling took him by surprise (again). “How dare you!” Her eyes were wide, alight with anger. “How dare you speak of the Elves that way, in my home! I will not have a word spoken against their people, certainly not under my roof.”

She returned his glare, and he felt his anger building. People usually conceded to him if he glared at them this long. In the back of his mind, he wondered where her partner was, for her braid signified that she was newly bonded, but there was no sign of another halfling here. How unusual, for a couple to be newly bonded and spend time apart in the evenings...

But that was not the pertinent issue.

The pertinent issue was this halfling before him, glowering at him with what he was sure was intended as a withering stare. She had wide eyes, which could have looked quite agreeable if not tinged with an unreasonable venom. Nonetheless, he found himself becoming riled by her consistent, unbearable and undue tenacity.
“I will speak however I please.”

“No, you will speak with respect and decency.”

He nearly blanched at that. How dare this tiny, insignificant, blatantly useless creature challenge him thus? It was unthinkable.

The tension between them crackled, as no one moved in the room.

Gandalf chuckled. “That’s quite enough. Bilbo, dear, here’s a pen.”

If Thorin hadn’t known better, he would have sworn Gandalf had winked at the hobbit as he handed her the pen. He watched, slightly torn, as the strange creature signed her name. He wasn’t inclined to let her come, but was bound by his word to Gandalf just moments before. She would be a burden, he was sure, and something about her was… There was no way to explain it, really. Not a way that he knew of. The hobbit was taciturn, disrespectful, and just didn’t add up.

He looked over to Dwalin, who was, as usual, staring at Ori. The dwarf noted his movement, however, and shifted his gaze to Thorin. That was why he had survived so long; his reflexes were second to none, and he was infinitely observant, which Thorin valued. Dwalin nodded subtly, advising Thorin to allow events to unfold. Thorin wasn’t sure why the dwarf would be in favour of the halfling joining their company, but he trusted the dwarf’s consul - at least, enough not to object immediately and see if there was more to the situation.

He found himself wondering, again, why the hobbit did not consult her bonded before signing such a contract. She was just bonded, so she should be inseparable from her partner. Truly, she was a strange creature. She was slight, he noted, almost frail - he doubted any strength coiled itself within her. Her eyes, too wide, were an unnerving, slightly shifting brown - the colour seemed deep, then shallow, with no particular rhyme to it. She wore a male’s clothes, which could show a level of practicality, Thorin allowed her, begrudgingly, but she was too pale, too soft…

She would not last well on their journey, he could tell, just by looking at her. She would be a liability. Nonetheless, he had made it clear to the wizard that he would not be responsible for her safety, and the wizard had understood. Gandalf seemed oddly set on her coming, and Thorin, despite his pride, appreciated that the wizard never did anything without reason. Dwalin’s silent testimony also carried weight for the dwarf. Still, he felt the hobbit would not fare well on the road. Yet despite her softness, the trivial nature of her existence and her cosy doll-house of a home (all of which he had deduced in less than an evening) she was also abruptly bad-tempered, defiant and insolent.

Thorin did not appreciate insolence.

Having signed the contract, he watched carefully as the hobbit excused herself and went away, presumably to pack. He shook his head. This would not end well.

He found himself wondering whether her skin was as soft as it looked - could anyone's skin feel as soft as hers looked? - before he shook himself out of it and turned to Gandalf, who was holding out a key.

He inhaled sharply, recognising the object instantly.

“How came you by this?”

“It was given to me by your father, for safekeeping. Here.” The wizard pressed it into his hands. It was cold, bringing Thorin’s memories of his home to mind in a rush before he closed his fingers around it, feeling it warm up in his palm.
Kili piped up then. “If there is a key, there must be a door!” He had a way of stating the obvious, but it was an important observation. Thorin raised his eyebrows at the wizard, awaiting elaboration.

“These runes,” the wizard gestured to the map, “Speak of a hidden passage to the Lower Halls. If we can find it, although dwarf doors are invisible when closed, we can get into the mountain. This is why we need the burglar.”

“I am not convinced,” Thorin asserted, “that the burglar will fare well on this journey. I know she has signed the contract, but I would prefer to go on without her.”

“Enough.” The wizard said, Thorin disliking his tone. “You agreed to trust me. Hobbits are remarkably light on their feet, so much so that they can pass unseen by most if they choose. Also, while the dragon knows the scent of dwarf, it has never smelled hobbit before, giving us a major advantage.” The wizard paused then, looking at Thorin for a moment. “I was tasked with finding the fourteenth member of this Company, and I have found Bilbo Baggins.”

Thorin agreed with his logic. The hobbit would be unknown to the dragon, and if hobbits were as light on their feet as Gandalf suggested, she would surely be an asset to their company. He turned to Dwalin, who nodded again.

It was for these reasons that Thorin finally acquiesced to allow the hobbit to accompany them on their quest, in spite of his gut, for a good ruler must know reason when faced with it.

He forgot, of course, that a good ruler must also do what they feel to be right.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading XD

Until next time
They had set up camp for the night, on a rocky outcrop in the hills. The sky was darkening slowly, as the fire crackled. The dwarrows were, unusually, quiet, sat around and busying themselves with this and that. The air was cold, but not uncomfortably so, and Bilbo felt oddly content with her situation. It could have been worse. It could have rained.

Quietly, she threw an apple in the air, catching it in one hand before polishing it on her breeches. It shone a warm red in the flickering firelight, tempered by soft tendrils of moonlight escaping from around the clouds. Dwalin had given it to her. The huge, heavily-inked, heavily-scarred dwarf was terrifying, but almost kind.

Aside from him, none of the dwarrows had made any attempt to communicate with her, but they had been riding all day, so there had not really been any opportunity. She told herself that was why.

She made her way from the edge of the group of dwarrows to where the ponies had been settled; no one really clocked her movement. Almost guiltily, she fed her pony the apple. She had become rather fond of the sweet little creature. “Hello there, Myrtle. Who’s a good girl? This can be our little secret, don’t tell anyone…”

She trailed off as a shrill cry pierced the night.

Goblins.

“Orcs.” Kili proclaimed, aiming the Dwarvish term for the beasts in her direction.
She realised that he probably assumed she had never seen one before, shuddering.

“Throat-cutters.” His brother, Fili, chimed in. Bilbo had a feeling they were enjoying the horrified look on her face, unknowing that it had little to do with them and everything to do with her. “There’ll be dozens of them out there. The lowlands are crawling with them.”

“They strike in the wee small hours, when everyone’s asleep. Quick and quiet, no screams. Just lots of blood.” There was a morbid glee evident in Kili's voice, but Bilbo couldn’t bring herself to chastise him, as images surged through her mind, as though before her eyes...

Thorin whirled around, rage evident in his face, his hands in fists. “Do you think that’s funny?” He roared, continuing in a lower tone, “Do you think a night raid by Orcs is a joke?” His eyes were alight with something dangerous, his whole body taught. Bilbo watched carefully as he made his way to the edge of the outcrop, to look out over the horizon. The grey in his hair reflected silver. She was glad of his intervention, his admonishment of his nephews. He was right.

“You know nothing of the world.” He muttered.

Those words struck a chord with Bilbo, as she realised he had probably directed them at her, too. She was shaken.

Balin seemed to notice. The white-bearded, smallish dwarf turned to her. “Don’t mind him, lassie.” He reassured her kindly, coming to her side and placing a comforting hand on her forearm. “Thorin has more cause than most to hate the Orcs.”

The older dwarf then went on to relate the dwarf’s history with them, telling her of the Battle of Moria. The tale was brutal and utterly raw, more unbelievable than anything she’d heard before (anything true, anyway). When he was done, the hobbit felt a much deeper understanding of exactly what had happened to their people. His story inspired more than a vague respect for Thorin, it inspired her to see him as someone who had truly struggled.

As she regarded him, she noted how square his shoulders were, how straight his spine was. He was a proud, strong dwarf; these qualities, she mused, would make him both remarkable and unbearable.

But one thing had stuck with her. One reference in the story, which had resonated with her own history and fanned flames which usually slumbered quietly at the base of her being. She felt them rise now, let them cloud her gaze.

“Is that what you call him?” She asked, facing Balin.

“Who, lassie?”

“The Pale Orc. His name is… Azog the Defiler?”

The dwarf nodded, regarding her closely. “Indeed it is.”

She spat on the ground, curling her lips in a snarl. “An apt title it is, too.”

A sudden anger surged within her, with the mention of the Pale Orc, and she went to sit by the ponies again.

Each eye of the company watched her retreat, but not a foot placed itself in her direction as she went away, nor did a tongue form a word towards or about her, and she knew that the silence meant the dwarrows were all in accord over her, although she could not know their judgement. She didn’t care much, either.
As she walked away, the blue eyes of Master Oakenshield caught hers, and for a moment, she looked back into them. His gaze snapped into a glare - she wondered what she had done to make him so angry. So constantly angry.

Sighing, she settled down to sleep - it did not come quickly.

Gandalf watched as Bilbo’s body relaxed, her head drooping.

He waited until he was sure she was fast asleep, before making his way over to her. Gently, he placed a blanket over her shoulders.

She frowned in her sleep.

He wondered if he had done the right thing in bringing her; but of course he had. If this was painful for her, there was no knowing how she had coped in Bag End for the two years since her return. This was better; Lord Elrond was expecting her return, Gandalf had ensured it, and besides, the hobbit would be invaluable in their quest, he knew. He hoped she would be able to lay some of her demons to rest on the road to Erebor, demons he found himself partially at fault for, for not watching over the hobbit as he should.

For not honoring her mother by ensuring her safety.

Perhaps he was even more than partially at fault.

As Gandalf watched Bilbo sleep, he reflected that he had failed her, and hoped she could still be fixed.

Thorin was restless. He couldn’t sleep, he was too uneasy from their discussion of orcs. He did not often dwell in the past, his gaze focussed on the future. Absent mindedly, he got up and began to wander away from the company, towards the ponies. The mud was crumbly under his feet, with scatterings of grass upon it. There, he happened upon the sleeping halfling, remembering that she had stormed over here to sleep. Such a strange creature, to react so strongly to the discussion of the Pale Orc, when she could surely have never encountered him.

Perhaps she had heard stories.

She murmured in her sleep, causing Thorin to stop walking past and look down at her. She was frowning, which was unusual in sleep, he thought. Her hair, still braided, was draped over one of her shoulders, her whole body covered by a blanket he knew to belong to Gandalf. She breathed softly, striking Thorin; she was so different to a dwarf, so much quieter, so much smaller. Even the tiniest of dwarrows would have dwarfed her. Why had he agreed to let her come?

He felt a crushing guilt as he realised that he had endorsed the death of the halfling by allowing Balin to hand her that contract. Thorin should have known better, and it made him angry. As he watched the hobbit sleep, he became more and more angry. It was her fault that he felt guilty, her fault that she was going to get hurt; why did she put them all in this position? Why couldn’t she just stay in her cosy doll-house hobbit hole like she ought?

Stupid halfling.

Grumbling, Thorin continued walking, stopping when he came to a fallen tree a little way from the
company, sitting against it. Absently, he reached into his pocket to draw out a block of some stone and a knife, carving as he thought. That damn hobbit. His nephews were going to be devastated if anything happened to her; they had never been good with death. Again, he cursed her for bringing this burden to his journey. Was it not enough, to have the fate of his people and honour of his line resting on his shoulders? Must he also be plagued by responsibility towards such a tiny, weak creature?

Looking down, he was taken aback when he saw what he had carved. Mahal! He had carved his courting stone, which he was supposed to save for his One, thinking it to be a block of spare stone, which he occasionally carried, for he was fond of carving, although he rarely kept what he made.

“Mahalu-me turg!” He swore, holding it in his hand. It had been a block of jade, unusual for a courting stone.

He could remember buying it, in the market in Erebor. Of course, the vendors had all been overwhelmed at his presence, running up to him to proffer their wares, but he had made his way over to a small cart selling metals and stones. The seller had been beside himself, for his was not nearly as grand a stall as the rest, but Thorin's eye had been caught by one of his wares. The block of jade. It was small enough to fit into the palm of his hand, which was why Thorin had immediately thought of a courting bead. It was deep green, but parts of it were almost white; the colour of the stone shifted, as though it were still forming, somehow alive. Thorin had known, then, that this was his courting stone, and that when the time came he would see it wound into the hair of the dwarf he would be with forever.

Not that he was a romantic, or anything.

He had purchased the jade, paying what he suspected was a slightly augmented price, before pocketing it carefully and going to his rooms. He had liked the weight of it beside his chest, so much so that he had never been without it - in no battles or despairs had it left his side. Even when he had truly accepted he would never be bonded, he had kept it, as a memento of a lighter time.

Now it was carved into a small, round bead, with a pattern of oak leaves around it. He was enraged by himself; now he had irrevocably altered one of his most poignant possessions. Not that he would ever need a courting stone, really; he doubted he would find his One. Still, this was the halfling’s fault too! She had distracted him so much he had carved a courting bead without knowing it - she really was causing him too much trouble.

Thorin slipped a small box out of his pocket; it was silver, ornately encrusted with jewels, one of the few relics of Erebor he had refused to sell or barter. It was worth far less than much of the Mountain's treasures, anyway, being silver and not gold, but Thorin had chosen to store its contents thus for a reason. Gold had been the downfall of his ancestors, and he aspired to value his people, not treasures. No one really knew he still had the box. He opened the lid, dropping the bead in amongst the others and clicking it shut. These were the courting beads of the whole line of Durin, including him now, or so it seemed. He could have saved far more valuable objects, but these had seemed most important, somehow.

He rose to his feet. Blasted halfling!

As he walked back past the hobbit, he paused. He found himself wondering what the small, green bead would look like plaited into her long, soft hair. But that was idiotic. Why on earth would he ever allow the hobbit to wear one of his beads?

Nonetheless, he couldn’t help thinking that it would bring out her eyes.
Shaking himself out of this bizzare train of thought, he went to rejoin the Company. Dwalin was watching him closely, and as the king sat down next to him, he narrowed his eyes.

“Why did you advise me to allow the halfling to come?” Asked Thorin, irritated. Despite the fact that he used the word ‘advise’ loosely - the other dwarf had simply nodded - he knew Dwalin would understand the incident to which he was alluding.

Dwalin looked at him a second longer, before looking into the distance. “I think she could be important.”

“Important?! Whatever for? She’s useless, rude, weak, unskilled at fighting…”

“But for the quest. For you.”

Thorin swore loudly at the dwarf, surging to his feet. “That pathetic creature?”

He stormed off rapidly, leaving Dwalin sat in his wake.

Wistfully, the other dwarf smiled.

“Sometimes,” he muttered to himself, “the strongest things come in the most delicate of packages.”

If you had followed the line of his eyes, you would have seen Ori begging one of his brothers to kill a spider and cowering behind a nearby tree.

* *

Bilbo had awoken aching all over. She groaned as she sat up, rubbing her bleary eyes and looking around. The sun had not yet poked its head above the skyline, but the sky was filled with fresh light, so she knew it would soon. She had fallen asleep with her back to the dwarrows, and behind her she heard their leader bark: “Would someone go to remind the halfling that she should have stayed at home if she intended to sleep all day?” There was a quiet chuckle at this, and then a deep, gruff voice, belonging to Dwalin, interjected: “Fili and Kili are still asleep too.”

Bilbo was irked by the dwarf king’s comment. What a way to wake up! Shrugging off a blanket and folding it carefully - it was Gandalf’s, she assumed by process of elimination - she braced herself. Quickly, she re-plaited her hair, making her way back to the rest of the group.

“Thank you so much for the reminder, Master Oakenshield.” She snapped, as Bombur presented her with a bowl of something and a wide grin.

“Morning!” Called Bofur, sauntering over to her. Fili and Kili, their hair mussed and their eyes not yet fully bright, giggled behind him. Oh dear.

“How was your first night in the wilds, lassie?” He asked, his eyes sparkling. For some reason, Bilbo felt slightly uncomfortable with the question.

“It was… fine.” She replied, confused.

“Aye, lads, but I think we can do better than fine!” He exclaimed, as the troublesome brothers began to laugh outright.

There were more chuckles from the dwarrows awake enough to function.

Bilbo frowned. This was most inappropriate.
“Really, Bofur, that’s no way to speak to someone you’ve only just met! I don’t believe I’ve ever heard such debasing comments.”

She fixed him with a stern glare and, Eru bless him, he paled.

“That’s enough, halfling.” Thorin’s voice cut in.

She turned to face him; she wasn’t the only person at fault for this conversation! However, when faced with his cold glare, she couldn’t bring herself to argue, knowing that those eyes would only vary in shades of hate towards her and nothing else, so there was really no point.

Turning, she went to sit a little way away and eat her breakfast, quietly contemplating the arrogance, crudeness and all-round unbearableness of dwarrows.

Chapter End Notes

Hope you liked it!

Little bit of fabrication, again, with Dwarf culture, but hey. That's the way this is going. Fictional fiction.

I believe “Mahalu-me turg!” means "By Mahal's beard!" Sorry if it doesn't make sense, the dwarrows wouldn't teach me their language so I had to have a go at teaching myself...

(I have language exams - why am I looking up khuzdul...?)

And yes, I know you can't carve stone, but I wasn't sure what the right verb was, and it does the job.
The day was passing slowly, the countryside blending into itself as they continued their journey East. Bilbo rode alone at the back of the Company, lost in thought. She wasn’t paying much attention to what was going on up ahead, so it same as a shock when she looked up to find herself flanked by two dwarrows.

“Mistress Baggins.” One smiled, as his brother finished his sentence.

“What could you be thinking about so carefully?” Fili and Kili exchanged a look.

Bilbo narrowed her eyes. These two really were rather mischievous.

“This and that, nothing in particular.” She smiled at them despite her suspicion, as it was nice to have someone to talk to. “Why?”

“We’re just interested.” Fili replied, as his brother leaned towards her conspirationally.

“We’ve never met a hobbit before.” he whispered, his large, dark eyes comically serious. He looked a lot like his Uncle, Bilbo thought - for a moment she couldn’t form a reply. Then she realised what he had told her.

“Never met a hobbit!”

Fili shook his head too now, in mock-seriousness. “Never.”

“My dear lads, I have much to tell you.” She found herself giggling as the two leaned towards her, listening.

“Go on, Mistress Baggins.” Fili urged, grinning.

“Tell us about the hobbits!” Kili declared.

Bilbo smiled. “It’s Bilbo.”
For the rest of the ride, she chatted to both of them about the Shire: the dances; the flowers; the food, oh, the food… The day sped by as the three of them swapped stories and asked questions about each others’ people. Bilbo was glad to spend the time with them, and grateful that they had sought her out, although they wouldn’t tell her much about the ways of dwarrows. Before, she had thought them to be vindictive, but their easy smiles and open eyes had worked magic on her.

Perhaps this adventure wouldn’t be so bad, after all.

Eventually, the Company stopped in an unremarkable spot, Thorin declaring that it was time to make camp. Although the sun was not yet drooping, Bilbo was; riding on the pony had left her strangely fatigued, aching all over. All she wanted was to keel over and go to sleep right there. (She hadn’t slept well the previous night). Nonetheless, she was cruelly detained from her glorious plans by the scene unfolding between Thorin and the wizard beside the ruins of an old farmhouse.

“I think it would be wiser to move on,” the wizard was suggesting, “We could make for the Hidden Valley.”

His words sparked anger from the unreasonable dwarf, who growled, “I will not go near that place.” Bilbo felt herself becoming riled up by his attitude; she was tired, grumpy after the long ride and not in the mood to hear his prejudiced views.

“The elves could help us.” She heard the wizard reasoning, in a patient tone she usually heard directed at slow children. “We could get food, rest, advice…”

“I don’t need their advice!” Boomed Thorin. It really didn’t take long to snap him. So arrogant, so proud. Bilbo really had little patience for the dwarf; he was always glowering at her, never addressing her except to make a snide remark. He may be a great warrior, a leader, as she had learned last night, but that didn’t make him any less of a prat, in her estimation. It just made him a royal one.

In the time it took for her to think this, the dwarf and wizard’s confrontation had imploded and culminated in Gandalf storming off. She didn’t like that; surely they should all stick together?

(Also, she blanched at the thought of being alone with the dwarrows. Fili and Kili had been kind to her, and Dwalin wasn’t so bad, but the others were less friendly. Although, not all of them. Well, specifically just the one - but she didn’t want to hear the things he would say when Gandalf was absent. He could be belittling enough when the wizard was around.)

“Gandalf, where are you going?” She called out, her voice at a slightly higher pitch than normal, wavering. She began to scurry after him over the rugged ground and the wizard turned.

“To seek the company of the only one around here with any sense left: myself!” And then he was gone, muttering about the folly of dwarrows.

Heart sinking, Bilbo turned to be faced by a stone-cold glare.

All for her.

Chapter End Notes

Well, that was a bit short, but no fear - I’m uploading the second part right away XD
That blasted wizard! By Mahal, he was too much! What did he mean by suggesting they seek the advice of the elves? Thorin felt his coiled hatred of elves contracting inside him.

Traitors.

Tree-shaggers.

They were a waste of... of... well, everything they used and were made of! To even suggest Thorin seek shelter in the Hidden Valley - unthinkable.

He watched, almost smug, as the wizard retreated over the field. Good. He was tired of talking to him. Then he caught sight of the hobbit, rushing after him. His eyes narrowed. That halfling seemed to have a strange attachment to the tree-shaggers, too; maybe they were in league?

Maybe they were conspiring against him with the traitors!

“Gandalf, where are you going?” Her voice carried to him, and he could hear how her voice broke. She sounded afraid. But why should she sound afraid? Was she afraid lest her plan to conspire against him with the elf scum go awry? He watched as she turned, her eyes meeting his.

Oh.

She was afraid of him.

The knowledge slammed into Thorin like a blow to the gut; he didn’t let it show on his face (in fact, his kingly glare only intensified), although he felt oddly sickened. Horrified, even. To think that he had inspired fear in a member of his own Company. She dropped her large eyes downwards, and he watched as she made her way over to the edge of the group. She was as far from him as it was possible to be. He tracked her progress with his eyes; she sat with her back to him, and seemed to rub her right forearm, as though it hurt. An injury? No, there was no reason for her to be injured, they had encountered no trouble so far. It was probably just rough cloth or something.

But what did he care, anyway? This stupid halfling, coming on their quest and making him feel bad, making him worry... She was becoming a nuisance. Maybe she would leave, he hoped. It wasn’t too unthinkable; she was evidently not cut out for the journey. In fact, it would be in her own best
interests if she were to decide to leave.

And if she were to be… encouraged… to arrive at that decision, well, that wouldn’t be so terrible, would it?

Thorin realised he was staring, and looked away, hoping none of the others had noticed. Bombur passed him a bowl of stew, and he nodded in thanks, gesturing for the dwarf to come closer. “Get the halfling,” He instructed, “To take Fili and Kili their food. It’s time it pulled its weight around here.”

With a twinge of something that would have been regret were he capable of it, he noted that the other dwarf recoiled slightly at his harshness and use of such an unfortunate pronoun. No matter. It was true, he didn’t care for the hobbit; nor did he care who knew it. He watched guardedly, whilst eating, as the dwarf made his way over to Bilbo and instructed her to carry the food to Fili and Kili. Thorin was somewhat surprised when she obliged without complaint.

He was taken aback by the smile she offered the dwarf as she acquiesced. It was no more than a passing, congenial smile, but it transformed her face, her eyes crinkling at the edges. Thorin felt a twist of some kind of emotion, realising he would never see her smile at him like that.

Slowly he realised, as the halfling walked away, that he had frozen with his spoon in mid-air, and hurriedly completed the action. The stew burned his mouth, but he did not react. Bombur gave him an odd look, going about his business. Thorin felt a very strong surge of dislike towards the halfling. She needed to leave, soon.

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The evening was passing amicably, everyone enjoying some rest. The sky was now completely dark, stars glittering. The quiet hum of chatter reverberated around the fire, as dwarrows had conversations amongst themselves. There were soft snores and whistles from Bombur’s sleeping form, and if Ori’s heavy eyes were any indication, he was not very far behind.

But Thorin was not relaxed. Thorin could not sleep.

The hobbit had not returned.

He was sure she was just talking to Fili and Kili. Those two had probably embroiled her in an elaborate trick or confusing conversation. They had ridden together today, and he had caught snatches of their conversation. They had sounded happy, laughing and chattering. He imagined the easy way she would laugh with them, smile at them, meet their eyes.

It made him unreasonably angry.

No it didn’t, he told himself, as he squashed his feelings. The halfling’s smiles were nothing to him. She was nothing to him. She would probably die on the quest, anyway.

He sprang to his feet, pacing.

The others noticed, but said nothing. They knew that asking Thorin about his feelings was like baiting a dragon - and they’d had enough of fire-breathing terrors, thank you. He continued to pace. What if something had happened? Concern crushed him. What if something had happened to Fili and Kili while they were on watch duty?

Oh Mahal, Dis would surely have his head.

If he hadn’t thrown himself from a ledge already, which he wasn’t sure he wouldn’t do if anything
happened to those infuriating princes. He couldn’t stand this. That was when he spotted the two boys - although they really weren’t boys anymore - running full pelt through the woods towards him. His breath caught in his throat. Where was the halfling? Was it dead already? His thoughts were unfeeling, but that was compensated for by the surge of sheer horror rising through him.

“Uncle!” Fili shouted, leaning on his shoulder to catch his breath. “Uncle…”

“We may have done something stupid…” His brother chipped in, as they both leaned against him, hands on his shoulders, struggling for breath.

“Really, really stupid…” Fili gasped.

“What did you do, for Mahal’s sake?” The dwarf all but roared in frustration.

The two paused, looking up at him with shame in their big eyes. They looked to each other, Kili opening his mouth to speak.

“We sent Bilbo to steal the ponies back from a group of trolls.”

The answer sunk through Thorin’s ears to his toes, as he absorbed its utter awfulness. He swore, extensively, sure he was teaching the boys a few new words in the process.

He did not allow himself to waste more any time, though.

“Everyone, get up!” He ordered, issuing specific orders as the dwarrows armed themselves quickly. Exchanging a look with Dwalin, he knew the dwarf would ensure everyone was suitably armed. He conducted a quick head-count; everyone was alert now, hurrying to collect their axes and swords (and Ori his catapult).

“Fili, lead the way.” He barked, and they were off, chasing after Fili through the woods. The woods were darker than the fields, full of the sounds of scurrying creatures and snapping twigs. Thorin felt the familiar roar of blood in his ears as his feet reached a rhythm, pounding the earth beneath them. Before long, they reached the edge of the clearing, Fili gesturing that they should conceal themselves behind the trees. Thorin did so, twisting his neck to look out upon the events unfolding.

It was not good.

A massive black cauldron simmered at the centre, bubbling with some vile-smelling substance over a large fire. Three enormous trolls were positioned around it, one inspecting an item in its hands at length.

Said item was none other than Mistress Bilbo Baggins.

She was trembling, visibly, her eyes wide and wild, her cheeks blotchy and the rest of her pale. Her hair was coming out of her braid in wisps, flying around her face. Why hadn’t she just stayed in her comfortable home with her bonded?

Anger surged through Thorin yet again.

Of course, of course the hobbit would get into a fix like this, and they would have to rescue her. Stupid halfling. Quietly, Thorin began to tell the others what to do, desperately catching at a viable plan, when something the halfling was saying caught his attention, and he stopped.

He would have been awestruck if he wasn’t so damn horrified.
OOH CLIFFHANGER! See you soon XD
Second Camp, Third Part

Chapter Summary

And now the canon starts to cry...

Chapter Notes

I was overjoyed by all the lovely words sent my way last time! It seems a cliffhanger drew you all out... (duly noted, *evillaugh*)
No, but seriously, thank you for your kindness, I really appreciate it. (There may have been some welling up.) I hope this doesn't disappoint.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bilbo nearly squealed as the troll tightened its grip on her waist. Her sides were definitely bruised now. The pain made her vision go funny for a moment.

The damn things stank, and they were stupid. That was her only hope; there was no chance the others would be staging a rescue anytime soon.

She almost scoffed at the thought. Even if, if, the brothers plucked up the courage to inform their uncle of the events, Thorin would just write her off, roll over and go back to sleep.

The thought made her deeply sad, which she attributed to her hope to fit in with the group and nothing more.

Nonetheless, she kept her face stern as she watched the trolls.

She had confused them.

“What did it say?”

“The burglarhobbit?”

“It said… What did it say?”

She almost rolled her eyes as they bumbled around. She would have pitied them for their stupidity if they weren’t holding her over a cooking pot.

“You heard me!” She cried out, “I’m a Baggins! You can’t hurt me!”

One leaned too close for comfort, its breath wiping her mind clear of thought for a moment. It narrowed its eyes. “You said you was a burglarhobbit.”

“A Baggins is a very special type of burglarhobbit!”
“Oh yeah?”

Unpleasant, nasty, disgusting creatures. She hoped they would meet sticky ends (soon).

“Yes, indeed! We are cursed so that if anyone kills us, they will be haunted by their worst dreams come true for a thousand years.” She fought to keep her voice steady, willing the trolls to be just stupid enough to believe the lie she had plucked out of her favourite myth, while she bought some time to figure out how to escape.

“A curse?!” One of them was becoming alarmed, but another cut in.

“I think it’s lying. Let’s just roast it; go on, throw it on the fire.”

“I’m not doing it, you do it!”

The creature turned, swinging its arm around so that Bilbo was dragged through the air. She felt a roll of nausea.

“No, you do it, there’s nothing to worry about…”

Wonderful. Whilst they were bickering amongst themselves, Bilbo took a moment to work out how to escape. She considered her miserable resources (nothing save for herself) and limited options as per movement. Racking her brains, she hit upon an idea.

A very stupid one.

She’d got it.

She was probably going to die.

“Wait!” She shouted, shocking herself with how loud she was. All three trolls swung their heads around to scrutinise her, looking a little irritated.

“Yes?” They leaned in.

She gestured to the one holding her. “Come closer. Come closer and I will tell you the secret of the burglarhobbits.”

“Secret?”

“Yes! Yes! The secret of the burglarhobbits, the Bagginsons. Haven’t you heard of it?” She used the same tone her teachers always had after she did badly in exams, and it seemed to work.

“Well, no…”

“Oh dear! Well, I suppose I simply must tell you, then. Can’t have important individuals like yourselves wandering about and not knowing the secret…”

It looked suspicious, but leaned its head until it was close enough that she could feel its breath on her.

“Yes?” It sneered.

She took a deep breath, and spoke, “Well…” She prepared herself. “The secret is…” And suddenly, in a split second, she took a swing at its eye, plunging her arm into the tear duct. What lay behind its eye felt squishy and stringy and sickeningly squelchy. She twisted a handful of it around her fist and wrenched it out. The troll shrieked, an honest, pained scream, and fell, releasing her as a reflex, as
she had predicted it would.

She fell to the floor with a crushing impact, pain shooting up her left side, but the other two were distracted momentarily as their friend fell to the floor, stone dead. Shaking, she noted that most of the insides of his head were draped on her arm, and that the pain that had claimed her whole left side, on which she had fallen, was only magnifying. But there was no time.

She ran.

She ran faster than she ever had before, away from where she knew the dwarrows were sleeping. She ran through the trees, going forwards for about five minutes. Each step was progressively harder as the pain seared up her left side. The air was thick in her lungs as she sucked it down. Biting her lip until she tasted blood, she kept going, as white spots flared before her eyes. She could hear the trolls crashing through the forest behind her. There was a small, dank cave hidden in a riverbank up ahead. Unthinking, she dove in. She watched as they rushed by, trashing the forest and swearing as they went.

Quietly, she dragged herself out, the pain so extreme she had to bite her lip again. She definitely tasted blood. Ignoring it as best she could, she ran back to where the ponies were tethered, working the knot free and hauling herself up onto one of them; the rest of the ponies followed as she rode, as fast as she could, back to the camp. Each step of the pony jarred all her bones, and she felt like a glass doll in a tempest. But she had to warn the dwarrows.

It struck her as ironic when she sped by two discarded bowls of stew on the periphery of the clearing.

Heart sinking, she noted the sound of movement behind her, and could have cried out. How had the trolls worked out what she had done? They were supposed to be stupid! But she could definitely hear something crashing through the woods behind her. Not daring to look around, she urged the pony on, unable to stop the tears leaking down her face.

She couldn’t die now! Not yet! She had to get to Rivendell… It was gaining on her, soon it would all be over…

“Mahal, Bilbo, stop!”

Thorin.

It took her a moment to stop the pony. She dismounted and turned, almost falling when she tried to stand, but somehow remaining upright, to be faced by a Company of harried looking dwarrows.

And one very angry one.

Internally, she sighed. Some things never change.

He advanced towards her, his movements violent and charged.

“What were you doing? You could have been killed!” He spat at her, his eyes wild.

In return, she looked up at him, and realised that he hadn’t just rolled over and gone back to sleep. He’d come to get her. They had all come to get her. That had never happened before.

No one had ever come to get her.

A strange, dark joy now began to twist through her already frail form. Was this what it felt like; the
opposite of abandonment? It was wonderful.

“Thank you.” She croaked, falling forwards and putting her arms around the dwarf king. He was taken aback, which was probably the only reason he didn’t shake her off, and after a long moment, he placed a hand over her back. He was warm, and solid, and she shut her eyes, not thinking of anything but him for a moment. He smelled like salt, blood and oak; he smelled like the earth, like her home, but also wonderfully more alive. She could feel his breathing, deep and heavy, along with his steady heartbeat, and it calmed her own.

“Don’t do that again.” The dark warning in his voice was tempered by something else, something that wasn’t quite hate. That gave Bilbo hope; hope that one day she might have a place in this Company. As he let her go, she was approached by a contrite Fili and Kili, which made for quite a sight. They helped her, as the others made their way back, allowing her to lean on them. They apologised, Kili’s round eyes brimming with tears and Fili’s with shame, but she reassured them. She really didn’t mind; they had come back, and that was what mattered.

Later, when she was, by some miracle, still conscious, she did her best to clean up her arm and everything returned more or less to normal. Oin looked over her injuries, saying she would be right as rain in a few days. He spread a poultice over them, giving her a pain draught, which sent her, finally, into a deep sleep. If the dwarrows were looking at her differently, she hadn’t noticed.

* 

Gandalf found the two remaining trolls and ensured they met the dawn. The wizard’s wrath was hard to incur but absolute, although he took no pleasure in their last moments.

Again, he had shirked his duties and trouble had befallen Bilbo. He really was responsible for a lot of her sufferings, he thought, almost ashamed. What if next time, the little hobbit wasn’t able to get herself out of trouble, and he wasn’t there? He hoped the dwarrows would take care of her.

After seeing Thorin Oakenshield’s face that day - which bore an expression very much akin to pure, blind hatred - he knew that there was at least one dwarf who would keep her safe.

No matter what.

Chapter End Notes

So... who saw that coming?

I hope you didn't think that was all a bit left-field. Yeah, sorry if you thought it was weird or annoying or something. Anyway, I hope to see you next time XD

Also, I'm not sure if hobbits would have exams or not, but I decided that it's likely they do - at the end of the year, I think. But that's just me pondering...

(I am going to fail all my exams so badly -_- oh well)
A Troll-Hoard

Chapter Summary

A bit of messing about in a cave, and then we meet somebody new XD

Chapter Notes

Oh my! May I take this opportunity to thank you all for leaving kudos and comments XD I must be the luckiest person in the world, to have such kind readers.
I hope you enjoy this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

As the ponies tracked their way over the hill, the green blades of grass glinting like steel in the sunlight, a terrible smell rose to meet the company.

“What’s that stench?” Bofur exclaimed, as they came to an abrupt halt. Bilbo was almost amused as the dwarf wrinkled his nose in an exaggeration of disgust, looking about at the company. From the back, she looked around too, wondering who would answer the question.

Thorin was glaring at her again.

She wasn’t sure how much longer she could take this.

Gandalf pointed to a small, rocky cave around the side of the hill. They dismounted, making their way up - although Bilbo couldn’t know why, for surely nothing good could come of such a stink - as the wizard told them, “It’s a troll-hoard.” He added as an afterthought, “Be careful what you touch.”

Bilbo was at the back of the company, so all the dwarrows were already inside as she entered. The cave stank, unbearably, and was stomach-churningly dirty, but she could see treasures under the grime and dirt. It was a very strange sight; two sides of the spectrum of value, in the same disgusting cave.

Thinking this, as she limped in, still heavily favouring her right side, she tripped, almost going flying.

An arm reached out to steady her, and she looked up to see Bifur frowning down at her. He waited a moment to make sure she was steady before letting her go. “Thank you.” She stuttered, intimidated by the dwarf with an axe in his head, who had never communicated with her before. ”Az-Baggins.” He nodded, grunting in Khuzdul. “Yâdúshun.”

She nodded, not knowing what he was saying but deducing from his tone that it was along the lines of, ‘no problem.’

“Try not to injure yourself, halfling!” Came Thorin’s barked insult from inside the cave.
She twisted inwardly.

Whatever semi-acceptance she had felt before had been fleeting. The dwarf king was being even worse towards her than usual, not hesitating to put her down and jeer at her. She couldn’t even bring herself to protest, she just felt so squashed and dejected.

She was also tired, pale from blood loss, and her lip was swollen.

Bifur was looking down at her, with kind eyes, and she brought herself to smile at him, finding the expression to be genuine. He really was a good dwarf. Bofur jostled into her good side, smiling.

“Don’t mind the king,” he joked, “He gets like that in the mornings.” It gladdened Bilbo’s heart that the dwarrows were trying to include her, even if their king wasn’t so welcoming, and she smiled back easily, truly happy for a moment (despite the glare she could feel on her, without even looking).

“Care to contribute to the investment?” Called up Nori, from where he and some of the others were kneeling to bury some of the better items.

“We’re making a long-term deposit.” Glóin informed them as he barreled past, laden with what looked like precious metals. Bofur grinned, joining them to add to the deposit, as Bilbo and Bifur watched in amusement. Dwalin came over from the other side of the cave, standing next to the other dwarf and making a joke in Khuzdul that had him guffawing.

* 

Thorin inspected the cave floor, a distinctively shaped metal object catching his eye. He leant to pick it up - a sword. It was a very fine one, too; he unsheathed it, testing its weight and balance.

Perfect.

“These swords were not made by any troll.” He mused aloud to the wizard, who had come to stand behind him.

“No.” The wizard agreed, inspecting one he was holding. “These were forged in Gondolin, by the High Elves of the First Age. No finer blade could be wished for.”

Thorin snorted. A dwarf blade was surely finer than an elven one! Nonetheless, this blade was very fine, and Thorin was not stupid. He would not pass up such a thing just because it had been made by tree-shaggers.

Wiping grime off the blade, he turned to hold it up to the light, to see it better, because it looked like there was an inscription of some kind along the blade. Turning, he looked up, jolted when his eyes were met by a pair of large, brown ones at the other end of the cave.

The halfling was staring at him.

Thorin felt a surge of excitement which he pretended was displeasure (he didn’t even know he was pretending.) The hobbit looked, well, objectively speaking, angelic, lit from behind by the rising sun, the light catching on strands of her hair as they floated around her face, making them look like spun gold.

She was bashed up, though, and he felt slightly anxious as he noted her swollen lip, unsteady gait, general bruising and the subtle gauntness about her. It was all her fault for that stunt with the trolls. She should have waited for him, instead of improvising like that!

Why had she not waited for the dwarrows to come and help her?
She dropped her eyes, turning away, but Thorin didn't move for a moment. He was thinking.

She had run away from the camp, further into the trees, when she had been dropped by the brute holding her. Again, Thorin was not stupid. That meant she had been leading them away from the dwarrows - but surely she would have known that they were coming for her? That it wouldn’t matter if the trolls were led towards them, because they were already on their way towards the trolls?

And she had thanked him. For what? For coming to get her?

Ah. But of course.

Bilbo had not expected them to come and get her.

Thorin considered that insight carefully as he turned back, eyes on the blade. He supposed that had been his aim - to make her feel isolated, to make her want to leave. He should be glad it was working. He should be relieved - so why did he feel so… not relieved?

Ugh, this was no good. He couldn’t be analysing the hobbit’s every move, if he were to have any peace.

Idly, he recalled how she had embraced him - literally falling into his arms. She had felt so fragile, yet so alive, so warm. He had felt her breathing calm, her heartbeat slow, as she relaxed into him.

No, this was no good at all. The hobbit would have to be dealt with.

Time to go.

* 

Bilbo’s eye was drawn by the sound of metal on metal, as Thorin and Gandalf inspected a sword on the other side of the cave. It seemed to be important, as Thorin frowned at it. From what she could hear, Gandalf was explaining something. The dwarf turned to face the entrance of the cave, to see the sword in more light. His eyes caught Bilbo’s, widening as his nostrils flared. She dipped her gaze, sorry for staring at him; but she was just curious about what they were doing!

The dwarf’s back facing her again, she felt it was safe to look up. Bifur and Dwalin were staring down at her, as if confused. She frowned at them. “What?”

Neither answered, shaking their heads and exchanging more comments in Khuzdul. Whatever Bifur said seemed to catch the attention of the other dwarrows, as Ori piped up, excited, and was shushed by the rest, who all quickly looked to Thorin. Whatever they were saying, he hadn’t noticed, and Bilbo was becoming irritated by their use of another language. She was going to make a comment when she was cut off.

“Let’s get out of this foul place. Come on.” Thorin’s voice instructed.

He made his way out, brushing past Bilbo without looking at her, whilst managing to make eye contact with everybody else. The dwarrows at once vacated the cave, Bofur patting down the earth where they had buried their spoils. He winked at Bilbo, before scrambling outside.

To her chagrin, Bifur and Dwalin remained by her side and seemed to have decided to help her out of the cave by physically lifting her between them, so that her feet dangled. She yelped, deposited on her pony by the grinning dwarrows. Shaking slightly, she wagged a finger at them.

“Now, that wasn’t really necessary, was it…”
“Stop making a fuss, halfling.” Came another of Thorin’s instructions, shutting her down as she looked to the floor. The other dwarrows made their way away, grumbling, and she dared not raise her gaze until they all began riding again.

She noted that Gandalf had stopped his pony, waiting for her, and her pony fell into place beside his.

He reached out, passing her an object. It was a sword, small enough for her to use. He didn’t offer any words with it, about to ride to the front again, when Bilbo spoke. “Gandalf - is this from that cave?”

The wizard nodded, commenting gruffly, “It’s about your size.” He had the tone of someone trying to hide their feelings, but Bilbo was grateful for his concern. And she had wished that she had some kind of weapon (other than wit, she thought sarcastically).

“Thank you.” She told the wizard, looking up into his eyes.

He made an approving sound, riding next to her for a little while.

“The blade is of Elvish make. It will glow blue when goblins or orcs are near.” He told her, and her eyes widened.

That would be invaluable!

She opened her mouth to thank him again, but the wizard chuckled, waving it off. “Please, Bilbo, I just picked it off the floor of a cave…”

He seemed to be thinking of how to phrase something, so she gave him a moment, smiling as their ponies plodded along and looking forwards.

She could see the outline of Thorin as he rode at the head of the Company.

Eru, she could not get the memory of his arms out of her head! She had dreamed of it last night - dreamed of his warm solidity, and how wonderful it had felt to be so close to him. His heartbeat, strong, and she had been so close she had felt it. She wanted that again. She wanted to be close to him. It crossed her mind that she might be falling for the dwarf king. What a disaster! He would hate her more if he ever discovered her feelings. He hated her so much already, she wondered if that was even possible. She hoped not. Longingly, she imagined what he would look like if those blue eyes were clear of hatred; could he possibly look more majestic? Bilbo thought he could.

Damn it all!

This was dangerous territory.

The wizard cleared his throat. He had obviously worked out what he was trying to say.

“Just remember, my dear, that courage… True courage is not knowing when to take a life, but when to spare one.”

She grinned, bemused but touched, as they continued in companionable silence for a little while more, until a cry came from the head of the company.

“Gandalf!”

The wizard was gone in a flash, already by Thorin’s side, staring down at something on the path ahead.
He looked down for a long moment.

Then his face broke into a wide, brilliant grin.

“Radagast!”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, I believe that 'Az-Baggins' means 'Mistress Baggins' and that 'Yâdûshun' is a formal way to say 'You're welcome'.

Now I'm off to take a biology exam. Wish me luck!
“Radagast! Radagast the Brown.” Gandalf exclaimed, dismounting from his pony and grinning broadly. “What on earth are you doing here?”

The dwarrows were suspicious, but dismounting too, gathering around the pair as they took in the scene. Bilbo limped up to the group, Dwalin ushering her over to him and allowing her to lean some of her weight on him. She was grateful for that, although Thorin looked irritated on his other side.

Did that dwarf ever look anything but?

Idly, Bilbo wondered what a smile would look like upon his face - but that was not a thought she could pursue.

It would only lead to tears.

Bilbo averted her eyes, inspecting the new figure who Gandalf seemed to be so friendly with.

Radagast the Brown.

She seemed to recall Gandalf telling her, on their journey, about him; he was another wizard, great ‘in his own way’. Bilbo hadn’t been sure what to make of that at the time, and she wasn’t sure what to make of the wizard now, either.

He was smallish, still much taller than Bilbo, with unkempt hair. To her horror, it seemed to be full of feathers and bird mess; his clothes were covered in mud and various substances which could be attributed to living with animals. He wore brown, his wide eyes brown too, full of something akin to innocence. Or perhaps not quite innocence - it was like hope, or courage, a sort of transparency that Bilbo had never before observed in an adult. She warmed to the wizard, despite the state of his hair and clothes.

He seemed utterly insane, but then, weren’t all the best people a little bit that way inclined?
The wizard spoke. “I was looking for you, Gandalf. Something’s wrong, terribly wrong…” The fear and urgency in his voice was terrible to hear.

“Yes?” Gandalf gestured for him to continue, for the other wizard had trailed off and was now fiddling with his frayed sleeves, eyes darting about as he rocked back and forth slightly on his heels.

“Just give me a minute. Oh, I had a thought, and now I’ve lost it. I’ve lost it… It was right there, on the tip of my tongue. Oh!”

An epiphany seemed to spark in his eyes as realisation dawned across his face. Bilbo watched in a kind of morbid fascination as he stuck out his tongue and pulled off an insect.

“It wasn’t a thought at all! It was a stick insect!”

Bilbo, already leaning her shoulder against Dwalin, buried her head in his side in horror for a moment, before looking back up. She could feel silent laughter vibrating through him, and she smiled, still looking at Radagast.

*

The day was bright, Thorin noted, as he led the Company. Gandalf had gone back to give something to the halfling, so he rode with Dwalin by his side, Bifur just behind with Balin. He could hear the relaxed, cheerful chatter of the Company as they progressed over the wooded hills.

As ever, he fixed his eyes forwards, scanning for danger in the distance.

Trees, not thick enough to provide cover, but not thin enough to leave them totally exposed, rustled in the breeze. Far off, he could see the trees beginning to thin out, the land falling into rocky plains.

He didn’t need to worry about the distance, as it happened.

A brown shape plummeted into his path, a few feet away.

Instantly, he halted, inspecting the brown thing, which straightened up into the image of a very, very strange man.

It spoke.

“Where is Gandalf?”

Thorin nearly sighed.

Of course the wizard would be at the bottom of this.

“Gandalf!” He called out, the wizard appearing on his pony beside him in an instant. Gandalf looked down at the figure, the figure looking up, and abruptly they were both grinning.

“Radagast!” Gandalf exclaimed. “Radagast the Brown.”

With that, the wizard dismounted from his pony, and Thorin decided reluctantly that he must do so too. The other dwarrows gathered around them, and he automatically took a quick headcount.

13.

Who - oh. Naturally, the halfling was causing trouble… Casting his gaze around, he caught sight of her making her way up to the group. Ah, of course, she was just slow.
Irritating creature.

He noted with surprise that Dwalin ushered her over, allowing her to lean her shoulder on his side to make it easier for her to stand. He was irked. Why would Dwalin go out of his way to help the halfling? What did he owe her? Nothing. There was no reason for him to treat her so gently.

It was just the loyalty Dwalin would show to any Company member, the dwarf reminded himself, which was part of the reason he valued Dwalin so greatly. Even so, he felt himself go rigid when he saw the easy contact between the two; Bilbo, relaxed next to him, Dwalin acting like it was nothing out of the ordinary. Just how close were they? Thorin narrowed his eyes, glaring outrightly at the hobbit. It was not appropriate, he thought, for them to get too close. It would impede the quest, could cost lives!

He would speak to Dwalin later.

Refocusing his attention, Thorin heard Gandalf ask the other wizard, “Yes?” Damned halfling. Now he’d missed part of the conversation. He noted that the behaviour of Radagast, unkempt and suspect-looking, was erratic; he fidgeted and his eyes darted around, as he rocked slightly.

“Just give me a minute. Oh, I had a thought, and now I’ve lost it. I’ve lost it… It was right there, on the tip of my tongue. Oh!”

Thorin was mildly disgusted as the wizard opened his mouth, plucking out an insect.

“It wasn’t a thought at all! It was a stick insect!”

He felt a movement from Dwalin at his side, and looked away from the wizards to regard his friend. The dwarf was laughing, silently, as Bilbo buried her head in his side, evidently disgusted by the insect spectacle. The dwarf’s eyes were lit up with real amusement as he vibrated with silent chuckling; soon the rest of the Company were also sniggering, although the wizards didn’t seem to notice.

Thorin glared at them all, which put a stop to it.

That damned halfling, causing such a distraction!

And she was definitely becoming too close to Dwalin, leaning on him like that. In fact, she was becoming too close to all the dwarrows, making jokes with them, talking to them, smiling at them… As if she were even a true member of the Company! As if she would be sticking around much longer!

Thorin, again, looked back to the wizards, when a sound froze every bone of every creature there. A howl.

“Wargs.” Bilbo breathed, barely loud enough to be heard. That surprised Thorin; how should the halfling know the sound of a warg?

No matter.

“Warg scouts.” He announced, addressing the circle. “Which means an orc pack will not be far behind.”

Gandalf whirled to face him. “Who did you tell about your quest, other than your kin? Who?” The vehemence of the question shocked the dwarf, but he answered honestly.
“No one.”

Yet the wizard persisted. “Who did you tell?!”

He answered again, unsure of what was happening. “No one, I swear. What in Durin’s name is going on?”

The wizard’s next words inspired an ice-cold chill throughout him, as the wizard looked into his eyes. “We’re being hunted.”

“We have to get out of here.” Dwalin chimed in, the seriousness of his voice jolting Thorin into action. The sight of his arm, now resting over Bilbo’s shoulders, added to his anger, making him more efficient.

It was just inappropriate.

“We can’t!” Came Ori’s cry, and they turned to look at him. He raised his arms in despair. “The ponies, they’ve bolted!”

Thorin swore quietly under his breath, considering their options. How on earth were they going to outrun a warg pack? Another howl ripped through the hills, anxiety building within him. They had to find a way to escape...

Looking around, he saw little cover anywhere. There was no high ground and they would just be picked off in the woods, or get separated, but beyond the woods were nothing but rocky plains.

The little brown one spoke up. “I’ll draw them off.”

His words shocked Thorin, who turned to regard him in disbelief. He was being surprised a lot recently.

“These are Gundabard Wargs. They will outrun you.” Gandalf advised firmly, as large rabbits pulled a cart out from the trees.

The other wizard smiled.

“These are Rhosgobel rabbits. I’d like to see them try.”

With that, he was off, bounding over the plains on his rickety contraption, pulled by rabbits.

The dwarrows watched in awe and horror as a pack of Wargs descended, giving chase to the obviously insane wizard, who was laughing manically as he zipped away, closely pursued.

Thorin snapped the other dwarrows out of it; they had no time for gawping.

“Stay close!” He ordered them, as they began to make their way onto the plains, praying to Mahal that they would make it out of this alive.

Chapter End Notes

It seems I am consistently overwhelmed by your supportive comments and kindnesses, as well as kudoses and such.
I've never actually had a positive response to a fic I've written before (from people who aren't supposed to be nice to me because they're related/my friends irl), so I'm not sure what to do with these sudden feelings of joy...
I'll just send them back out, shall I?
Here, have some joy!
You all rock XD (especially you, the angel and the villain - you should know who you are - you've been commenting since the start, and your names just make me giggle.)
Everybody is so kind, it means a lot to me, as do constructive criticisms, as it means you think my writing is worth your evaluative consideration.
Oh my, I am so inspired by all the nice things XD
Thank you for reading, I hope you continue to and enjoy it too.

(But please don't feel in any way obliged to be nice for the sake of it or believe that I think my writing is not flawed - it certainly is and I know it. I don't want you to think I'm getting a swelled head.)
Crack

Chapter Summary

Orcs!

Chapter Notes

So yes, this will be short and dramatic.
I hope you enjoy it!
Also, thank you so much for all the kind comments and kudos XDD It really means a lot to me! Here, *grouphug*
You are so awesome.

Oh and also be warned, there is some violence and serious injury to a main character in this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Orcs! Everywhere.

Thorin whirled, hacking at one with his (really rather excellent) sword, taking no pleasure in its execution.

He had long ceased to be enamored of the glories of war.

The screeching, grunting beasts and howling wargs surrounded the Company, all was chaos; Thorin tried to take stock of the situation, but there was violence all around, seemingly without rhyme to it.

Crack!

Thorin whipped around.

In horror, he watched as Bilbo Baggins fell to the ground.

Time seemed to slow as she crumpled, like a doll.

She had come from a doll-house, he remembered. She had come from a doll-house, and now she was a doll.

He couldn’t feel anything.

The world was strangely silent.

He ran, sinking to his knees by her side. The sting of their impact on the ground brought his senses back, the crashing cacophony of violence playing out its tune around him as he regarded the one point of quiet in the chaos.
Blood began to pool from her head, as she struggled to speak.

Thorin felt his stomach drop, his hands shaking as his heart raced, blood sloshing about in his head. He felt a lump in his throat as his mouth went dry, his hands uncharacteristically fluttering over the hobbit in panic.

“Not you.” He begged, as if she could grant his wish. “Not you, not you, not you…”

He lifted her head, her blood warm on his fingers, as he momentarily pressed her forehead to his.

“Not you… Please.”

Yet still the halfling lay there on the earth, and still her blood stained it.

He fought the urge to cry out.

Abruptly, Dwalin was by his side. “We have to move!” He urged him, as Thorin stared down at the halfling, gripped by terror.

He nodded.

Gently, he placed one hand under her knees and used the other to support her neck, picking her up and holding her tight against him.

He could still feel her heartbeat.

He would cling to that.

Chapter End Notes

My apologies for the brevity. Next chapter should be up soon, although not as soon as you would perhaps like :3

Thank you for reading! XDD
Oh man, I love you guys so much.
Out of the Frying Pan

Chapter Summary

Things begin to come to light, as the Company plunge into darkness...

Chapter Notes

Okay, so I did warn you I'd be screwing around with the geography - the secret entrance to Rivendell they run down in canon? Now an entrance into the Misty Mountains. Because I can :3
Okay. So I have reached the conclusion that all the nicest people in the world have decided to come and read this, it's the only explanation for how lovely and kind you all are XD I can't get over it - every time I get a comment I GENUINELY do a happy dance and simultaneously worry, 'Please don't be mean to me...' Very conflicting times for me emotionally XDDD

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Bilbo awoke, it was to darkness. As she adjusted, becoming acutely aware of a throbbing in her head, she quietly raised herself onto her elbows to look around. She was in a cave of some kind, surrounded by the sleeping forms of the dwarrows. Instead of her own blanket, she was covered by snug, thick furs - how strange.

How did she get here?

She racked her brains, trying to remember what had happened.

She could remember Radagast all but flying off over the plains.

It all began to come back to her.

The company had made a break for it, running over the plains, dodging behind rocks to stay out of sight. Then - and here it became blurry - she could remember Kili shooting an orc, wargs descending upon them...

Then there had been a sharp blow to her head, she had fallen down, and then there had been... There had been someone, someone leaning over her, talking to her...

What had they said?

Something like, “Not you, not you,” repeated over and over.

Who had it been?

Suddenly, a pair of piercing blue eyes swung into focus in her mind, like the moon from behind the
clouds.

Thorin.

“Not you, not you.”

What did he mean by that? She nearly groaned in frustration. Vaguely, she could remember being bundled up and carried, as the world had slipped out of focus. She recalled the feeling of gentle arms, holding her tight against a solid, warm chest, securing her as she was claimed by darkness. Thorin's gentle arms. Thorin's solid, warm chest.

She felt a sinking feeling, as a realisation dwaned upon her.

He was her One.

She knew. It was an unswerving, immutable knowledge; it had been described to her countless times, but she had never felt it herself. She knew that was what she felt, though. How did she know? She guessed it was because she longed to see flowers in his hair, longed to know how he took his tea in the mornings, to know every part of him as intimately as she knew herself. She couldn't even hate him for his mistreatment of her (although that did not mean she would tolerate it much longer.)

This was bad.

After that, she thought, refocusing on the question at hand, she had woken up here.

Her left side ached, as well as her head, and she wasn’t sure how long she could support her own weight, crying out quietly as her ribcage twinged.

One of the dwarrows’ heads snapped up at the sound. She was relieved when her eyes were met by those of Mister Bofur. Initially, she had disliked the dwarf, but now she knew that he was well-meaning in his teasing, optimistic and cheerful.

He smiled, a wide, honest grin, which she returned, somewhat more weakly.

“Good to see you’re back with us, lass.” He made his way over to her, putting an arm over her shoulder to support her weight. She made a noise of gratitude, infinitely grateful for the thought; she knew he understood how much she appreciated it.

“What happened after I…” She trailed off, her voice rasping and sore.

He nodded. “After you blacked out, lass? Well, Master Thorin scooped you up, he did, carrying you all the way. We ran from the pack but they were gaining on us, and we found an entrance into the rocks. We dove in, and the orcs didn’t follow, for some reason.”

He paused for a moment, wrinkling his nose so than his beard danced over his chin as he thought. Bilbo would have giggled if she hadn't felt so dismal.

“Now we’re a bit further down the passage, where we decided to make camp. It’s relatively safe, and as long as one of us keeps watch, we shouldn’t have any trouble. The wizard’s gone though, went to check on his friend with the rabbits.” The dwarf informed her of this in a matter of fact tone, but she recognised the mischievous glint in his eyes.

Oh dear.

“So, Mistress Baggins…” He paused, amused, as she interrupted him, beginning to croak that he
should call her Bilbo - he waved a hand to save her the effort.

“Of course, Bilbo. So, Bilbo, how did it feel, being carried in our brave leader’s arms?”

Bilbo felt herself going red as beet, although there was surely no reason for her to be embarrassed.

“I’m sure I don’t remember.”

*

Thorin knew the moment she awoke. Her breathing pattern changed, and he could just hear her pull herself up onto her elbows, no doubt recollecting the events of the previous day.

He steeled himself, suppressing his urge to go to the hobbit’s side, to gather her up in his arms again, to feel her soft skin turn pink where he touched it…

But no.

He couldn’t possibly be feeling the things he was feeling. He felt nothing but a sort of fraternal love at best towards the halfling, just like the rest of his Company.

That was the way it had to be.

His heart contorted in his chest as he heard her let out a quiet cry of pain. Yet still he did not move, hearing Bofur - who was on watch - sit up.

Bofur would look after her, he knew.

Subtly, he opened one eye, and could see the halfling. She smiled at Bofur, her expression muted by pain but still genuine, and the pure acceptance on her face made Thorin want to crush people.

Why should the halfling smile for others so easily? What right did she have to bestow kindness on everyone, everyone but him?

Anger flared more deeply through him as he watched Bofur come to sit next to the hobbit, putting an arm around her. Thorin, unthinkingly, opened both eyes, knowing that neither the hobbit nor the dwarf would notice.

He watched how the hobbit relaxed against him, offering him a grateful smile. It was an outrage! By Mahal, he was the one who had carried her for miles, keeping her out of danger, not Bofur.

He was the one who had watched her crumple like a doll and felt like Erebor was falling, all over again.

Why should Bofur receive her grateful looks, her smiles, her acceptance?

*Because the hobbit hates you, like you wanted all along,* sneered the voice at the back of Thorin’s mind. *Wasn’t that what you wanted; for the halfling to hate you and leave?* He willed the voice into silence, watching as the two began to speak.

Now that he was watching the hobbit, his anger deflated, and he was left with something else. It felt… well, Thorin had dis-acknowledged his feelings far too often for far too long to be able to put a name to it, but if he could have, he would have said it felt lonely.

“What happened after I…?”
The hobbit’s rasping voice sent horror coursing through him. Her throat must be so sore; he did not allow himself to rush to her side as he longed to, to turn her body over and over in his arms until he had inspected every scratch and made it better.

He lay, perfectly still.

“After you blacked out, lassie?” Bofur’s flippant tone irked Thorin. “Well, Master Thorin scooped you up, he did, carrying you all the way. We ran from the pack but they were gaining on us, and we found an entrance into the rocks. We dove in, and the orcs didn’t follow, for some reason. Now we’re a bit further down the passage, where we decided to make camp. It’s relatively safe, and as long as one of us keeps watch, we shouldn’t have any trouble. The wizard’s gone though, went to check on his friend with the rabbits.”

Thorin knew the words to be true, but something in them did not strike him right. He couldn’t quite put his finger on it.

The dwarf’s next question shocked him utterly.

“So, Mistress Baggins…” There was a pause as the hobbit began to protest something, Bofur catching on and gesturing for her to calm down.

How did he do that - anticipate her words? Thorin could never predict what the hobbit would say next.

“Of course, Bilbo.”

They were on a first name basis.

They must be quite close, then. This revelation returned some of Thorin’s anger to him - she was close to Dwalin, Bofur, who knew, maybe she was on a first name basis with all the dwarrows! Except him.

“So, Bilbo, how did it feel, being carried in our brave leader’s arms?”

Mahal!

Despite himself, Thorin felt his mouth go dry in anticipation of her answer.

He could remember it, all too vividly. He remembered hearing a great crack, and turning to see her fall, an orc leering behind her. Bifur had hurled himself at the beast, ripping it to pieces, but Thorin had not noticed.

He had sped to her side, dropping to his knees beside her. Her eyes were half-open, and her mouth moved as if she were trying to speak, blood seeping over her head, turning her beautiful honey-blond hair copper, then dark red.

He had watched, desperately wishing there was something he could do, willing the hobbit to be alright.

“Not you.” He had muttered, “Not you, not you, not you…”

Dwalin had run over to him then, informing him that they had to move, so, gingerly, he had scooped up the hobbit, allowing Gandalf to lead the party until they made their way, fighting and bleeding as they went, to an entrance into the rocks.
Thorin had waited for the others to dive in first, then slid down with Bilbo held gently against his chest. He braced himself to absorb all the impact, and then they were off again, rushing through the tunnels.

Eventually, Gandalf had stopped them, going back to help his friend. The dwarrows had more or less collapsed where they stood, Bofur electing to take watch.

Thorin had laid Bilbo’s body down on the rocks, all too aware of how fragile she was, how broken looking, covering her in his own furs so she wouldn’t get cold. The eyes of the others on him had caused him to walk away, when really he wanted to curl himself around her, so he could feel her breathing.

But really, these thoughts weren’t appropriate anyway. She braided her hair in one, long braid, which he knew meant she had already found her One and bonded.

There was no point in pursuing this train of thought.

Not that he was even having it.

The train of thought.

Still, he held his breath as he waited to hear her reply.

“I’m sure I don’t remember.” There was panic in her rough voice; had it really been so bad, to be held in his arms?

Did the hobbit really detest him so much? Was she really so afraid of him?

Still Bofur pressed her. Damn that dwarf!

“You must remember something, why else would you be turning all red?”

The hobbit actually squeaked at that, before saying, barely audibly, “It wouldn’t matter if I did.”

Thorin didn’t understand her tone, or the long silence that followed as the two came to an understanding.

What could she mean by that?

“Aye, lassie,” he heard the dwarf sigh, “But it might just yet.”

With that, he watched as Bofur laid her down again on the floor gently. At least the dwarf was careful with her.

As he began to walk away, Bilbo asked him something else.

“Bofur - where are we?”

“To be exact, the wizard said we’re in the Misty Mountains, near High Pass.”

The change in the hobbit was immediate. Her breathing quickened as she scrambled to her feet. Thorin wondered how she could do that - she was so injured. Her bruising from the trolls, paired with blood loss and general abuse had rendered her very weak. Still, she stayed on her feet, swaying. Unsheathing her sword, Thorin saw that it glowed blue in the darkness, illuminating the complete terror on her face.
Suddenly, at the top of her broken voice, she yelled: “Run!”

Then there was a great cracking sound, the floor beginning to tremble and cleave apart. That was when the floor began to collapse, and as they hurtled through the dark, Thorin was consumed by fear and panic, for his Company, for his nephews, and most of all, for Bilbo.

Chapter End Notes

How exciting!
(The reason the orcs didn't follow is because they knew that the entrance led to the goblins' lair and didn't want to end up there. Who would, really?)
Now, the next chapter might not be up for a while. It's one of the two chapters I have been calling the Big Chapters, and it might take a while to get right.
So please bear with me :3

Also oh my goodness did anyone else love the new trailer?! I'm so excited for the second movie! Must have watched the trailer about ten times...
Chapter Summary

I'm very nervous about this. And sorry...

Chapter Notes

Warning: this is going to be weird and left-field. Although I'm pretty excited about it.

Okay, there are a few triggers in this one, but I don't want to spoil the plot, so if you're worried about triggers they are listed in the notes at the end, in case you'd rather not know what's going to happen in advance.

Moreover, I will thank you all again for your amazingly lovely comments thus far. I'm shocked by how kind you all are :') I just can't get over it - every kudos and comment makes me smile like an idiot. I hope you continue to enjoy this, despite the slightly out-there plot development...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Bilbo screamed as she fell, knowing all too well where they were going. She landed on top of another dwarf - Bombur - which wasn't great for him, but meant that she didn't incur any further injury. The air was forced out of her lungs on impact, so she struggled to breathe for a moment, as the Company sprawled on the rocky cave floor.

Goblins swarmed around them, grabbing, pulling, herding them along a walkway. The dwarrows were too shocked to fight back well, and were soon defeated despite their struggles.

Bilbo hated their stench, their ugliness, their repulsive screeches - as they made their way along the walkway, she was at the back of the group, as was Thorin. She could hear the dwarrows protesting, but could not call a sound to her lips.

A fear began to pound through her, and, in her desperation, she reached out, grabbing his hand. His eyes widened, but he did nothing to stop her. She squeezed his warm, rough hand for courage, feeling how small her own was in comparison.

After a moment, he let go. Bilbo felt her heart sink, fixing her eyes on the back of Bombur's head in front of her. She needed someone to hold onto, as fear coursed through her.

And she had liked the excuse to hold onto him.

That was when she felt his arm wrap subtly around her lower back, allowing her to lean against him. She was grateful - her limp had made it hard for her to walk - but as she was about to turn and thank
Looking forwards, she let out a strangled noise, faced with a terror she had not even been able to conjure in her darkest nightmares.

The Goblin King.

He towered, obscenely ugly, before them. Bilbo could feel her breathing become labored, her heart rattling in her chest, as she fought against her panic. Images surfaced in her mind, images she had fought so hard to suppress, and she struggled for control.

"Who would be so bold as to come armed into my kingdom? Spies? Thieves? Assassins?" The Great Goblin boomed, his voice violent. Bilbo couldn't breathe; she forced herself to inhale slowly, her self-control returning with the deepness of her shaky breath.

"Dwarrows, your malevolence." One of the goblins sneered. She recognised it, letting out a small whimper.

"Dwarrows?" Asked the Great Goblin, his voice mocking. "Well, don't just stand there. Search them! Every crack, every crevice..."

And then the goblins were upon them, tearing at clothes and grabbing at weapons, squawking and jibbering. Bilbo was faced by one, and it roughly pulled at her, taking her pack and sword before loping off to add them to the pile.

The Great Goblin spoke again. "What are you doing in these parts?"

No one spoke.

"Speak!"

Still no one said a word.

"Very well," the beast smirked, "If they will not talk then we will make them squawk." The goblins began to jabber in excitement.

"Bring up the Mangler! Bring up the Bonebreaker! Start," He narrowed his eyes, pointing at Ori, "With the youngest."

Instantly, Dwalin pushed the dwarf aside, standing in front of him protectively, and Thorin moved forwards as if to say something.

No! They couldn't know who Thorin was - then they would never get out alive.

"Wait!" Bilbo cried out, her throat still sore, the desperate word bouncing off all the walls of the cavern.

The whole Company, as well as the goblins, froze, all looking at Bilbo. Her breathing spiked, as the Great Goblin leant down slightly, smiling as he recognised her.

"Well, well, well." He sneered. "Out pet has returned to us."

The goblins broke out into sniggers then, pushing her to the front of the crowd so that she stood before the Goblin King. At the back of her mind, she considered hurling herself off the walkway into the abyss, but did not. She had to try to ensure the safety of the dwarrows. She had to get to Rivendell.
Another goblin hissed at her from the side. "You have covered it!"

"Indeed... Show it to us, halfling." The King commanded. She glared up into his heartless eyes, willing him to die right there.

Bilbo raised a shaking hand to her plait, undoing it and letting the hair untwist. Then, slowly, she wrapped a handful of it around her fist, the hair that grew from the nape of her neck, yanking it clean out. She did not feel the pain, but sensed one of the dwarrows wince behind her. She lifted the hair above the patch, turning to show the Goblin King.

The goblins all laughed then, cackling and sneering at the exposed skin. There was a mark there, raised and white. It was a brand, a sharp shape, a serrated square with lines running through it. The Goblin King stopped laughing, jeering at her again.

"We will have to send word to Azog. He was most put out that he didn't get to finish with you." The words of the Goblin King sent deep tremors through Bilbo, but she managed to stay standing, willing the dwarrows to keep quiet. If she played this right, the goblins might not notice that some of them were from the line of Durin and they could escape; if what she had heard about Thorin and the Pale Orc was true, the moment they found out Thorin was here, they would send for Azog, and it would be over.

"Why would you return here, halfling? Did you really miss us that much?" His taunt raised hatred alongside the fear twisting in Bilbo's gut, but she stayed calm, steeling herself.

Bilbo inhaled slowly, opening her mouth to speak, but no words came out. Trying again, she spoke. "Let my friends go."

The Goblin King's smirk grew. "And why, pray, would I do that?"

"Let my friends go and I will remain without fighting. Let them go and you can do what you like with me."

The Great Goblin leaned closer to her. "Interesting... But why not take you all?"

"They're worthless," she shrugged, "Worthless dwarrows, trouble to break. They'll put up a fight."

The Great Goblin jeered. "I think we'll play a game." He broke off, addressing the goblin hordes. "It's been too long since we had a good game, hasn't it?" They all jeered, their cackles echoing around the caverns, filling Bilbo's head.

"We'll give them a head start."

With his words, the goblins began to jostle the company forwards, away from Bilbo, up the walkway towards the exit.

"Run!" Hissed the goblin king, laughing as the dwarrows began to scramble for the exit. Bilbo willed them to keep going and not look back, but Thorin stopped, turning to look at her.

She glared directly into those blue eyes, those eyes like lightning, and willed him to run, trying to convince him that she'd be fine if he would just go. He cocked his head as if he could hear something, turning to sprint out of the tunnel. She felt her heart sink as she watched him retreat, but it was for the best. She consoled herself with the fact that she had done the right thing.

A few moments later, the Great Goblin uttered, "Kill them." The goblins surged forwards, but Bilbo knew that some of the Company had already reached the surface. The could run, or hide in the trees.
They would be alright, and she felt a wave of relief, before looking forwards again.

She was now alone with the Goblin King and a few (hundred) goblins. Her heart sank further as they clutched her arms, dragging her back, back to where she knew a cell was waiting. Tears swam before her eyes as she realised that she was going to die here, after all. She was never going to make it to Rivendell. The knowledge slammed into her, breaking her heart.

She was never going to go to Rivendell!

She was never going to keep her promise, to honour her last words to the one person she loved most in the world: *I love you. I will come back for you, and then we will go home to the Shire, and you'll spend every day in the sunlight and you'll pick flowers, you'll try honey and tea and all the things I've told you about...*

"Stop!"

The word echoed around the caverns, causing the goblins to halt, looking back to where a tall man, dressed all in grey, was stood.

"Don't touch her." He spat, bringing his staff down on the floor; a brilliant white light engulfed the cavern, the goblins screaming and running in all directions.

Gandalf ran over to Bilbo, hoisting her up. "Not this time." He said, looking grimly into her wide, terrified eyes. "Not this time."

Thorin was stood behind him, gripping his sword tightly, and Bilbo was surprised to see him there; he had to run! If the Goblin King found out who he was, he was done for...

Then he uttered something in a language Bilbo didn't understand, and Gandalf nodded, responding in the same language.

"Mukhu?"

"Medrûnat."

Then Thorin was off, Bilbo watching in awe as he hacked through goblins, running to their King. In one swift movement, he jumped, unsheathing his sword, kicking off from the floor and rolling when he reached it again, straightening up the watch the creature. The Great Goblin groaned, as a large slit appeared, running from one side of his belly to the other. She watched, transfixed, as he died.

Thorin whirled back around, lopping the heads off three goblins simultaneously as he did so, before running back to where Gandalf and Bilbo were standing, awestruck. (Well, Bilbo was.)

Then Gandalf picked Bilbo up, as though she were a child, and ran to the surface. Goblins attacked them, but they were all felled, as Thorin appeared beside them, hacking at the goblins with his sword. He covered them until they were out, his face set in grim determination. Most of the goblins must be on the surface, chasing the other dwarrows...

Feeling the sun on her face, Bilbo was infinitely grateful to them both. She would not die in the caverns, she realised; she would never be locked in one of those dank cells again, never have to endure what she had again. She may yet make it to Rivendell.

A great sob shook her, as she buried her head in Gandalf’s chest, relieved and terrified all at the same time. The wizard set her down gently, in a small clearing in the forest. Goblin bodies were piled on the ground; those that survived must have fled. The dwarrows were there, looking at her as if for the
first time, but there were others, too. Elves. One of them, she knew very well.

He smiled at her, and she smiled back, so glad was she to see her old friend.

"Bilbo!" He exclaimed, wrapping his arms around her.

"Lord Elrond!" She chirped, delighted.

They embraced for a moment, Bilbo filled with sudden joy at the sight of him, after what seemed like many years but was really just two. With that, he picked her up, putting her in front of him on his horse. All the dwarrows were placed on horses too, next to their elven riders, and they made their way to Rivendell. She could detect that the dwarrows were unhappy about being so close to elves, but the elves had saved them, so they could hardly complain. Bilbo and Elrond didn't speak, and as she sat atop the horse, her mind began to wander.

What would the dwarrows think of her now? She would have to tell them the truth. Her heart sank at the prospect, anxiety flaring as she considered the reaction of one dwarf in particular.

Thorin.

She hated that he hated her, hated it. But, at the back of her mind, she remembered how his hand had felt on her back, the fact that he had come back for her, how warm he was, how he smelled, like home but at the same time, like places she had never been before...

As they entered the Hidden Valley, Bilbo was jolted out of her reverie. Rivendell! She was here! The sun shone brightly, illuminating the beautiful scenery, but Bilbo was not interested in the sights.

Twisting to look at Elrond, he smiled, nodding as he stopped the horse outside the palace entrance, lifting Bilbo off the horse and placing her down.

"She's here." He spoke, and no sooner had the words left his lips than Bilbo's breath caught in her throat at the sight before her.

There was a little elf girl.

She was running, running out towards Bilbo. Bilbo took a staggering step forwards, falling to her knees as the child barreled into her arms, holding her close and burying her face in her long, dark, curled hair. She felt tears pouring down her cheeks as she held the child tightly, shaking with relief.

Through her sobs, she murmured into the girl's hair, "Oh, my baby, my baby..."

Chapter End Notes

Triggers: PTSD, mentions of imprisonment, torture, serious injury, death, violence, suicidal thoughts, scars, general sadness.

Thank you for reading! I wonder what you thought... Also, I would have had Bilbo fight a bit more, but please remember that she is very injured and not at all well enough to be taking on goblin hoardes. Also I call the Great Goblin the Goblin King a lot, for which I apologise, but it's just what I call him in my head and there's no way around that... Oh and I'm sorry Lord Elrond is quite out of character, I think, but I love him too much not to make him totally lovely :3
GEOGRAPHY: right so basically I just moved the Misty Mountains to in front of Rivendell and placed some *Ambiguous Woodlands* in between.

Also, I believe that 'mukuh?' means 'may I?' and 'medrûnat' means 'go on'.

AND (last thing) if you're a fan of fem!Bilbo check this out, it's gorgeous: http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Memories and Revelations

Chapter Summary

Remembering what we hope to forget.

Chapter Notes

I was a bit nervous about the last chapter, but I think the general consensus was that you liked it! So, joy XD
As ever, thank you so much for the kind words and kudos-ing, it is so appreciated. (Full stop used to add gravity to the thanks and highlight their serious and from-the-heart-ness. See, another full stop for the same impact.)
I hope you enjoy this, you wonderful reader XD

(Also there will be some childhood traumas here, abandonment and a bit of injury.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

'You are not a child. You are a prince of Erebor, and you will act accordingly.'

He was curled up in a ball.

This part of the mountain was dark, dank - the black walls were rough with sharp edges, the silence only permeated by the hollow drip of water on stone.

He buried his head in his knees, his hands tight in fists, so tight his fingernails cut into his palms. His hair fell around his head, and he squeezed his eyes shut.

The humidity of tears buried under his thick hair made it even harder to breathe.

His father's face loomed in his mind, eyes wide with hate and something more terrible yet - almost like madness.

'Where is khagan, khagam?'

A silence and a glower which shook him near to tears.

'Please, where is mama?'

'Gone.'

'But where-'

'Silence!' A hand had swung at him, stinging him over the face as he fell back, his head smacking on the ground and his wrists grazed.
'You are not a child. You are a prince of Erebor, and you will behave accordingly. Your mother,’ He spat, 'Is gone. Now get out of my sight.’

Then he had turned, running.

He was shaking, his whole body racked by sobs which were, by necessity, silent. Not that anyone would hear. This was an abandoned part of the mountain, and no one was looking.

Another memory surfaced in his mind, causing his devastation to intensify.

'What is it, Thorin?' Her voice was as clear in his mind as if she were really there, but she was not. 'What's wrong, my treasure?'

Warm arms around him, as he buried his face in her shoulder, feeling himself calm as he absorbed her warmth, her safety. That was what he could remember.

He was so alone.

A sob ripped through him, breaking away from his throat as he cried out and no one came.

Mama would not be coming back. Father hated him.

Thorin's sobs lapsed into silence.

He straightened up, uncurling his fingers and wiping the blood from the incisions of his fingernails on his trousers.

He was not a child. He was a prince of Erebor, and he would behave accordingly.

---

The vile beast was smirking - the Great Goblin, Thorin knew was his name.

"We'll start with the youngest." His eyes narrowed, and he pointed at Ori, anxiety flaring in Thorin.

There was no way he would touch a hair on that dwarf's head.

The reaction in Dwalin was instant, as he pushed Ori aside and stood in front of him.

Thorin surged forwards, about to challenge this creature; he would not threaten the Company.

Thorin would die first.

The voice at the back of his head told him that he just might, as he opened his mouth to -

"Wait!"

The halfling.

What?

He turned, almost in synchronisation with every goblin and Company member, regarding her in horror and shock.

What in Mahal's name was the idiot doing?!

"Well, well, well." He sneered. "Out pet has returned to us."
Laughter spread throughout the goblins then, as they jostled her to the front. Thorin felt sick, as he saw her tiny frame stood before such a huge, terrible creature.

Their 'pet'? What could that mean?

Thorin watched carefully, as a goblin hissed at her.

"You have covered it!"

"Indeed... Show it to us, halfling." The King commanded.

Show what? Could these creatures possibly know Bilbo?

Thorin watched, frozen in a sick terror, as the halfling reached to undo her braid, her hair untwisting like a waterfall of dark gold around her shoulders. She twisted a lock of it around her fist, and, with no warning, yanked it out, dropping it so that it floated to her feet. Then she lifted the hair, exposing the nape of her neck, and Thorin's mind stopped working for a moment, when he saw the mark there.

Turning, the halfling showed the mark to the goblins, their laughter sickening Thorin to the point of utter rage. Something was very, very wrong here.

"We will have to send word to Azog. He was most put out that he didn't get to finish with you."

Send word to Azog.

Send word to Azog.

From this, Thorin gleaned three things: first, the halfling had encountered the Pale Orc; second, the Pale Orc had done something terrible to her; third, the Pale Orc was still alive.

He felt, for a long moment, as though his heart had stopped beating. Then it started again, shuddering in his chest, pumping alarm and hatred through his veins.

"Why would you return here, halfling? Did you really miss us that much?"

So she had been here before.

Thorin regarded her frail form, as she stood, alone. Her hair, loose around her shoulders, made her look even softer, even more delicate.

They would not touch the hobbit.

*

_It hurt._

_Why did it hurt so much?_

_She struggled to breathe in the dark. Everything hurt, and she felt pale._

_Pale._

_Terror surged through her broken body at the word, as she choked on her own blood and started convulsing._
It tasted of salt and iron, which was really all she knew, yet it did not bring comfort.

Where was mama?

Where was mama?!

Mama, mama, where was mama - why was she gone? Wasn't she coming back?

It was so dark, and only mama could make it better, mama, mama, but she was gone...

The darkness expanded, swelling around her head, but she didn't make a sound in her anguish.

A pair of bright eyes glowed in the darkness.

A girl awoke violently on a white infirmary bed.

She shook, crying uncontrollably, but didn't cry out, didn't make a sound.

It was going to be alright, she tried to convince herself. She was in Rivendell, and mama would come back.

It was alright.

Still she cried silently, struggling to claim breath as fear shook her.

Chapter End Notes

I believe that 'khagan' means 'mother' and 'khagam' means 'father', and I love any excuse to mess around with Khuzdul XD

So, I hope you enjoyed that.

It was rather depressing to write, truth be told, and I'm not sure if it was a very good chapter, but I plan on the next chapter being the second of my Big Chapters, so that should make up for this.

My headcanon: we're never told anything about Thorin's mother (to my knowledge), so I think it's likely that Thrain was a bit gold-sick in Erebor, and might have sent her away, thinking she wanted his gold. This creates a nice parallel between Thorin's father and Thorin's own actions in canon, so I tend to prefer my theory XD
**Before Bag End**

Chapter Summary

Some reflections

Chapter Notes

Sorry, this is very short, but it's really just to augment the previous chapter. So treat it like a continuation of that, if you will XD

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Thorin was balanced on the bench, next to his mother, curled up with his head rested on her lap.

She stoked a hand through his hair, and he sighed, his eyelids drooping.

He had asked her to tell him a story, and she was deciding which one to tell him.

As Thorin made his way up to Bag End, he recalled that moment of his childhood, shocking him slightly. He hadn't had time to dwell on the past in, well, decades.

Sitting under a tree, he decided to take a moment. He would just tell the others he'd gotten lost.

"Alright, my treasure, how would you like to hear the story of Mahal and Yavanna?"

He supposed this memory was surfacing because the Shire was so similar to the way his mother had described Yavanna, her love of the earth, her softness and her enrichment of the natural things that grew in the soil.

The story had been long, but the part he recalled was that she had been afraid of the dwarrows harming nature, causing her to run from Mahal, her husband.

Thorin could not remember the end of the tale, as he had fallen asleep, lulled into a slumber by his mother's voice, and he thought that was worth more than the end of any story.

Sighing, Thorin noted that the night drew in.

It was slowly darkening, the stars beginning to peer out of the sky.

Now he was surely late - the others would already have gathered. That was probably for the best, they could never relax as easily when he was with them.

He'd best be on his way again.

Chapter End Notes
Sorry for any inaccuracy! I'm not an expert... And thanks for reading XD
Thorin was rooted to the spot, transfixed. The halfling knelt on the ground, crying as she held a small child, murmuring something. This must be why she had wanted to come to Rivendell.

For the child.

But who could the child be? Bilbo had her back to him, and Thorin could see the scar, the brand, on the nape of her neck. It made him feel deeply sick. What had happened to the hobbit?

He recalled how afraid she’d looked, as they had walked into the goblins’ lair; how she had reached out for his hand, and he had felt her shaking. Eventually, he had worked himself up to put an arm around her, strangely focused on her despite their situation.

She had not flinched from his touch, as he had expected.

Thorin cursed himself for being such a fool. He had never hated the hobbit, never could. He had always been attracted to her and, in that moment, it had dawned on him that he loved Bilbo Baggins.

He wasn’t in love, for claiming to be in love implied it was a state to be in, and states shifted. Being in love was like the phases of the moon; shifting - shifting like the jade stone he had bought to be a courting bead, long ago. His love for Bilbo was not the shadows upon the moon, but the moon itself, which swings high even in the darkness, even in the light.

He loved her. He loved her bright eyes, her light voice which could so suddenly be full of fire, and her scent, like the earth, but a different kind to the earth Thorin lived in. Not dark caverns and fearful
mountains, but gentle hills and flowering plants. Thorin liked to know his own mind, and now he had made a decision, he would stand by it. He loved the hobbit, and that was that.

She was his One.

He needed to know the hobbit’s story, needed to know why the Goblin King had recognised her, who the child was - but most of all, he needed to apologise to her. He knew she could never be his, because she was already bonded, but he needed her to know he was sorry for his treatment of her. He recoiled internally as he recalled his harsh words, his constant mocking and derision, feeling a dull horror, as he knew the hobbit must hate him. She could only have held his hand because she was afraid and he happened to be there - how could she not hate him, when he was so awful to her? He deserved nothing more.

Yet there was one thing he wanted more than anything, now, and that was to hold her little, shaking hands in his and warm them against his chest, to draw them up to his lips and kiss away their tremors, to hold them over his heart and attune them to his heartbeat to make their trembling cease...

Mahal, he had it bad.

He watched as the child rolled up Bilbo’s sleeve, inhaling sharply as he saw an alphabet scarred into the flesh of her forearm. The child began to press different letters, her tiny fingers running over Bilbo’s pale skin, and Bilbo responded, speaking softly. She then inspected the girl’s arms, exposing her wrists, which were encircled by raised, pink scars, and her ankles, which bore the same marks. The hobbit then turned the child, lifting her hair to regard the back of her neck. It was clear, with no mark or scar. He heard the hobbit exclaim in surprise, as the child spelled something on her arm. Then she lifted the child up, balancing her on her hip as the girl buried her head in her chest.

She turned, facing the elves and dwarrows behind her.

Thorin ached to see those wide eyes wet with tears. He wanted to walk over and gather her up, dry her eyes. He didn’t know who the child was, but she seemed very important to Bilbo, and for that reason he knew he would vow to the hobbit to always protect her, if that would make her happy. He would do anything to make her happy, to ensure she never wept again.

“Thank you.” She said, voice cracking, to Lord Elrond, who nodded. The rawness of her voice - for it had been sore before and now was heavy with emotion - went further to cause Thorin’s heart to tighten in his chest. Lord Elrond gestured for her to come with him, the whole Company following him into a large dining room, which had been prepared for their arrival. The dwarrows soon forgot their reserved attitude to elves when faced with the food - although it was far too green for their liking - and dug in, talking loudly amongst themselves and, less enthusiastically, to the elves. Thorin watched as Elrond led Bilbo away.

* 

Bilbo felt, for the first time in a long time, complete, with the child in her arms. She laid her down on the infirmary bed, noting that she was still too thin, too pale, her eyes too large in her face. It had been three years, and still she had not recovered; Bilbo felt her heart ache.

Lord Elrond turned to her, holding out a small, clear vial. “For your throat.” He told her. She took it gratefully and without question, feeling the cool liquid slip down her throat and clear it. He handed her another, and again, she downed it unquestioningly.

Looking up at the elf, she knew she owed him more greatly than anything she could ever possibly use to repay him, more greatly than she could ever possibly express.
“Thank you.” She whispered, the violence of her gratitude making it hard to form the words. “Thank you so much.” She felt the elf’s arms on her shoulders, as he looked down at her kindly.

“Come now, Aier, I believe you need to speak with your Company.”

She looked back at the girl on the bed, noting that she had fallen asleep. Brushing her hair from her forehead and planting a kiss on her forehead, Bilbo felt the regularity of her breathing. It provided her with the courage to follow Lord Elrond back to the dining hall.

He turned to her, “Quel marth ar uuma dela.” He smiled.

Bilbo understood, as she had a basic grasp of the language. Good luck and don’t worry.

She did her best to smile back, “Diola lle.” Thank you. She replied, and he chuckled, obviously noting that she said ‘thank you’ an awful lot. Then she braced herself, walking back to the table of dwarrows to sit down.

Oh dear.

They were all staring.

*

The pair returned later, the child gone, and spoke for a moment before Bilbo came to sit at the table. The elf was smiling, Thorin noted; the pair seemed very familiar. Of course, the idea of anything happening between them was ridiculous, but somehow that fact did little to assuage Thorin’s slight anxiety. The hobbit was bonded anyway, he told himself - this, too, only served to make him feel worse.

The dwarrows were all silent as Bilbo sat down. They stared at her unreservedly, waiting for her to speak. She started to go pink, fiddling with the tablecloth.

Thorin decided to take charge.

“Mistress Baggins.” He spoke, his voice harsher than he intended, which he regretted, when her big eyes met his, “May I speak with you somewhere else?”

She nodded, rising to her feet, and led him down the corridor, turning into a big, empty library. He noted that she knew her way well - she must have spent a lot of time here. He wondered what that could mean, reminded of a time when he had thought that the halfling and the wizard were conspiring against him with the elves. Somehow, he could no longer imagine such a thing. Anyway, these elves seemed to treat Bilbo well, and they were different elves to the ones who had betrayed Erebor, so maybe they weren’t totally evil tree-shagging traitors. Just mostly evil tree-shagging traitors.

Shelves of books covered the walls, and Thorin could smell that they were old tomes, full of ancient tales. He wondered why the hobbit had led him here, but it felt like a room where she would be at ease, reminding him slightly of Bag End.

The hobbit turned to face him, and he blanched at the fear in her eyes.

*

This was it. Thorin was going to ask her why she had lied to him, to all of them - or not told them the truth, more accurately. He was going to shout at her for fraternising with elves, say terrible things to
her like he always did, and then he would leave. She knew how he’d spoken to her for the whole journey, and it made her miserable; she really should have been angry about it, but she was a hobbit, and hobbits are an understanding lot. More than that, she longed for the dwarf to treat her kindly, longed to be able to reach out and hold his hand whenever she chose, to feel his warmth and draw courage from him - but that was an idiotic dream. She really had thought something had changed, when he had let her hold his hand, and returned to save her from the goblins, but he would do the same for any Company member. When he had asked her to speak with him, his tone had been brusque, and she dreaded to think what he might say to her.

So as she turned to face him, she decided to finally have it out.

She was going to say exactly what she thought of the dwarf, once and for all.

She was going to give him a piece of her mind!

“You never smile!” She yelled.

Wait, what?

Why had she said that?

The dwarf looked confused too, frowning at her, which made her more angry.

He did never smile! Always frowning, always glaring at her.

Would it kill him to throw her a smile every now and then?

Surely it was just basic manners!

“What?” He snapped, his frown intensifying.

Frowning! Always, always frowning!

Glaring, glowering, for Eru’s sake!

“You never smile!” She repeated, becoming steadily angrier about the fact.

She was taken aback when he responded with a similar outburst.

“Neither do you!” The dwarf shouted back, shocking her.

“What? Yes I do! All the time!”

“Not at me!” He bellowed back, anger flaring in his eyes.

This was absurd!

Suddenly Bilbo was giggling, as she regarded his outraged glare.

Struggling for breath, her giggles overtook her. She bent over, soon roaring with laughter.

He watched her, confused, and then a smile broke over his face, and he began to laugh too, a deep, rough chuckle that escalated into real laughter, alongside hers.

She wiped tears from her eyes, her stomach aching from laughter, looking up to see that the dwarf was very close to her.
Close enough to touch.

Unthinking, she leant towards him, so that their noses nearly touched. She heard his breath hitch, could feel it on her lips as she looked into his bright blue eyes.

He had such beautiful eyes.

Softly, she pressed her lips to his.

His reaction was instant. He inhaled sharply, winding his arms around her as she tilted her head, running her fingers through his hair. She loved the feel of his hands around her waist; she burned where he touched her. His lips felt rough against hers, but moved gently and his beard tickled her face. She moved her hands from where they were twisted in his hair, instead running them through his beard. Thorin groaned, sending shivers down her spine, making her gasp as he moved his hands to her lower back and pulled her hips closer. She let out a moan as he ran his tongue over the seal of her lips, opening her mouth to feel his tongue brush against hers.

She was surrounded by his scent, his warm, earthy scent, unable to think of anything but him. His hands moved back to her waist, running up and down her sides, and she moaned again, pulling on his braids. He groaned, pulling her even closer to him, until they couldn’t possibly get any closer without clothes coming off. The thought made the tips of Bilbo’s ears go red, but in a good way, and she gasped, twisting his hair around her fingers as she deepened the kiss, sucking on his tongue and drawing another deep groan from the dwarf.

Abruptly, he pulled back, his blue eyes clouded.

“This isn’t right.”

Bilbo was hurt, confused by his sudden rejection.

She felt herself crashing down, her heart breaking.

He was her One, and for a moment... But of course it couldn't be.

“We shouldn’t do this.”

“Why not?” She asked, her words falling hollow as she realised why.

Because she wasn’t good enough for him, because he did hate her, because she’d kissed him and he hadn’t wanted her at all…

How could she be so stupid? Of course this could never be. How could it?

She began to back away, her eyes on the floor, as shame flushed her cheeks.

“You’re bonded.”

What?

Bilbo giggled, impulsively, sending the dwarf’s eyebrows shooting up.

“Whatever gave you that idea?”

“Your hair… you braid your hair, in one long plait. Does that not mean you’re recently bonded?”

She felt a rush of relief, smiling up at him. “No, for us hobbits it means absolutely nothing like that.”
She was shocked as the dwarf smiled back, his whole face lighting up. His eyes crinkled at the corners, and he looked years younger. Holding out his arms, he gathered her up, embracing her. He held her tightly, burying his face in her hair. “I’m so sorry, Mistress Baggins.” He muttered.

Bilbo felt a warmth spreading from her stomach, as she wrapped her arms around the dwarf, slipping her hands under his overcoat so that they rested against his shirt, on his shoulder blades.

“Really, at this point I believe you should just call me Bilbo.” She said, “And there’s nothing to be sorry for.”

They stood there like that for a long time, until each could feel the other’s breathing, each becoming attuned to the heartbeat of the other and perfectly content to be held by them. Thorin was so warm, so solid. Bilbo had been held by him twice before, but it hadn’t been like this. Now, she squeezed him tight, inhaling his scent unashamedly, tip-toe to press a kiss to the side of his neck. Eventually, Bilbo pulled away, surprised to see raw emotion in the dwarf’s face. She stroked his cheek, gently. His eyes never left hers.

“I think I have some explaining to do.” She spoke softly, and the dwarf nodded, catching her hand as it fell and intertwining their fingers. The simple contact made her stomach leap, and she had to focus on her train of thought. “I suppose it all started when I was still a child, during the Fell Winter…”

She stared at their hands as she spoke, telling him the tale from the beginning. She told him about the death of her mother, and the subsequent death of her father, and the fact that it was her fault. She told him how, a few years after her father’s death and many years after her mother’s death, when she had reached courting age, she had left the Shire.

She told him how she had been captured by goblins, how they’d taken her prisoner and decided to keep her, for fun. There was anger in her voice as she spoke of their motivation, the pure sadistic pleasure of having prisoners to taunt and torture at will.

She told him how, when they’d dragged her down to the dungeon, she had found a tiny, terrified elf girl being held there, with the same brand seared into her neck, terrible wounds all over her body.

She recounted the four years she’d spent there, looking after the little elf girl and trying to survive, being tortured by the creatures. The girl had been too scared to speak, and Bilbo had decided that reading was an important skill for when the girl escaped (which she was convinced would happen), carving the alphabet into her own arm so that they could communicate. That had become their preoccupation; Bilbo had survived by teaching the girl to read, telling her tales of the Shire and the world outside. The girl couldn’t remember what it was like outside, she couldn’t remember sunshine, and was fascinated by the idea of honey and tea; Bilbo had promised her that, one day, they would live in the Shire and the girl would bask in the sun. She would try all the food the Shire had to offer, everything sweet and good.

The girl couldn’t remember her name, so Bilbo had named her Melissa, because it sounded like a cross between a hobbit and elf name, and it meant ‘honey’.

Bilbo told Thorin how the girl had become her daughter, in all but blood.

Bilbo had learnt how to keep them alive, treating wounds and giving whatever food they had to her daughter. Her daughter had been kept in shackles for a long time, and Bilbo had treated the wounds on her ankles and wrists, knowing they would never heal fully. They were each other’s only companion, and had become closer than most mothers and daughters ever did.

There was a muted, deep horror in her voice as she told Thorin that, today, she had learnt that her
daughter had elected to keep the scars on her wrists and ankles, even though the elves could have cleared them when they cleared the brand, because they reminded her of her mother.

It broke her heart that scars were the things she would cling to, to remember her; Bilbo would make sure she would not have to remember evils to remember her mother again.

Bilbo told him that she would work all her life to make sure the child never had to suffer ever again; she would fill rooms with all the candles in the world so that she never had to see the dark, fight off hordes of goblins, slay dragons, give up everything she had, if it meant her daughter would always be happy.

Bilbo would have died for her in a heartbeat, but it had almost been the other way.

She went on to describe the day the Pale Orc came; he had tortured Melissa badly, finding more sport in it than even the goblins. He had enjoyed the fact that she was an elf; after her, he had turned on Bilbo, but had had to leave before he could really do her any damage. The girl had been thrown back into the cell, pallid from blood loss, too injured to move, her breath shuddering. She was dying, and Bilbo could do nothing to help, except to sit by her and watch her fade.

Bilbo’s throat closed up as she remembered her fear, but Thorin squeezed her hand.

She continued.

She told him how she had managed to escape, sneaking near to the entrance and then fighting her way out desperately, in the hope of finding someone to help her and save her daughter.

She had promised her daughter: ‘I love you. I will come back for you, and then we will go home to the Shire, and you’ll spend every day in the sunlight and you’ll pick flowers, you’ll try honey and tea and all the things I’ve told you about.’

She began to cry, as she told him that the one thing she had wanted more than anything had been to see that girl with flowers in her hair, in the sunshine, and know that she would be happy.

Eru, she wanted her to be happy! She was consumed by fear, with the image of the one person in the world she called family, the person she loved as a daughter and more deeply than anyone else, lying in a cell and bleeding out. All she wanted was to put flowers in her hair and see her smile.

She needed to see her smile, to see her face free of weight and terror. She needed her to know what love was, what freedom was, what sunshine was.

Such a basic thing, to know the feel of sunlight on your skin.

Then she had been forced to run, to leave her daughter in the dark cell, and she had immediately run into an elven hunting party with Lord Elrond at its head when she surfaced. The light had blinded her, for she had not seen the sun for four years, but there was no time for joy. She had told him of the girl, lying in the cell, and he had immediately taken her back to Rivendell, rallying his troops.

They had marched on the goblins, rescuing the child.

Bilbo had recovered more quickly than she had expected, and lived in Rivendell for a year, but Melissa remained unconscious for months, and was not well when she woke, lapsing in and out of consciousness.

She had become very close to Lord Elrond and his family, who had treated her as one of them and vowed to her that, although the girl was of their kin by blood, they would not stand in Bilbo’s way,
assuring her that they would not seek to separate them.

Eventually, Lord Elrond had persuaded Bilbo to return home to the Shire, promising to send for her when her daughter was well enough to travel. She had spent two years settling back into her home, trying to forget her past and become a proper hobbit again, a Baggins, awaiting the summons from the elves.

Then a wizard had walked up the garden path, and the rest Thorin knew.

When she had finished her tale, she looked up into the dwarf’s eyes again. He looked completely blindsided, staring at her in wonder.

This was not what she had expected, at all.

Where was his anger?

Abruptly, he used her hand, still held in his, to pull her against him again, leaning down and whispering into her shoulder, his voice shaking with emotion.

“I’m so sorry.”

She frowned, looking up at him. “I told you, there’s nothing to be sorry for.”

“But there is.” He uttered, closing his eyes tight. “You are so brave, strong, and have lived through so much, but even if you had been perfectly ordinary, my treatment of you would still have been unforgivable, and all because I didn’t know how to deal with the fact I loved you.”

*How to deal with the fact I love you.*

Bilbo took a moment to let those miraculous words sink in.

Could it be possible?

The dwarf was only so cold because he felt the same way she did, but didn’t know how to show it?

He loved her.

He loved her!

Bilbo let go of his hand, and felt him jolt with the movement, his eyes still shut. She knew he would assume the worst, but she did not falter, raising her fingers to smooth out the frown lines on his forehead, standing on her tiptoes to kiss his brow, where they had been.

When she lowered herself onto her heels again, his blue eyes were open, boring into hers.

“I love you, too, you silly dwarf.”

She smiled at him again, thinking her heart would surely burst when the darkness lifted from his face and he smiled back, gingerly running his hands through her hair, then over her shoulders and down her arms. When he touched her right forearm, he paused.

*“I love you too, you silly dwarf.”*

Mahal, her smile was the most glorious thing he had ever beheld, and it was all for him. He swelled
with joy as the hobbit - *his* hobbit, his Bilbo - looked up at him. He didn’t just see her as being his love, anymore; now he had heard the harrowing things she had lived through, he felt a deep admiration towards her, an awe. In hobbit years, she was an adult, but she was very, very young in dwarf years; he thought she was like a butterfly. Her life was fleeting but she was more beautiful, more remarkable, than any other creature; she would flit between his fingers before he had time to marvel at her, but he would never be without the memory of her utter beauty, in the true sense and not the physical one, although he found her physically beautiful as well.

She was soft and sweet, fragile, as he had seen the first time they had met, but he now knew that she was tougher than most dwarrows, with resolve and resourcefulness.

Thorin was utterly in awe of her. He felt he could never bring himself to tear his eyes away from her. She was his undeniable equal, in every way that mattered, and it was that realisation which had Thorin feeling as though he were in the presence of a Queen in her own right. He looked upon her as he imagined Mahal had looked upon Yavanna herself.

Tentatively, he ran his fingers through her hair, soft as silk against his rough hands.

He caressed her shoulders, marveling at how small they were, running his hands down her arms.

When he touched her right arm, he paused.

Gently, for although his hobbit was not made of glass, he wouldn’t risk being rough with her (which he knew was ridiculous, considering how tough the magnificent creature was), he rolled up her sleeve, revealing the letters carved into her skin. He held her forearm and, not wanting to cross any boundaries, ran his fingers over them. She did not indicate for him to stop, so he pressed his lips to the letters, spelling out a message which had her laughing again.

By Mahal, if that wasn’t the most beautiful sound in the world, a sound he would gladly die one thousand times over to hear!

When he finished the message, four words, he rested his hands on her waist, pulling her further towards him to kiss her softly.

She ran her fingers through his hair again, making him lose his self-control and groan, pulling her closer.

Oh, if this moment wasn’t perfect, nothing ever could be.

* 

Bilbo’s skin tingled where Thorin had kissed it, his beard running over it, tickling her arm as he spelled out four words. As she kissed him, they rattled around in her head, making her strangely happy.

He had spelled out:

‘*Queen under the hill*’.

Chapter End Notes

Okay, my researching of Sindarin has caused me to believe that: 'aier' means 'little one'
Triggers: mentions of imprisonment, torture, self-harm (for educational purposes)
Jade

Chapter Summary

Fluff because I'm a mushy sod

Chapter Notes

My friends, my friends, it's good to see you!
Thank you to everyone who commented and kudos'ed last time, I was really glad you liked the chapter! It was an important one, y'know...
So here, without much further ado: the next chapter!
Yaaay!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bilbo could barely believe it. Here she was, in Rivendell, her daughter safe and Thorin by her side. It was like a dream come true.

When she had related her story to the dwarrows, they had listened carefully, before casually breaking off and going to busy themselves with other things.

She knew they were thinking about it, about her, but Thorin’s obvious acceptance made them more ready to accustom to the facts she had shared with them.

Bilbo and Thorin had decided not to tell the dwarrows about their relationship for now; when they had broken apart in the library, Thorin had muttered something about dwarven traditions and hurried off. She had smiled, warmth spreading through her, with no idea what he was doing. She suspected he wasn’t too sure, either; he did seem to just get stuck on ideas in his head. That was part of the reason why she loved him.

She loved him.

She didn’t have to be ashamed of it now, it didn’t have to give rise to despair; she could say it to him and he would smile. She wanted to say it every time she saw him, and planned on doing just that.

Now she was sat in the library again, idly flicking through a book on gardening - it was nothing she didn’t already know - and waiting for her dwarf. He’d asked her to meet her here, oddly stiff and formal. She thought he was quite adorable, but would never tell him that. Anyway, he could be incredibly sharp-edged when he wanted to be - she had been on the receiving end of his temper more than once before - so she knew it wasn’t right to think he was totally delightful.

She looked up as the door swung open, and there he was, stood in the doorway, looking at her.

Her dwarf.
Her Thorin.

She smiled at him, and loved that he smiled back - he probably didn’t even know how amazing he looked when he wasn’t glaring. (And he looked rather magnificent when he was glaring, too, so that was quite the statement.) He made his way over to her, holding a box in his hands. She got up and they shared a kiss; she relished the feel of his rough lips on hers. Then he was sitting next to her on the seat, which was slightly too small, so she was squashed up against him.

Neither of them complained.

She may or may not have anticipated the space issue before deciding to settle there.

He cleared his throat, and she looked up at him, bemused. The dwarf obviously had something to say.

As she expected, he began to speak.

“Bilbo Baggins, it is my profound honour to be in the position of asking you whether or not you would allow me to court you.”

He spoke just a tad quickly, and the words were so garbled that Bilbo had to take a moment to work out what exactly he was asking.

“Aren’t we already courting?” She smiled up at him, watching as he began to lose focus and falter. “We’ve confessed love for each other, called each other One...”

“Well, yes, but…” He trailed off as she took his hand in hers, pressing her lips to his knuckles.

Eru, but it was fun to tease her dwarf.

He regained his composure. “It is traditional that I must ask you for permission first. I must also ask your next of kin, but I don’t know who that is.”

Bilbo knew he was asking her a question, sighing. Who was her next of kin? He couldn’t very well ask her daughter.

It dawned on her who he could ask.

“You should ask Lord Elrond.”

The dwarf stiffened beside her. “Ask an… elf?”

“Yes.” She nodded, regarding him closely, “Lord Elrond.”

“Alright,” he agreed, his voice low, “I will ask the elf for his permission.” There was a tension between the two of them that followed, Bilbo watching his every move.

If he dared insult the closest thing she had to a family…

“Sorry, Bilbo,” He sighed, eyes clearing, “I would be happy to ask Lord Elrond for his permission.”

She smiled, pleased that he wasn’t spouting off prejudice like she would have predicted. She squeezed his hand in hers.

“What’s the box for?” She asked, gesturing to the box Thorin had balanced on his knees. It was fairly small, made of some kind of silver metal, inlaid with stones. They looked quite precious, Bilbo
thought, but she wasn’t terribly interested in how valuable the box was, not in terms of money, anyway. She didn't know much about that sort of thing.

The dwarf seemed to stiffen again, so she could tell it was important. Probably another tradition.

“This box,” He began, picking it up and passing it to her, “Contains beads. Courting beads. Traditionally, we should braid them into each others’ hair.”

Bilbo nodded, looking up at him with a question in her eyes. He nodded back, and she lifted the lid of the box. Inside were the most exquisite things she had ever seen; there must have been at least ten beads, each made of precious metal and inlaid with beautiful stones.

One caught her eye, and, unthinkingly, she reached out to poke it, rolling it around the box.

It was the simplest one, made of a light green stone, like jade, with a pattern of oak leaves around it.

She heard Thorin’s breath hitch, and turned to ask if he was alright. He grunted something, not taking his eyes off her hand, still touching the bead.

Quickly, she retracted her hand, hoping she had not offended him.

“I’m sorry!” She squeaked, for the expression on his face was so terribly serious, “Was that one special? Was I not meant to touch them?”

As fast as she could, she shut the lid of the box, pushing it back into his hands.

He wouldn’t take it. Why wouldn’t he take it?

Frustrated, she continued to try and push the box into his hands, squeezing her eyes shut.

How could she ruin it, when it was going so well? She didn’t know anything of dwarf culture, surely he knew that, surely he knew she didn’t mean to offend him?

Moments later, she felt his hands reach out, as he gently caught her chin, lifting her head so that she had to look him in the eyes. He slid his palm up to her cheek, running a thumb over her jawline before using the pads of his fingers to stroke her cheekbone. They trembled slightly, she thought.

His bright, blue eyes seemed to pierce her own, but she couldn’t look away from them.

He spoke, his voice raw with an emotion. “That bead, the green one, why did you touch it?”

She frowned at his question, considering it. “I thought it was the most beautiful.”

Suddenly, she was engulfed in the most enthusiastic hug she had ever experienced, as he squeezed her just a bit too tightly.

“Thorin… Thorin, I need to breathe.”

“Oh yes,” He replied, letting go sheepishly, “Of course.”

“Thorin, why does the bead matter so much?” She asked him, slightly dreading the answer.

He looked at her for a long moment, reaching out to run a thumb over her cheek. “I made it for you.”

Oh.
Thorin couldn’t believe she’d instantly reached out for that bead. The ‘most beautiful’. The knowledge filled him with warmth. Of course, when he’d made it, he’d been consumed by hate for the hobbit, but now he knew that he had made it for her. It was like his hands had known before he did, carving her a bead, just for her, without informing the rest of him. He longed to braid it into her hair - even then, it had been on his mind - but first he had to talk to her family.

And she had asked him to speak with Lord Elrond.

Thorin had decidedly mixed feelings about that. He had already reached the conclusion that these elves were not quite as evil as those of Mirkwood, but they were still elves. Hence, still tree-shaggers and liars. He felt conflicted (slightly), remembering that Bilbo’s daughter was, herself, an elf - but that was different.

Nonetheless, he knew he could not be outspoken with his opinions on elves; he didn’t want to lose his love now. Joy surged within him as he freely allowed himself to think of her that way, his love, with the knowledge that he could address her so and she would smile. He would just have to bear it, to speak to Lord Elrond and ask for his permission.

Not that he relished the prospect.

Standing in the corridor, he realised he didn’t even know where to find the elf.

Damn elves and their confusing palaces…

He looked around, deciding to walk down towards the dining room and seek Lord Elrond there. As he made his way, he saw the elf walking towards him, as though he knew the dwarf was looking for him.

How did he know?

Thorin fought to keep his eyes from narrowing in suspicion.

“Ai’ atar,” he greeted him, smiling a smile which the dwarf did not return, “Bilbo tells me you wish to speak with me.”

Bilbo had told him. Well, that was... logical.

Thorin grunted in agreement, doing his best to be civil.

“Come.” The elf said, Thorin resenting his order but following anyway, focusing on why he needed to do this.

The elf led him to a small balcony overlooking the Valley, and they sat facing each other. The view was nice, Thorin noted begrudgingly, as the elf offered him a drink.

The drinks were already out on the table, he noted, so the elf poured him some into a glass, before himself.

Thorin waited for him to drink it before he did, lifting the glass to his lips and testing the liquid. It was cool, sweet and, well, passable, just like the view, but Thorin hated to acknowledge even that,
so he did not. He nodded his thanks to the elf, realising he had still not spoken to him.

The elf sat back in his chair, obviously waiting for him to speak.

Thorin cleared his throat.

“I am told by Bilbo that you are her family.” His words came out stiffly, as he glared at the elf, daring him to interrupt, “Therefore I need to ask your permission to court her.”

He was not prepared for Elrond’s reaction.

The elf’s face lit up in a wide, honest smile, as he regarded the dwarf. “Of course, my friend, this is wonderful news!”

Thorin, taken aback, did not quite know what to say.

“This is very good news indeed.” said the elf, still smiling, “The whole court will be overjoyed to hear it. I must send word to Arwen and all Bilbo’s friends.” Suddenly the elf was standing. “If you would excuse me?”

Thorin felt this was almost comical, being asked to excuse Lord Elrond from his own damn table.

“Please.” He said, trying not to sound too stunned, as the elf strode away to inform all his kin of the news.

Wait - he was going to tell his kin?

Thorin’s heart sank.

He couldn’t very well let all the elves find out before he had told the Company.

Sighing, he got up.

Hesitating a moment, he finished his drink.

It wasn’t that bad.

---

Thorin had gathered all the dwarrows around him at the table. Bilbo was with her daughter, and they had agreed it was best that Thorin tell the dwarrows of their relationship himself. Now, they sat around him, waiting for his mysterious announcement.

“I have some news.” Thorin began, his words stiff. He fell into silence, not sure how to phrase the best news of his life to his companions without embarrassing himself.

Kili snorted, as his brother rolled his eyes. “Out with it, Uncle.” He smiled, “Before we die of old age.”

Beside Thorin, Dwalin chuckled. “I think we all know what this is about.” The warrior smiled.

“Aye, a certain hobbit lassie.” Bofur chipped in, his cousin guffawing despite the language gap (which Thorin knew meant they’d discussed this before, at length), as the Company fell into giggles.

“I shall write about this!” Ori squeaked. “The great love story on the road to Erebor: The Dwarf King and the Hobbit!”
This was followed by more merriment, as Oin yelled, “Oy, what was that?” At someone, while Balin professed his congratulations and Bombur chuckled, growing slowly redder with ale.

Dori and Nori were engaged in questioning their brother about his Epic Tale of Love, as Gloin rambled about how much this all reminded him of his wife.

Thorin turned to Dwalin, blindsided.

“How did you all know?”

His oldest friend smiled kindly back at him. “I knew when I first set eyes on the lass, she was the one for you. The others… they caught on soon after. When you were gone so long last night, we assumed the two of you had worked it out.”

Thorin looked at his friend in awe. “When you first saw her?”

“Aye.” He dwarf nodded. “You need someone to balance you, just like I need someone to balance me.” He was looking at Ori now. “And when she had it out with you, the minute you walked in the door, I knew it was meant to be.” He chuckled softly. “I knew you were besotted wi’ the lass before you did.”

Thorin knew who his friend was looking at; he was not so unobservant, either. “Why do you not act on your feelings?”

The dwarf sighed. “It isn’t right. He’s too young, too soft, too good to be ruined by the likes of me. He deserves greater happiness than I could provide.”

Thorin thought about those words for a long time, as he sat beside his friend. His mind wandered to Bilbo; was he going to ruin her? He hadn't even considered it. She was too good for him, but recalling her laugh, her smile, he realised that he could make her happy, and he would try damn hard to.

“Friend,” He spoke, looking at his brother (blood was but a technicality), “No one would try harder than you, and no one deserves the chance to try more than you do.”

He was not surprised by his friend’s quiet intake of breath, nor was he surprised to feel his paw of a hand, trembling slightly, find solace in his own under the table, as he looked with wide eyes upon the one he loved.

“Aye,” he whispered, “But wouldn’t that be grand.”

Thorin had seen this dwarf take on hundreds of orcs without fear. He had seen this dwarf face insurmountable odds and not shake. He had seen this dwarf pierced by foreign metals and not cry out.

Thorin had seen this dwarf run into battle, wielding nothing but his own brute strength, and slay uncountable foes - Thorin had seen this dwarf be stabbed in the back and surge back up, fighting.

Thorin had seen this dwarf nearly die for him, time and time again. He had heard his mighty roar over many a battlefield, felt his unswerving courage radiate through whole armies of tired, injured troops.

So to feel his warm hand grasp his under the table, it told Thorin just how deep this feeling was. He vowed to help however he could, and they sat there, as the dwarrows dissipated into their rooms, the evening growing dark, and it was just the two of them left.
They sat still, silent, neither moving.

There was the sound of a nervous cough from the corner of the room.

Thorin’s head snapped around, as a little dwarf stepped out of the shadow of the doorway.

“Excuse me,” he mumbled, eyes fixed on the floor, “But do you think I might speak to Master Dwalin for a moment? I need to draw his portrait…”

The dwarf was floored by Thorin’s smile as he rose, squeezing Dwalin’s hand to give him courage.

“Of course you can, Ori,” he grinned, “He’s all yours.”

He heard Dwalin swear softly at him under his breath, before he turned to leave the two alone.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading! XD

I believe that 'Ai' atar' means 'Little Father', which is an elven way to say 'Dwarf'.

I know, I know, more ships... BUT I CAN’T HELP IT OKAY. Dwalin and Ori just looked at me with those big eyes and I had to... They made me. Dwalin is scary and Ori's too cute to say no to. So take it up with them.

And check this out, if you like fem!Bilbo and quality writing (it might just be my favourite fic): http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Bilbo was feeling better. She had gone with Lord Elrond to the infirmary, where he himself had administered many vials of healing liquids to her. There was a vial of blue liquid, crystal clear and glittering, a vial of violet liquid, sharply glinting in the light, and a vial of green liquid, soft like the grass at dawn; there were also several vials of clear liquid, which tasted foul. Nonetheless, Bilbo had downed all the medicine, and now, as she lay in bed, she felt much better. Her body felt possibly healthier than before she had left the Shire, ironically.

Yet still she could not sleep.

Melissa was safe in her room, being watched over by the healing elves. The Company were also safe, in their rooms. She was safe, in her room.

She didn’t want to be.

She wanted to be with Thorin.

It was strange, how much she missed him, how she longed for the feeling of his arms around her, longed to be able to look up into his eyes and hear his deep voice vibrate through her.

This was ridiculous! He was only down the hall!

Bilbo rose, her feet making no sound on the stone floor. She was in a night-dress, so she wrapped herself in a thick, white robe that had been hung on her door before making her way out into the corridor.
Making her way down to the dwarrows’ quarters, she blanched as she realised she didn’t know which room was his. Hovering outside, she froze in her indecision, when she heard someone making their way down the hall behind her.

Oh no! Here she was, in her night-clothes, shamelessly seeking the bedroom - and how she blushed at the thought - of the king of the dwarrows! Oh dear.

She didn’t turn around, hoping the person would just go on their way.

She squealed as a pair of arms slipped around her sides and a dwarf rested his head on her shoulder. His ticklish beard made her giggle, and she leaned back into him.

“Good evening, Bilbo.” His voice was warm with humour.

“Good evening, Thorin. I’m so glad it’s you.”

“Really?” He raised an eyebrow, causing her cheeks to go a few shades pinker. “And what are you doing so far from your room?” His question made her insides seize up.

“Looking for you.” Now it was his turn to inhale sharply. Without a word, he disentangled himself from her, holding her hand to lead her into a room down the hall. He led her though the door; the room was dark, so he lit a lamp, warm light quietly seeping out and illuminating the two of them.

He stood a little distance from her, watching her carefully. Quickly, she slipped off her robe, folding it up and putting it on a chair, so that she was just standing there in her night-dress, and looked up at him. She couldn’t have been much clearer.

He growled, taking a step towards her as she began to move towards him, and they met in the middle. They stood, very close but not touching, for a moment, until she reached up to stroke his beard, tugging on one of his braids and kissing him. He groaned, running his fingers through her hair, but this kiss was not as innocent as last time. She opened her mouth, feeling his tongue brush against hers, fast and urgent. Gasping, she ran her hands down his sides, slipping them under his shirt and sliding them up his chest. He groaned again, and suddenly his shirt was on the floor. Bilbo looked at his chest, peppered by small scars, and ran her hands through the hair there.

Impulsively, she leaned in to kiss the centre of his chest, running her lips up to the base of his throat, all the way up to his chin. She felt his moan vibrate through his throat, sending shivers down her, as he twisted his fingers in her hair and she cried out.

“Bilbo!” He exclaimed, worried he had hurt her.

In reply, she crushed her lips onto his, this time invading his mouth with her tongue - he tasted like a mixture of dwarf and elf, due to his new elven diet, and now it was her turn to growl.

Evidently, Thorin had decided it was time to retaliate, as he ran his hands down her sides, making her squirm. He held the hem of her night-dress, raising an eyebrow at her, and she could do nothing but nod in reply. He lifted the dress over her head, and then she was wearing nothing but her undergarments.

As he looked her over, he gasped sharply. Bilbo began to go red. Her scars.

She must look so disgusting this way.

She tensed as he took a step towards her, leaning in to speak into her ear. Holding her breath, she braced herself for what he might say.
“I want to kiss every scar on your body.” He whispered, running a hand along her waist.

She shivered, as he caught her chin and lifted her face to kiss him. As they kissed, he ran his hands over her. She felt her need for him building up inside her, as his warm, rough hands moved over her skin.

Quickly, he turned her, and she felt him press his lips to the top of the scar that was torn over her back, running kisses down its length. He planted kisses on all the smaller scars as well, and she moaned.

“Thorin, please.”

He did not give into her plea, instead continuing to run kisses along her spine, then, putting his arms around her and holding her tight, he began to kiss her neck, kissing the brand on the nape of her neck, making her cry out, then sucking in the most sensitive spot in the hollow of her neck, and she knew she would have a mark there too tomorrow. A very different kind of mark, one she would gladly have inflicted time and time again... Letting out a strangled moan, she twisted out of his iron grip and turned to face him, pressing her lips to his once more, urgently.

Not particularly aware of what her hands were doing, she began to unlace his trousers, only realising when he had shucked them off and now he, too, was dressed only in his underwear. She groaned as she felt the hardness of his groin push up against her, as he began to trace kisses down the scars on her arms, then her stomach, and then, with a wicked glint in his eyes, licked his way back up along her sternum, stopping to plant a kiss in the centre of her chest.

She made another garbled noise, mentally noting that it was unfair that he was doing none of the moaning. Time to remedy that.

She smiled, reaching down to stroke him through the fabric of his smallclothes. A torrent of garbled swearing followed, although she understood none of it, as he abruptly picked her up - yes, picked her up, they were so having words about this manhandling later - and sat her on the bed, kissing her heavily until she was lying on it.

He leaned down, running his hands over the mesh of scars that covered her shoulders, tracing each mark on her skin. She squirmed under his touch, her breath spiking and her heartbeat loud in her head. All she could think about was him - she wanted him so much, wanted to feel his skin against hers, his weight on her, his scent surrounding her.

She forced her way back up so that she could help him remove his undergarments, as he pulled hers off somewhat enthusiastically, kissing her until she was lying beneath him again.

She moaned as she felt his whole body press against her.

“Thorin, please…”

It was all the incentive he needed.

*

Thorin was warm. He could feel Bilbo, soft and sleeping, in his arms. Her hair was splashed over the pillow like liquid gold, and he couldn’t believe that she had managed to look even more beautiful than before. He smiled.

She wasn’t frowning in her sleep anymore, as she had before, so long ago now.
He would have been worried about pregnancy - for it would be unsafe on their quest and too soon - but he suspected Bilbo could not have children of her own. If the jagged, ridged scar, which he suspected was from a stab wound, on her stomach was anything to go by, he was right.

Looking at her as she slept, he realised that her scars only served to make her beautiful, shimmering silver in the half-light. He hated that they had been put on her body, but now they were a part of her. They told her story, and he loved her for them - every imperfection made her more perfect, somehow.

Mahal, but he had it bad.

With that thought, Thorin tightened his arms around the hobbit, closing his eyes and sleeping. In his dreams, he saw not dragons, or mountains, or kings - no, he saw wide, brown eyes, staring up at him, and heard the voice of an angel, begging, “Please…”

Chapter End Notes

Ah and I have no idea if Lord Elrond can do healing or not, I just wanted to get him in there because I love him.
Who am I kidding, I love all of them.

And click here if you want to read some brilliant fem!Bilbo, full of cliffhangers and character developments and cool stuff like that:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Thorin was not entirely surprised to be apprehended by a little elf girl as he walked past the infirmary. He tried sneaking, not sure if Bilbo would want him to meet her daughter without being there herself, but there was nothing for it. The child caught his eye, and fixed him with a glare he knew she must have learnt from Bilbo.

There was no escape.

Like Bilbo, the girl was little and frail - but drawing physical similarities between them was moot, he noted, because they were not related by blood. Nonetheless, there was something about the girl which was undeniably similar to Bilbo. She had wide, verdigris eyes and flowing, dark hair, curling around her shoulders. The tips of her ears protruded from her curtain of hair, but if Thorin applied himself, he could convince himself that her ears were just like Bilbo’s, and ignore their blatant elvishness.

He made his way over to her bedside, where she was sat, propped up against some cushions. He wondered how she could possibly be so weak after such a time - she was probably lucky to be alive. He tried smiling at her, but she was having none of it, and he began to feel uncomfortable.

The girl whipped out a sheet of parchment from beside her, beginning to write.

_Hello. My name is Melissa._

“It’s nice to meet you.” He replied. “I am Thorin Oakenshield.”

_I know._

She paused to fix him with a glare before she continued to write.

_You are courting my mother._

He nodded, mutely, not sure of the appropriate protocol.
Why?

The question threw him off. What did she mean, why? Mentally flailing, he looked into her expectant eyes and decided on the truth.

“I love her.”

She considered that for a moment, her unfaltering gaze unnerving him slightly. He felt as though he were being evaluated, which was somewhat novel.

He was a king; people usually just complied with him. Mahal, evaluating others was his job!

His relief was nearly palpable as the girl began to write again.

Alright then. I have yet to consult with her, but if things progress as I foresee there should be no reason why I forbid this union.

Thorin suppressed a laugh. Such a small, young creature using such political words! Of course, she felt it was her duty to approve the match. He straightened up, for before he had been leaning in to read her writing.

“I’m glad to have your approval, Mistress Baggins.” He said, his tone inoffensive, as he smiled at her. She really did take after her mother.

You may as well call me Melissa.

“Of course, Melissa. Please, call me Thorin as well.”

Obviously. You’ll be my father sooner rather than later, I suppose.

The candor of the statement shocked Thorin. Her father? He hadn’t really considered that…

I need to ask you for something.

Her words filled him with apprehension, but he nodded.

My mother will go with you, to complete your quest. We have already discussed it, and it seemed pertinent. This leads me to remind you that I will hold you personally responsible for any harm that will befall her. If you hurt my mother, in any way, I will take matters into my own hands.

He was stunned by her words, and the fire in her eyes. Such a frail creature, threatening him, the head of the line of Durin? It barely seemed comprehensible. Somehow, it inspired respect in him for the child. He smiled at her, oddly gratified by her threat.

“I would expect nothing less.” He paused, carefully considering his wording. “Now, enough of this. We are to be family in a few weeks, as you say. Tell me about yourself.”

* 

Bilbo wasn’t sure what was going on.

She hovered outside the infirmary, spying on what was transpiring within.

Thorin was sat beside her daughter, and they were conversing, both smiling. Occasionally, Thorin would chuckle, and Melissa was smiling. Smiling. It was a sight - her smiles were rare and hard-won (as were Thorin’s, Bilbo noted suspiciously). They seemed to be talking about her, but Bilbo couldn’t
hear Melissa’s side of the conversation.

“She did what?!”

Frantic scribbling.

Guffawing.

“The whole basket!”

Bilbo decided it was time to make her entrance. She had never anticipated that the two would gossip about her.

Oh well.

At least they got along.

“Oh, Bilbo.” Thorin smiled, stretching slightly as he titled his head so that she could press a quick kiss against his cheek.

She was amazed as he ruffled her daughter’s hair, leaving his arm over her shoulders and squeezing her slightly in a kind of one-armed hug, and more shocked yet as her daughter continued smiling, not flinching away.

“We were just talking about you.”

Bilbo widened her eyes, taking in the sight of a dwarf king cuddling her daughter, who was grinning broadly. Her intended, who was about as cuddly as a brick wall, and hated elves, and her daughter, who smiled as often as she spoke. They were sat next to each other, grinning like maniacs, totally relaxed and - Eru! - cuddling.

She had seen it all.

“Nothing bad, I hope?”

“Melissa was telling me about the incident with Elladan and the basket of waybread.”

Bilbo groaned, nudging him over so she could sit next to him. For once, she was glad elves were so much bigger than hobbits and dwarrows, and that their infirmary was kitted out for larger creatures; the bed was big enough for them all to sit on it.

“And there I was, thinking I’d lived it down.” She grumbled, as she felt Thorin shake with laughter and slid her hand into his.

*

Gandalf couldn’t find Bilbo or Thorin, and he needed to speak to them about the map. He had searched everywhere and was despairing when something odd caught his attention.

There was the distinct sound of snoring coming from the infirmary.

He turned, noting that Elladan and Elrohir were hovering in the doorway. Walking over to the doorway, he cleared his throat, and they turned, smiling.

“Mithrandir.” Elladan greeted him, “You’ll never believe this.”
Joining them in the doorway, Gandalf was struck by the vision of Bilbo asleep against Thorin’s shoulder, who had nodded off sitting up, with a sleeping Melissa on his other side, clamped to his side by his arm.

The wizard chortled in amazement.

“We were coming to congratulate Bilbo.” Elrohir informed him. “But…” He gestured to the scene before them.

Bemused, the three regarded the sleeping figures for a moment.

“They seem very happy.” Elladan smiled. “A very strange family.”

Gandalf was surprised by his words. Family.

Yes, he supposed, that’s what they were. A hobbit, an elf and a dwarf, sleeping softly in the infirmary.

A family.

He felt gruffly emotional as he listened to the sounds of their heavy breathing. Bilbo deserved this; he could remember how lost she had been, after her parents’ deaths, and still regretted not taking her from the Shire then. He could remember how she’d looked when he’d come to Rivendell, after her rescue - he could not bring himself to picture it.

She deserved to be happy, and the wizard had decided not to fail her again - he felt oddly paternal towards her, as he had been close to her mother and seen her grow up, and after having failed to rescue her, a guilt he would carry for all of his days. It was not often the wizard felt like that towards any creature, if ever, and it had caused his guilt over his failure to be greater.

Now, as he saw her, happy, with a family once again, he finally felt that she would end up alright. The knowledge brought him peace.

His voice was laden with emotion as he responded to the elf.

“Indeed. Yet, somehow, the strangest things are often the simplest.”

The elf brothers turned to him, their serene smiles never wavering.

“Of course, you are right.” Elladan agreed.

“I just hope that Bilbo will not forget us, here.” Elrohir sighed.

Gandalf smiled. “Come now, friend, she could never forget you - don’t you remember what she said during the lembas incident?”

The two of them made their way off, giggling and recalling the memory.

Gandalf was left stood in the doorway, before he, too, departed. The map could wait, for now.

He felt a strange warmth spread through him, as he was filled by the conviction that this might just work out after all.

Now he just had to convince Lord Elrond to allow the dwarrows to sneak out under the noses of the White Council, when they convened in two days’ time.
That would be easier said than done.

Chapter End Notes

So what was the lembas incident, the story about the basket?!
Heheheh well, while she was staying at Rivendell, Bilbo got into an argument with Elladan and Elrohir when they tricked her into eating five slices (five!) of lembas (she was full for days!) and she threw the whole basket of it at them (actually, she gave Elladan a bit of a bruise, but nobody minded, and blue suits him anyway) and she shouted, "Now I can't eat a meal for days, I'll be too full! Mealtimes are what we hobbits live for! You will never be forgiven, you troublesome elves!" Of course, they were forgiven by dinnertime (although Bilbo did sulk a little, as she was too full to eat anything).
This is becoming too real for me, you say? I'm putting too much thought into this, you say?
Nah...

And, if you want to read a truly hilarious, emotional and wonderfully written fem!Bilbo story, go to this link: http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Dinner was an interesting affair. Bilbo was sat beside Thorin, and the whole company were in high spirits, celebrating their news. Fili and Kili, who Bilbo had always suspected were lightweights, were engaged in a rather disastrous drinking competition, Bofur propping Fili up, while Kili slowly slipped off his seat. Bifur caught him before he reached the floor, grumbling something in a tone Bilbo could only describe as fond. Dori was entertained, debating the likelihood of rain during her bonding ceremony - the mention of which spurred a strange feeling in her stomach - with Oin, while Gloin had a spirited debate with Bombur and Nori about the food they should serve. Dwalin and Ori seemed deep in conversation with each other, quietly sat far from Ori’s distracted brothers.

Beside Bilbo, Lord Elrond’s sons were seated, watching the dwarrows in blatant fascination, occasionally leaning in to ask her about references in the conversation or remark on their behaviour. She could feel Thorin tense beside her when they did this, but had no time for his prejudice.

Turning to him, she smiled, recalling the events of the day and the evening. “It’s lucky today was the right day, wasn’t it?” She commented, referring to the moon runes on the map Lord Elrond had interpreted for them. He grunted in agreement.

Wistfully, Bilbo wished Lord Elrond and Gandalf were here with them, but the White Council had convened, and after dinner they were to ‘sneak out’. Or, at least, to pretend to.

Thorin leaned in to speak to her.

“May I discuss something with you?”

She nodded, rising to leave with him.
There was a chorus of guffawing from the dwarrows. She went bright red, freezing.

“We’re just going to talk to each other!” Bilbo squeaked defensively, sparking another round of raucous laughter, as Thorin smiled and put his arm around her waist, steering her away from the table.

He led her to the library, sitting down. Bilbo smiled when he noted that he’d sat on the slightly-too-small bench, but instead of squeezing in beside him, as he expected, she sat with her back on the armrest, her legs stretched out over him. Grinning, she spoke.

“What is it, then?”

Thorin cleared his throat.

“Well, I have your kin’s permission, you have agreed, all is in order, so…” He trailed off, pulling the small box of courting beads out of his pocket.

Bilbo knew this was a big deal for dwarrows, so she made sure to look serious as she nodded. “Of course. Will you braid mine first?”

Her intended smiled then, nodding. He opened the box, and Bilbo immediately reached in, pulling out the jade bead. “This one.” She said, to make sure he didn’t start to fret.

She sighed as she felt his rough fingers comb through her hair, separating a strand behind her ear. She frowned.

“I thought it should be in one long braid?”

Thorin smiled. “No, that’s for after you’re bonded, for a year.”

“After we’re bonded, you mean.”

“Yes.”

They were silent, as he braided her hair. She could feel that the design was quite intricate, watching as he focused on it. Shutting her eyes, she enjoyed the feeling of his gentle hands winding her hair. Eventually, he let go.

“There.”

She didn’t feel it was adequate to thank him, so she pressed a hand to his cheek, turning his head so that she could kiss him.

“Now you.” She said when she broke away. “Which bead?”

“Traditionally, the partner should make the bead for their intended.” He informed her, Bilbo’s hear sinking, “But this one will do.” He said, pointing to a blue and silver bead in the box.

Bilbo picked it up, holding it between her thumb and forefinger. It was much heavier than hers.

“How do I braid it in?” She asked, looking up at him.

He inhaled sharply, although she wasn't sure why. “The same way you braid your own hair, but smaller.”

“Where?”
“Here.” He instructed, holding out a section of his hair which lay behind his ear. “When we’re bonded, you braid my beard.” He added, making her smile.

Bilbo shuffled forwards, so that she was nearly totally sat on top of him, to get close enough to his hair. She ran her fingers through it, and felt him sigh. Carefully, she extracted the strand, gently twining it together in a small braid and finishing it with the bead. It took a while, as she was careful not to mess it up, and when she finished she looked back at Thorin.

He was staring at her, his face expressionless.

She gulped. “Was that alright?”

Suddenly, he was kissing her, and she was surrounded by dwarf, as he held her tight.

“Allright!” He scoffed, coming up for air, before deepening the kiss. “Alright…”

—-

Bilbo wasn’t sure if she could do this.

Each step she took towards the infirmary seemed to leaden her heart.

She was alone, because it was better that way. The farewells of Elladan, Elrohir and Lord Elrond were still fresh in her memory - the brothers she had spoken to tonight, but their father she had spoken to the day before, as now the White Council were in session and she could not see him again for a while.

They had become her family; it hurt to say goodbye.

Funnily, Elladan and Elrohir reminded her of Fili and Kili, so the presence of those two dwarrows would, she was sure, lessen the blow. Lord Elrond, she would miss deeply - he wasn’t someone who could be described as forthcoming, but she was infinitely grateful to him, and trusted him unswervingly. She could recall his last words to her, in Sindarin.

‘Cormlle naa tanya tel’raa, Bilbo. Aa’ menealle nauva calen ar’ malta.’

*Your heart is that of a lion, Bilbo. May your ways be green and golden.*

The infirmary door before her, Bilbo stopped.

Oh, Eru, she didn’t want to do this.

Quietly, she swung the door open, listening to its quiet creak as light pooled in the dark room.

Her eyes fell on her daughter, sleeping on her bed, curled up with her head hidden under her blankets.

Quietly, Bilbo made her way over, sitting beside her on the bed, but not touching her. She didn’t want to scare her.

When Bilbo’s weight made the bed bend slightly, she felt her daughter stiffen. It wasn’t right, for her to still be so afraid, after all this time.

“It’s me.” Bilbo told her, placing her hand on Melissa’s shoulder to reassure her. “It’s just me.”

Melissa sat up, smiling. Bilbo smiled back, her eyes brimming with tears, as her daughter began to
press a message into her arm. Bilbo didn’t even need to look at her arm, she could remember the position of each letter and just feel, instead of reading.

Are you leaving now

“Yes, but I’ll be back before you know it.” Bilbo’s voice broke as she looked into her daughter’s bright eyes. She didn’t know if she could leave; to abandon her daughter again, it was too much…

I’m so scared for you Mama

“I’ll be fine, honey, don’t be scared.” Bilbo tried to soothe her, as her daughter started to tremble. How could she be scared for her? Bilbo was constantly scared for her daughter, but there was no reason to be worried about Bilbo! No child should ever have to worry about their parents…

Please come back for me

“Oh, my sweetling…” Bilbo scooped her child up and held her tight, her heart breaking.

“If there’s one thing to be certain of, in all the world, it’s that I will always come back for you.”

Chapter End Notes

So that's that.
I'm going to ramble now. Feel free to ignore me.
Today I was at a theme park and I realised that as I was looking around, I was thinking, 'Kili would really like that ride.'
o.O
Getting wayyy too into this...
But anyway, that got me to thinking, what would they all be like in a theme park?

My hypothesis:
Kili and Fili would be really excited and go on everything, but Kili would get scared just before the ride started and that's why he'd drag Thorin along with him (and also because he likes to annoy his uncle...) I bet Fili would make Bofur go on everything, and Bofur wouldn't really care about the rides, but he'd have fun (I ship them - does anyone know their ship name? Fifur? Boli? Ugh I suck at that...) Yeah, and there's no way Thorin wouldn't drag Bilbo with him, and Bilbo would pretend to be irritated and find the rides stupid but really enjoy himself. I actually feel like Dwalin wouldn't like the big rides, he strikes me as liking to have both feet on the ground - but Ori (yes, I ship them too) would make him go with him on the big ones, because I think Ori would enjoy the really scary ones and actually be braver than Kili. I think Oin and Balin would just sit around, Balin would think it was a waste of money and Oin would think it was a waste of time. Nori, I think he would enjoy the little rides but he wouldn't bother to queue for the big ones, Dori would chase after Ori to make sure he was safe, but I think that Ori would sneak off with Dwalin and Dori would probably just go about with Gloin, Bifur and Bombur on the rides after that. Bifur would want to stick with Bombur and the two of them would probably enjoy the scary rides, and Gloin wouldn't want to go about by himself and would rather them than the rest.

And Gandalf would troll around and play on arcade games.
So yeah, that's what happened when I had to queue for an hour and a half for a ride.
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

Things escalate somewhat rapidly

Chapter Notes

PTSD, injury, self-sacrifice, violence, torture

Hey! Welcome to chapter 22. I would like to thank you for comments, kudos and just for reading :3 It means a lot; without such wonderful readers, I doubt I would have even reached this point at all... I love you all for reading this XD And even more for your kind words and kudoses.

Also, this is set in some more *Ambiguous Woodlands* which I, ahem, fabricated to replace the Misty Mountains outside Rivendell

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bilbo walked beside Thorin, although they walked at the back of the group. The Company were relaxed, and Rivendell had long since faded behind them, as they made their way through the woodlands leading to Mirkwood, although the wizard still hadn’t joined them. Bilbo felt heavy over leaving the Hidden Valley, and a strong sense of trepidation towards Mirkwood, but she knew she had done the right thing in continuing. She deliberately didn't allow her mind to wander back to Rivendell, to those she had left behind, and although she was not totally successful, it didn't show on her face.

The leaves of the trees shimmered in the light; Bilbo thought they looked more precious than gems, more beautiful than any volume of golden coins. The ground was peppered with wildflowers, the blue ones reminding her of Thorin's eyes. She felt the impulse to weave some into a crown, but this was not the time. The grass was verdant, soft under her feet. Birdsong flew through the air, like water between the banks of a stream, pure and clear. The air itself was warm, the sky blue with wisps of white cloud at its edges.

It was strange, to be on the move again, when so much had changed. She was now firmly a member of the Company, and the weight of a bead swinging from a braid behind her ear reminded her of how quickly her relationship with Thorin had changed.

Thinking about it, they had taken this decision very quickly - yet Bilbo was certain it was the right thing to do. Once you found your One, that was that; it seemed that dwarrows and hobbits held this in common, at least. She reached out for his hand, squeezing it as they walked. He smiled, leaning down to press a kiss to her lips.

“Oy!” Gloin called, “Save it for your wedding night!”

There was an uproar of laughter from the dwarrows, as Thorin straighened up, smiling wistfully.
Bilbo went bright pink, deliberately not making eye contact with anyone.

“Fine.” Thorin barked at Gloin, jokingly, “As long as you stop going on about your own.”

There was more laughter at that, followed by Gloin rambling about how beautiful his wife was. Bilbo giggled, as he professed her saintly personality and amazing multitude of virtues.

The sun was beginning to set, so the Company made camp in the trees. The fire crackled quietly, as the dwarrows conversed loudly. Bilbo noted with interest that Bofur and Fili were sitting slightly apart from the group, and Bofur seemed to be - Eru help him - blushing, as the light-headed (in both senses) prince placed a hand on his thigh. This was a development, but Bilbo was pleased for the both of them. Fili, so full of life yet caring for those he loved, and Bofur, the hatted, twinkling dwarf, both deserved the joy they would bring each other.

It made Bilbo grin.

Thorin came to sit by her, handing her a bowl of stew. She nodded her thanks, shifting up to be closer to him and knocking into his shoulder slightly. He grunted in amusement, reaching to tuck her braid behind her ear.

“Menu tessu.” He breathed.

“Sorry?” She asked, not understanding what he had said.

He just smiled, raising a spoonful of stew to his lips.

“I said, eat your dinner before it gets cold.”

She snorted, raising a spoonful of stew to her own lips nonetheless. When she had swallowed, she chided him. “I’m not one of your nephews, Thorin.”

He spluttered at that. “No - you most certainly are not!”

When they had finished eating and even the fire was slumbering, Thorin and Bilbo curled up together. It was warm, under both her blankets and his furs, and Bilbo felt peaceful after her conflicting emotions throughout the day. Thorin radiated heat, his arm encircling her tightly as she buried her head in his chest. She could hear his heartbeat, and it lulled her into sleep.

Even in her dreams, she could hear it beating, and as she dreamed, it became the rhythm of her own heart, in a different sense.

___

Bilbo was shaken awake violently.

The sky was dark, but the kind of dark that just precedes the dawn, and there was movement all around her.

The birdsong had ceased.

Groggily, she sat up, as Thorin’s bright eyes fixed on hers.

“Bilbo!” He was calling, “Wake up!”

“Wha-” She took in the scene around her.
Something was wrong.

The dwarrows were all on their feet, arming themselves and gathered, looking ready to run.

The howl of a warg piercing the air made her heart go cold.

“We have to go.” Thorin urged, pulling her to her feet.

She nodded, slipping her hand into his as he turned to face the Company.

“Let’s move!” He shouted, every inch a king, and the Company began to run through the forest. The two ran hand in hand; he was slightly faster than she, and her heart pounded in her chest as a warg howled again, the sound closer.

She began to feel light-headed from running, her grip on Thorin’s hand tightening as her breath became shallow. Her legs seemed to be running unbidden, jarring into the earth and stiffly at her knees on each step.

A cry arose from the head of the Company.

“Cliff!” Came Dwalin’s growl.

Thorin led Bilbo, still running, over to the other dwarf, where they were met by the sight of a sheer drop before them. Bilbo’s head spun as she looked over the precipice, the trees below as tiny as hobbits with distance.

Then a warg crashed through the trees, snarling, an orc astride it. Bilbo whimpered, for it had been long since she had seen any of the vile creatures, as Thorin barked out another command.

“Into the trees!”

The dwarrows climbed more adroitly than Bilbo would have expected, and soon they were all high above the wargs in the trees, the beasts snapping and jumping for them. Bilbo clutched at Thorin’s clothes over his chest, twisting the fabric in her fist, her breath catching as she briefly pressed her forehead into his shoulder. His hand over hers gave her some comfort.

That was, until the trees began to fall.

With a groaning creak, the tree before the one Bilbo and Thorin were in began to fall, Fili and Kili desperately jumping from it and onto the next tree, which then began to fall, too.

It crunched into Bilbo and Thorin’s tree, which, too, began to topple, as, panicked, they jumped from that tree to the next. Bilbo screamed as Thorin’s hand slipped from hers, and she fell a branch lower, narrowly escaping the jaws of a warg before hoisting herself up and launching herself into the next tree.

Bofur reached out, grabbing her arms and yanking her onto the same branch as him, where she leant against him to balance herself. Thorin, she saw, looking around wildly, was above them in the tree.

It dawned upon her that the whole Company was now in the same tree, the one nearest the cliff edge, as an orc rode into the (newly cleared) clearing. He was thick-bodied, rippling abhorrently, his pallid skin beaded with sweat, fluid scars running over him, one arm intact and the other a stub with a clawed weapon stabbed through it. He rolled back astride his white warg, eyes widening in humour as he regarded the Company.
The Pale Orc.

Bilbo felt physically sick, white spots dancing before her eyes. Her heart leapt into her mouth and she began to shake, her breathing laboured and her heart shattering on each beat. Her palms felt clammy, and she was cold, frozen in fear.

A chuckle escaped the monster’s lips, and Bilbo didn’t let herself scream. She watched, horrified but strangely absent, as it dragged his clawed arm over her, ripping deep into her skin, jolting as he laughed. That was always the worst, she thought; when the monsters were laughing.

He grunted something in Orcish, his voice like gravel over her soul, and she fought to keep her grip on the tree, willing herself not to let go. Yet her hands were feeling weak, strange, unable to grasp, as she gasped, images rising unbidden from the darkness which she had swept under the carpet of her mind, the darkness which was always visible at its edges.

Her daughter was not screaming. She never made a sound, but Bilbo watched, in horror, as she writhed on the floor, the pale monster stood over her, suspending her on the blade of a knife. It was laughing, as her daughter convulsed, blood spurting from her mouth. She began to choke, Bilbo powerless as the orc’s eyes shone in the dark.

She ran upwards, slaying everything she saw, hacking through flesh and bone and marrow, until she surfaced, the image of her daughter screaming in silence imprinted onto her mind like the sun imprinted on the backs of a blind man’s eyelids.

The tree was falling, Bilbo noted. She listened as it seemed to cry out, finally surrendering so that she had to hang on against gravity, suspended over the sheer drop. She was unaware of what was going on; it seemed that someone had nearly fallen, but had not - she didn’t know.

She just wanted to keep breathing.

Unfortunately, fate had other plans, as she took in Thorin’s movement. He rose to his feet, striding out towards Azog, determination and hatred etched upon his face.

No.

No.

She would not see another person she loved bleeding out at the Pale Orc’s hand. Her breath was thick as she watched Thorin run at Azog, who wielded his club.

It smashed into Thorin, and Bilbo watched him fall.

Oh, Eru, Thorin looked like a doll as he fell, crumpling to the ground. He looked like each of his joints were loose, like he was as delicate as a spring flower - he looked like a doll in a maelstrom, crumpling.

Bilbo, shaking, rose to her feet. Bofur tried to pull her down, swearing briefly, and for a moment she was surprised to hear such vehemence from him. Nonetheless, she shook him off.

She felt like she was in a trance, as she watched an orc hold a blade to Thorin’s throat, lifting it up to bring it down -

She barreled into him, skewering him on her blade like so many others on that day when Melissa had been on the floor. The image of her daughter swelled before her eyes, alongside the image of Thorin, and she roared in rage. She twisted the blade within the creature, before pulling it out, watching it
slump to the earth, jumping before Thorin and looking up.

Up into the murderous eyes of Azog the Defiler.

She narrowed her eyes, pushing back her fear, which readily gave way to blind wrath, her shaking hands steadying around her blade, which glowed a distressed blue.

He growled in Orcish, evidently recognising her, and her hatred contorted within her.

Then he started laughing.

That was just too much.

Roaring again in fury, Bilbo ran at him head-on, launching herself upwards and sinking her blade into the chest of the warg, which snapped at her visiously, its sharp teeth narrowly missing her head, but then she was gone, whirling around to slash at its hind legs. It snarled, turning, but she was quicker than it was, slicing off its tail cleanly, enjoying the satisfying thud as the appendage hit the earth. It yelped then, Azog roaring atop it, and suddenly Bilbo was besieged by orcs, hacking and growling and laughing.

With a loud cry, the dwarrows rushed forwards, flattening many orcs as they swarmed - as far as a group of 12 can swarm - around the creatures, Bilbo running back to Thorin’s body, where he lay on the ground.

She crouched by him protectively, watching as the dwarrows fought.

They were losing.

She needed to save Thorin. He had to survive, he had to. He was lying not far from a large rock, cracked and indented by time and nature.

There was only one course of action she could feasibly carry out, she thought, as she searched her mind for options.

It would probably result in her death.

But in that moment, without thinking it through, without evaluating her own life, Bilbo took the decision.

Quickly, she pushed Thorin’s body against the rock, as he mumbled in confusion and, she thought, protest.

Trust him to put up a fuss.

Bundling him up into a ball, she made him as small as she could, pushing him into an indent in the rock. Then, with a deep breath, she curled up over him, physically covering every inch of him that wasn’t encased by the indent in the rock, his head protected by her stomach, as she gripped to the rock.

Claws raked over her back, the pain sharp and exquisite as she felt the wet warmth of blood spread over her, but she stayed silent, for now.

If she remained here, the only way they could get to Thorin would be if they prised her cold, dead corpse off him first.
Chapter End Notes

I am informed that 'Menu tessu' means 'You are everything'.
You may have to wait a little for the next update.
I'm sorry :3

And check out this brilliant fem!Bilbo fic! It's truly fantastic:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
The sounds of fighting filled her ears; the snarling of wargs, the growls of orcs and the battle-cries of dwarrows. She longed to help her friends, but she couldn't leave Thorin unprotected. This was the only way.

Bilbo screamed, curving her back and burying her head deeper into Thorin's back. A sword had raked over her spine, and claws were tearing at her skin. Tears sprang to her eyes, as her breath shuddered.

She inhaled deeply, Thorin's scent filling her.

In her head, she recalled falling asleep beside him on an infirmary bed, her daughter on his other side, the melody of their breathing lulling her to sleep.

His warm, rough hand in hers; his bright, blue eyes; his rare, glowing smile.

His glower - for she loved even the parts of him that had been cruel.

Sleeping softly beside him, trusting him to hold the only other creature she truly valued as she, too, slept. Seeing them both smile together, the two creatures Bilbo held most dear, over everything the world and whatever lay beyond had to offer. She hoped he would look after Melissa, when this was done. She hoped they would continue to draw smiles from one another. She hoped that her daughter would gain a father and her intended would gain a daughter.

She recalled the peace of that moment, the peace.

A dagger buried itself in her back, and she cried out, as Thorin began to shift under her. She willed him to stay there, to stay safe, and felt as he stopped moving again, reclaimed by the darkness of unconsciousness.

The dagger twisted, bringing with it a sharp and searing pain, before it was wrenched from her, hot blood spewing over her back - Bilbo marvelled that she had any left to bleed, when the white-hot pain receded from the backs of her eyelids.

She felt herself, too, slipping away, and did not fight the dark as it flooded her vision, falling into the embrace of it like a deep sleep...
Awakening (Again)

Chapter Summary

Waking up

Chapter Notes

Hey there, darling reader. Thank you for coming back! If you left a kudos or you commented, have some love *hugs*
I hope you enjoy this...

Also, heads up, I changed Bofur’s profession to being solely a toymaker, instead of toymaking and mining. I only realised my mistake after I wrote it in, when I looked it up, and I liked it too much to change it... Sorry :3 Please forgive.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bilbo awoke, groggily, squinting her eyes against the harsh sunlight. Her head was pounding, her every bone aching. She felt worse than she had in a long time, struggling to sit up when nausea rolled over her.

Nope.

Best to stay lying down for a while.

Darkness consumed her again.

—-

The next time Bilbo resurfaced, she felt better. Marginally so, anyway. She lifted her head, and immediately felt a hand under her neck, propping her up.

"Mistress Baggins?" Came a voice.

Bilbo was shocked to recognise its owner. "Ori?"

She sat up, taking in her surroundings. They were in the same sort of woodland the Company had travelled through before, the Carrock vaguely visible a little way off. Ori hovered next to her, concern in his eyes.

"Are you alright?" He asked, before calling out to someone behind her. “She’s awake!"

Soon, Bofur was grinning at her from her other side.

"Good to have you with us, lassie."
Bilbo looked from one dwarf to the other, perplexed. The last thing she could remember was covering Thorin, something sharp digging into her back…

"What in the name of Eru is going on?!" She flailed, trying to look about. “Where are the others? Where’s Thorin?"

"Ori," Bofur fixed the other dwarf with a look. “Would you mind going to find more firewood?"

Ori mumbled in acquiescence, as Bofur smiled kindly at Bilbo.

"It’s probably best if I explain."

Bilbo nodded, realising that this had happened before - Bofur explaining to her things which had happened while she’d been passed out. She hoped the trend would not continue.

"What you did, Bilbo," his voice was rich with emotion, his eyes glistening slightly, Bilbo thought, “Was mighty brave, and the stupidest damn thing I’ve ever seen."

He held both her shoulders, squeezing gently, and Bilbo was shocked. She hadn’t thought that her actions could elicit such an emotional response from the dwarf.

"I’m not sure how long you were there, before Gandalf arrived. The Eagles of Manwe followed, rescuing us, dropping us high on the Carrock." Bofur paused, loosening his grip on her shoulders and letting one arm hook around her, sitting beside her so she could lean on him. “Thorin was injured badly, but you were, too - Gandalf said we should get you to his friend’s house, Beorn, but we could only carry one. We couldn’t very well leave Thorin behind, so Gandalf did his best to speed your recovery, Gloin giving us herbs and treatments for you, and then the rest of the Company left with Thorin."

The looked beseechingly down into her eyes.

"I’m so sorry, Bilbo."

She frowned.

The logic was, of course, foolproof - they could only carry one of them, and Thorin was their king, as well as their kin, so they had carried him off to safety, leaving her behind with two of their Company.

"Why you two?" She asked, wondering why those specific dwarrows had been selected to remain behind.

Bofur’s usually chipper smile turned down slightly at the edges.

"Ori’s brothers, and Dwalin, weren’t happy about his staying, but he insisted on helping you. You’ll have to ask him why. And as for me, Bilbo," he sighed, “As for me, I just couldn’t stand to leave you lying on a rock like that."

Bilbo squeezed his hand. “You are a true friend, Bofur. You must miss Fili terribly."

He stiffened. “Wh-what?"

She frowned again, confused. “Surely you miss him?"

"Aye, Bilbo, but how… How did you know?"
Bilbo grinned at that, forgetting for a moment her predicament. “Bofur, the rest of the Company must be blind not to see it.”

He chuckled, the sound soothing her. “It seems we have both had our hearts conquered by the Line of Durin.”

"Indeed." Bilbo sighed. “Is Thorin going to recover?”

"I should think he’ll be fine," Bofur answered, not too quickly, so Bilbo thought he was sincere. “You took most of the beating for him. How are you feeling?”

Bilbo grimaced at that. “A tad weak, if you must know.”

"Aye. Onto your belly, let’s take a look. Gloin gave me some remedies and strict instructions.”

Without much further ado, he flipped Bilbo over onto her stomach, and she barely had time to squeal as he lifted up her shirt.

"Bofur!"

"Oh, shush now, Bilbo. You know I like ‘em bearded.”

She giggled, despite herself, then hissed as he applied a stinging ointment to her back.

"Sorry, sorry…” He muttered, and she was thankful that his hands were not so rough, actually fairly smooth. How odd.

"What do you do?” She asked abruptly.

He paused in his application for a moment, then continuing.

"Sorry?"

"Your trade.” She elaborated.

"Oh!” He exclaimed, pulling her shirt down and helping her to sit up again. “I’m a toymaker.”

"Of course you are.” Bilbo grinned. He gave her a quizzical look, but just then Ori emerged from behind the trees, firewood bundled under both his arms.

"Should I light it now?” He called, placing it in a heap on the ground. Bofur scrambled to his feet, panicked.

"No, no, laddie, I’ll do it…” He leaned down to wink at Bilbo. “He never was good with lighting fires.” Strolling over to Ori, he hummed, “Why don’t you sit with Miss Bilbo for a while? I’m sure she’d like to talk to you.”

Ori smiled, shyly shuffling over to the hobbit, and Bilbo realised they hadn’t really spent much time together. She smiled back at him, noting that his gained in strength when she reciprocated. He must be very shy.

He sat beside her, a little distance between them.

"How are you feeling, Mistress Baggins?” He asked, genuine concern evident in his voice. Bilbo realised she’d never had the opportunity to ask him to call her Bilbo.
"Please, call me Bilbo."

He seemed to be surprised by the statement, his smile magnifying. “Call me Ori too, Bilbo."

"It was good of you to stay with me, Ori." Bilbo said softly, trying to work out the motivations of the dwarf. Why would he stay with her, letting Dwalin (and the rest of his kin) go off without him?

He made a noise of acknowledgement, and she felt the need to push the question.

"If you don’t mind me asking, why did you stay?"

The tips of the dwarf's ears went pink as he looked around at Bofur, who was, Bilbo thought, suspiciously busy with the fire.

"Well, Missst- Bilbo, you see…” He trailed off for a moment, before seeming to gain determination, a firmness entering his tone. “You’re a hobbit, Bilbo, and I always felt that I had rather a lot in common with hobbits. I’ve read about you, you see,” his words were rushed, and it seemed like he’d been needing to say this for a while, “and I really would like the opportunity to talk to you about things dwarrows might not understand."

Bilbo frowned, not sure where this was going and hoping it wasn't going somewhere too odd.

"Like what, Ori?"

"Well…” He shifted his eyes around guiltily, before leaning in, closing the space between them and whispering in a a hushed voice, “Sometimes I like to pick flowers, and put them in my room, and sit and drink tea, and read books by the fire…”

He trailed off, as Bilbo started laughing.

"Oh, Ori," she spluttered, whacking the dwarf weakly on the shoulder, “I think we’re going to get along just fine."

Chapter End Notes

So, there we go.
I hoped you liked it. Thanks for reading!
And may I reiterate how much your kind comments and kudoses mean to me. Really, it's amazing for me.

Check out this awesome fic of epicness:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Thorin was sat with the Company, deep in discussion. He had awoken earlier that day, and was trying to extract from them their actions.

"So where is Bilbo?" He asked again, turning to Dwalin in frustration.

The dwarf cleared his throat. "The Carrock."

"The Carrock?!" He exclaimed, leaping to his feet. "Mahal, why has she been left there? And where are Bofur and Ori?"

"They are with her." Balin’s voice came, slow and calming, but it did little to assuage Thorin. “She was injured in your defense, but we could only carry one of you here, so Ori and Bofur were left with the means to heal her, and it was decided they would meet us here.”

Thorin swore, the others taken aback slightly by his wrath.

"You left my One on a rock in the woods to die?" His voice was low, steeled, and he glared at the Company, daring one of them to offer an explanation. “Where are we?"

"The house of Beorn." Gandalf announced, “Who has kindly agreed to allow us to rest here."

"Right."

"Just outside of Mirkwood." Kili chipped in, helpfully.

Thorin took a moment to absorb this information, as Balin turned to him.

"We are just outside of Mirkwood, and three of our company are travelling towards what may be last safe place on our journey." The white-bearded dwarf said carefully, looking at Thorin as though he was trying to impress an idea upon him.
Thorin frowned, thinking. What was he trying to say?

Ah.

"Dwalin, Fili, may I speak to you alone for a moment?"

They nodded, as the others, perplexed and grumbling, obliged by vacating the space. Some wandered up into the garden; the dining hall was left empty, save for the three.

"It appears that all of us have left love behind on the Carrock."

Dwalin nodded, as Fili spluttered, “U-uncle, what are you - no, I’m not sure what you…”

"Quiet, Fili, I don’t have the time now." Thorin snapped, silencing his nephew’s vain attempts at innocent denial. Honestly, would it kill him to credit his king with some intelligence?

"I, myself," he began, evaluating his words carefully, “Would be worried about Bilbo’s fate in Mirkwood."

Dwalin nodded, eyes widening as the realisation of what Thorin was suggesting dawned upon him. Fili, of course, didn’t understand, and Thorin raised a hand to silence him.

"I’m sure you both have similar feelings towards Ori and Bofur. Therefore, I suggest that we ask Gandalf’s friend - Beorn - to grant them shelter when they come here, and explain to them that we have gone to Mirkwood without them, and that they should remain here."

Fili frowned. “I’m not sure if they would like that, Uncle…”

But Dwalin was nodding. “Ori would be safe. Bilbo would come to no harm, nor would Bofur.”

The consensus of the two others swayed Fili.

"I suppose it would keep Bofur out of danger…” Relief flooded his tone as he realised this. “He wouldn’t be in danger.”

Thus, it was agreed, and the Company departed from Beorn’s house post haste, as the big man watched them go and smiled to himself, bemused, as an irate Gandalf cursed beside him about the foolishness of dwarrows.

Gandalf had business to attend to, and had to leave, by necessity, as a great bear loped over the hillsides.

*  

The fields shimmered like oceans in the breeze, giant daisies blooming under a warm, soft sun. The sky was blue, the birds were singing, all was peaceful.

Bilbo was furious.

They had made the journey to Beorn’s house, and, after a suspicious inspection, the bear of a man had informed the three of them that they had been left a note by the Company.

It read:

*Bilbo, Bofur, Ori,*
We journey on to Mirkwood. Remain here until further notice.

It is best.

Thorin

Oh, hell no.

Who did he think he was, ordering them to just ‘remain’ there? ‘It is best’?! What did he even mean by that?

Of course, Bilbo knew exactly what had happened. Thorin had awoken, spoken to Fili and Dwalin and they had decided to keep their sweethearts safe while they went and got themselves killed.

Idiots.

Ori was upset, his lower lip trembling as he read the note, over and over, while Bofur looked fit to burst.

He and Bilbo exchanged a look.

"Well, obviously we’re not going to stay here." Bilbo rolled her eyes.

Bofur grinned. “Aye, obviously."

Ori’s ears perked up. “We’re not?"

They both turned to him, Bilbo amazed and Bofur chuckling.

"No." They answered in unison, both in mirrored tones of ironic incredulity at the thought.

"But Thorin says…” He piped up.

Bilbo cut him off. “I don’t give a damn what Thorin says! He’s going to run to that dragon for shelter when I catch up with him!"

Bofur was laughing, nodding profusely, as Ori’s eyes widened.

"I’d wager Fili has a reckoning headed his way, too."

That was when Ori cottoned on, a small smile spreading over his face.

"So, we’re going to Mirkwood, then?"

Bilbo nodded, putting an arm around both dwarrows and guiding the three of them to the table inside Beorn’s dining room.

"But not before I’ve had a cup of tea."

—

They had arrived in the early morning, so after Beorn had provided them with honey-cakes and tea, which made Bilbo wistful for her daughter in Rivendell, they departed, the sun swinging up high above them. The three walked amiably, and Bilbo was glad that these two had elected to stay with her; Bofur was now solidly one of her greatest friends, and she had been surprised by how much she liked Ori. He was quiet, but seemed to value reading and scholarly pursuits, music, art, and tea. So
he was very much the most hobbitish dwarf she had ever met.

They made their way through the fields, Beorn’s advice fresh in her mind. They were not to stray from the path, to eat any of the things that grew in the forest, to drink the water - Bilbo thought they should probably just avoid touching anything. She felt a sense of trepidation which could not be shaken away by Bofur’s cheery grin, for she saw that the glint in his eye was flat as Ori’s tuneless humming. The dwarf liked music, but he couldn’t quite carry the lilting tune, not today.

They stopped beside a stream, filling up various waterskins which Beorn had given to them. When Bilbo had thanked him, he had just grumbled something about goblins being evil and given her a wrapped parcel of honey-cakes; Bilbo was glad she had, impulsively, grabbed some waybread before leaving Rivendell, which should keep them going through Mirkwood. She had taken rather a lot, actually - more than enough to feed the whole Company for at least a week. It was fairly heavy in her pockets, but very much worth it.

Now, Mirkwood loomed in the distance - although it really wasn’t all that distant - dark and steeped in gloom, its trees dense and unforgiving, a harsh blemish on the landscape of fields and hills. Bilbo swallowed, as Bofur whistled.

"Those idiots." He murmured, taking in the imposing wall of forest on the horizon.

Ori squeaked. “Don’t you think we should just… Do as Thorin says?” He looked up at Bilbo questioningly, fear written over his large eyes like a sonnet.

Bilbo smiled at him, wondering when it had been decided that she would choose. Gently, she rubbed his shoulder, to comfort him, as Bofur watched her carefully, also wanting her answer. She rested a hand on both of their forearms, looking out to the forest. They looked too.

"There is only one thing that terrifies me more than the prospect of entering Mirkwood." She said, each word vibrating with a heavy honesty and a terrible weight, “And that’s the idea of Thorin in there without me.” She looked at both of them, connecting with their eyes before continuing, “I know he’s a king, the same as Dwalin’s a warrior and Fili’s a prince, and they’re strong, they’re fighters, they’re brave and they’ll look out for each other, but they’re idiots too.” The love falling from each of her words, laced with sadness too, resonated with both the dwarrows.

"Aye," Bofur mused, “And who would tell Fili how pretty his hair looks, if it wasn’t for me?"

Ori giggled at that. “I suppose Dwalin needs someone to show off his strength to."

The three, laughing by the stream, were united in their mirth, and suddenly the dark vastness of Mirkwood lessened, slightly.

Chapter End Notes

So there we have it.
I didn't really go into depth with Beorn, for some reason I'm just not comfortable with his character, and it wrote as it wrote :3
Check this out! It's fem!Bilbo at its finest -->
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Gloom was the word.

Mirkwood itself seemed to be heavy, the air thick with darkness and dismal, dank, devoid of any kind of life. The trees stretched upwards, creating a cocoon of murkiness. Bilbo was glad of the path under her feet, as she walked between Bofur and Ori. They, too, were quiet, taking in the blackness of the forest. Dripping noises were interrupted by rustling, scratching, crunching, cracking… All the noise was small, frightening, magnified by the musty stench of disease. Bilbo was cold, shuddering. She wished Thorin was beside her, wished she could feel his heat. Why had he left her; how could he honestly believe she wouldn’t follow him?

Eru, she was going to yell at him.

They had been walking for a few hours, but without the sun, Bilbo wasn’t sure what time it was. Something glowed in the distance - the three stopped dead.

"What’s that?” Ori whispered, as Bilbo and Bofur exchanged a look.

"I think we’d best go carefully.” Bofur breathed, as he and Bilbo instinctively pushed Ori between them, flanking him and drawing their weapons quietly. They advanced slowly. The path was level, here, a black ribbon running through the forest; all was thickly silent in the air around them.

As they approached, they began to see what lay ahead.

It was the remains of a fire.

Bofur leaned down to inspect it.

"This is recent. Whoever lit this has not been gone long.”

Ori, who had walked a little distance to look at something on the ground, cried out, “It’s them!”
Bilbo and Bofur made their way over, horrified to see one of Kili’s arrows where it had been dropped in the dirt. Inspecting the area, they saw footprints, heading off the path, into the forest.

A sinking feeling in her gut, Bilbo turned to the other two. “They’ve left the path.”

At that moment, there was the sound of something moving in the undergrowth. “Quick, hide!” Bilbo hissed, pulling the two dwarrows down with her into a bush.

From within the bush, which scratched her face and pulled at her clothes, snagging them, Bilbo looked out at the path.

An elf on horseback rode into her line of sight. He had long, blonde hair and regal features, sat tall astride his steed.

"Clear!" His voice rang out, into the night.

A cry of, “Clear!” answered his own.

As he pulled on the horse’s reins, turning away, Bilbo leapt out of the undergrowth.

He took a moment to regard her, before he frowned.

"Bilbo? What are you doing here?"

Bilbo smiled, as she spoke to him.

"Legolas, it’s good to see you. I might be needing your help…”

The elf inclined his head, indicating for her to continue, as he dismounted his horse.

While Bilbo explained that she had been travelling with a party of dwarrows, Bofur and Ori emerged from the vegetation, and she introduced them.

The dwarrows did not seem pleased to meet an elf of Mirkwood, nor did the elf seem pleased by them; he was troubled.

"Your friends are safe," he informed her, “But they are being held in my father’s dungeons.”

Bilbo sucked in a deep breath, at once relieved and horrified. She looked up, holding Legolas' gaze, and decided she needed his help, if she were to have any hope.

"I know it’s a lot to ask, but could you take us to them?"

There was no change in his facial expression, but the elf froze for a long moment, wisps of his hair carried around his face the only sign that he was not a statue.

Bilbo knew he was thinking, weighing the idea in his mind.

"Yes."

The hobbit barreled into him, hugging him tight.

“Thank you so much.” She whispered.

It felt good to wrap her arms around her old friend, who she loved, despite all that had transpired between them.
He smiled ruefully, hugging her back, a tad longer than the dwarrows were expecting.

"I owe you."

She smiled.

"Legolas, you know you owe me nothing."

The elf smiled back at her, still wistful.

"I do regret it, though."

With that, he led the hobbit, as well as two confused dwarrows, to his father's palace, concealing them in his rooms until he could find a way to let them visit their friends.

Chapter End Notes

I hate to say that I'm starting to run out of steam, so updates may be slower here on in
Thorin awoke in the dark. He spat, the coppery taste of blood sharp in his mouth. Sure he had a black eye from his beating at the hands of the tree-shaggers, he pulled himself up to sit against the wall, looking around as his sight accustomed to the darkness of the cold cell.

It was barred, leading out into a corridor. Although there were no guards directly outside, he knew there were at least two stationed at the end of the passage, which was the only way in or out. He doubted, however, that they were particularly vigilant; they were convinced of their own infallibility.

Not that their arrogance would be of much use to him.

His mind wandered to the Company, who he had heard being dragged past the passage his cell lay in, to some cells further along. That meant he knew they were relatively safe; he had picked out all ten of their voices, and not heard Bombur wailing, so he knew Bifur was safe too, despite the fact that he was not the most loquacious of dwarrows.

Although Thorin longed to see them, to ensure their safety, he was comforted by the fact that they were all accounted for.

The same could be said for his thoughts of the hobbit.

Bilbo was safe.

Thorin was glad he had decided to instruct her to remain at Beorn’s, for she did not now face this mammoth obstacle; she was not to be trapped underground again. He had doubted, initially, that she would follow his instructions, but had tried to convey his meaning clearly.

_It is best._

He hoped she had understood what that meant.
It would be best for her to remain behind. It was obvious that Bilbo had no problem sacrificing herself for him, but that was not her choice alone. Thorin had been horrified by her actions. He would rather die one thousand times than see her hurt, yet she had almost died for him; she was his One, and so her life was his, just as his was hers, and he would not allow her to endanger herself so wantonly, least of all for him. Moreover, if she were to be inclined to do such stupid things, it was best she remained behind for the sake of her daughter, who needed her.

Thorin could not allow the two to be parted permanently.

He was angry with Bilbo, of course, rage rising before his eyes as he thought of her.

What had she been doing?! Trying to save him, with absolutely no qualms over her own worth.

Thorin brought his fist down to whack the stone floor, not flinching as the skin over his knuckles tore and bled.

She was so stupid! How could she take such an idiotic risk? Did she not know that the very notion of causing her harm was abhorrent to Thorin; did she not realise that the thought of being the reason she was hurt turned his stomach and raked at his insides like poison?

Did she not know he loved her at all?

Anger was tiring, and Thorin was injured, so it was not long until he fell into a shallow and fitful sleep.

Despite his relief that Bilbo was far from him, far from the dark belly of Thranduil’s palace, Thorin missed her warmth beside him.

—

Thorin awoke abruptly.

Instantly, he focused, looking about to see what had woken him.

An elf.

It was male, tall - as they all were - with long, blonde hair and, strangely, a blank facial expression. No derision, no pity, no curiosity, no hate - nothing. It regarded Thorin for a long moment, before casting its gaze around the passage.

Seemingly contented, it spoke.

"It’s safe."

With that, it turned on its heels, walking away down the passage, leaving in its stead a small, golden-haired hobbit.

Leaving in its stead a small, golden-haired hobbit.

_A small, golden-haired hobbit._

Thorin’s heart sank, as Bilbo walked towards the bars of his cell. She reached them, putting a hand through and trying to touch him, but he was frozen, unable to move.

What, in the name of Mahal, was she doing here?
"Thorin?" She asked softly, her voice falling oddly in the dark.

Immediately, he snarled, recoiling from the sound.

"Why are you here?" He snapped, glaring at her.

She seemed to balk, her eyes wide as she stepped back involuntarily.

"For you."

Thorin groaned, sinking to his knees and holding his head in his hands. It was too much - for him. Of course, for him. He was the reason the hobbit would endanger herself, he was the reason she would face hardship, he was the reason she would bear more scars…

"I told you not to follow." The words were sharp, their sound cut short and harsh by rage and pain.

She let out an incredulous snort then, eyes flashing with anger. "And I told you I loved you - how dare you leave me behind?!"

Thorin rose, shouting at her with all his might. "How could you endanger yourself like that? Does my love mean so little?"

"By Eru! That makes no sense, Thorin!"

"No! What makes no sense is that you, my intended, would throw away your life for my sake, paying no heed to the fact that I wouldn’t even want to live it without you!"

The hobbit was silent then, and Thorin moved closer to the bars, trying to see what she was thinking.

She looked up at him, eyes glistening with tears, and his stomach dropped. He wanted to say something, anything, but had no idea what, so all he could do was stare back, held in limbo by those wide, terrible eyes.

"I’m working on an escape plan."

She blinked, the tears gone, and Thorin frowned. That was not what he had expected to hear, but she continued, so he did not need to react.

"Legolas, the elf, will aid me."

Thorin stiffened at that. This must be the elf from before.

"Why?"

You can’t trust these tree-shaggers, Bilbo, they’re not like your Rivendell ones…

"It’s complicated."

Her evasive answer spiked his suspicion.

"Complicated?"

Bilbo sighed, walking up to the bars and reaching her hands through to hold his. It felt so good, to hold her soft, warm hands in his, even if she should be safe at Beorn’s and not here with him.

"We’re friends."
Bilbo heard her words ring out, bouncing softly from the walls of the room and coming to settle like dust.

Thorin’s eyes narrowed and he became even more rigid, glowering with increased fervor. He could tell she wasn’t giving up the whole truth.

She steeled herself.

Some secrets were best kept that way.

"Friends?" He loaded the word with enough weight to sink her heart, as she gripped his hands tightly, praying that this would not turn sour.

"Friends." She affirmed, her smile wavering and her pitch slightly too high, as she tried to return his gaze.

"Mahal!" The word burst from him, as he retracted his hands. "What are you hiding?"

"Thorin!" She pleaded, not willing to lie or tell the truth. "Please…"

"Please, what, Bilbo? Please don’t make you tell me the truth?" He spat, glaring.

"Thorin…"

"Tell me!" He bellowed, his voice booming.

"They’ll hear you!"

"Let them."

"Thorin, they’ll hear-"

"There should be no secrets between us." His words stumped Bilbo.

It was true.

She would have to tell him.

But now was not the time.

"Please." She begged, imploring him to stop pushing, to just trust her. Staring into his hard eyes, she was met by nothing soft. It rocked her core, to see his anger directed at her; even at the start of their journey, when he had been so horrible to her, he had never looked at her like this.

"Get out." He growled.

When she did not move, his growl became a roar.

"Get out!"

And then she was running, running from his hateful eyes, into the warm, open arms of an old friend who wiped away her tears and whispered in Sindarin:

"Lirimaer, amin hiraetha."
Lovely one, I'm sorry.

Bilbo wondered, through her soreness over Thorin’s ire, why the elf would apologise for something that was not his fault.

Chapter End Notes

So... what did you think?

And take a look at this stunner of a fic if you want more fem! Bilbo:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Bofur and Ori walked past the passage where Thorin was being held, as Bilbo’s elven friend, Legolas, directed them to where the Company were being held.

"They are all in separate cells," he informed them, “But they were only guarded by those at the door, so you should find no trouble in reaching them. Continue along his passage and I’m sure you’ll hear them."

With a wry smile, the elf had straightened up from addressing them, then frowned, cocking his head towards the passage as though he had heard something. Bofur flinched at the next sound, loud enough for both him and Ori to hear it.

"Tell me!"

The words, roared by Thorin, echoed over the stone walls, as Bofur swiftly latched onto Ori’s arm, firmly steering him down the passage and nodding his thanks to the elf.

This was not an exchange that was theirs to overhear.

They made their way along the passage, which was surprisingly long. The walls were close, the air dank; it was dark, the floor paved with thick slabs of stone completely unlike the ornate finery of the palace above the dungeons. Nonetheless, Bofur did not think this space was purely functional - there was a sort of melodrama, a calculated pretentiousness to its cold, violent, angular darkness. This space was meant to intimidate, meant to sap hope. Therefore, Bofur widened his smile, fixing Ori with it - by Mahal, he was going to look on the bright side.
What was the bright side again?

Not important.

The sound of shouting rose to greet the two, and Bofur turned to grin again at Ori, who smiled tentatively back as they caught the end of an exchange.

"Bloody hell, could you just try to -" Gloin’s voice was cut off mid-sentence.

"What?" Oin yelled.

"I was saying-" Bellowed Gloin, only to be interrupted again.

"Could you two pack it in? I’m trying to sleep." Grunted Dwalin.

Ori’s reaction to hearing his voice was immediate. He lit up from the inside, going pink as a spring blossom, squeaking, and suddenly he shot away, feet barely touching the cobbles, towards the sound of his love.

Bofur, grinning, followed, also sprinting, at the prospect of seeing the whole Company, and specifically one blonde-haired Prince of Durin. Who was getting a stern talking-to. After a cuddle.

Rounding a corner, Bofur stopped, panting, as his eyes were met by eleven other pairs, staring at him and Ori in amazement and horror alike.

The Company were in separate cells, lined up in a row in one wall. They had been held in every other cell; there was an empty cell between each of them, and their grouping of cells was in the centre of the wall. Each cell looked of an adequate size, not comfortably proportioned by any means, but with enough space to stand up and walk from one end to another. The cells were barred, with thick bars of what looked like wrought iron, and they were shadowy, thick with shadows which dripped from the ceiling and into the corners.

Eventually, the silence was broken by Bombur, who grunted, “You idiots.”

Bofur, laughing, went to reunite with his brother and cousin, chiding them for leaving him - but really, he was glad to see they were in one piece. Their cells were beside each other (ignoring the empty cell in between), which was convinient for speaking to them both.

Adjusting his hat, he made his way along the row of cells, to Fili’s, which was at the end. Strangely, he felt a mix of excitement and nerves, which did not abate.

Standing before the bars of the cell, he caught his breath.

Staring back at him, their noses almost touching, was Fili, beaten, bruised, and beautiful.

"You shouldn’t have left me." Bofur breathed, when he had managed to remember his name, taking in Fili, who somehow managed to look more regal, more bloody perfect.

"I’m sorry." He truly looked contrite, too, which Bofur marveled at for a moment, staring back into his star-like eyes, bright in the dark.

It was all too much for his poor little toymaker heart.

Growling, he reached through the bars, pulling the prince’s body flush against his and crushing his lips onto his through the gap in the bars. He kissed him quickly, the bars making it hard to go any further, and pulled away, feeling almost bashful.
Fili gasped as their lips parted, his arms making their way out between the bars and snaking around Bofur, their steel grip preventing him from moving away - not that he wanted to.

"Mahal, Bofur, I've missed you."

* 
Fili loved the feel of Bofur in his arms. He hadn’t really been happy leaving him behind, and had always suspected the toymaker would not remain at Beorn’s anyway, so it was with little surprise and a lot of relief that he had received him. He hadn't expected the others to come, though - was Bilbo with Thorin?

At that moment, he didn't care all too much.

"Mahal, Bofur, I've missed you."

Bofur chuckled at his words, and Fili felt the glorious sound reverberate through him, the cold bars pressing uncomfortably against him as he pulled the toymaker tighter against him.

"Aye, and I you." Came his reply, and Fili felt as though each of Bofur’s words was a gift, a gift just for him, the greatest of treasures, as he smiled, his nose pressed against Bofur’s. Bofur’s eyes, glinting with joy, gave him something to latch onto - they gave him hope.

Fili felt safe.

He’d always had his uncle, but Thorin could be cold, distant - he had been as a father to Fili, but it was hard for him to shake his darkness away. Kili had always been there for him, too, but Fili protected his brother, kept him safe.

No, Bofur made Fili feel looked after.

He gave him hope, his rock in a storm, his anchor in a swirling void of sea - Fili held Kili to him, held Thorin to him, as the storm of their world surged, but Bofur held Fili safely to him, and Fili had never felt that before.

"You have no idea." Fili muttered, the toymaker frowning in confusion but not asking for an explanation, simply sighing and, with a smile, tightening his hold around Fili, until he thought he would surely burst.

* 

"Could you two pack it in? I’m trying to sleep."

That was Dwalin’s voice.

Dwalin!

Ori smiled, as he sprinted off down the passage, not caring if Bofur had followed or not.

Dwalin!

Dwalin!

Dwalin was here!

He came to a skittering halt as he reached the row of cells containing the Company, anxiously
searching their faces.

His brothers were there, and for a moment he was distracted, running to their cells, which were adjacent.

Nori grinned, seeing him.

"Ori, you stupid dwarf! It’s good to see you, brother."

Ori smiled back, glad to see his more troublesome brother was in one piece. “Nori!” He squeaked, as the dwarf rummaged in his pockets and held something out through the bars.

"Here, take this." He said, presenting Ori with a small box. “It might come in handy."

Ori took it, but didn’t have time to open it, for he was then subjected to the wrath of Dori.

"Ori! What are you doing here? You were given strict instructions to remain at Beorn’s! It isn’t safe…” Dori continued, and Ori tuned out as he often did. When Dori had to pause for breath, his face ruddy and his eyes glinting, Ori grinned at him.

"I’m glad to see you too, Dori."

At that, the other dwarf melted slightly, a rueful smile twisting his features.

"You’re impossible."

Ori giggled, turning to walk along the row of dwarrows, smiling at each of them. At the end, he saw Bofur embracing Fili through the bars of his cell, and he took a moment to be amazed.

How had he not noticed?

He stopped outside one of the cells.

Dwalin was sat at the back of it.

He watched, as the big dwarf’s eyes focused on his feet, running along the length of his body until they reached his eyes.

Ori was paralysed by what he saw there, in Dwalin’s eyes.

It was pain.

"Why?" The warrior’s voice cracked, as he stood and took a step towards Ori.

Ori didn’t understand the question, didn’t answer, frozen as he watched Dwalin move. Was he not pleased to see him? Involuntarily, Ori’s lip began to tremble as tears welled up in his eyes.

"Why?" The word was stronger now, as Dwalin stopped before him.

Ori blinked, tears running over his cheeks, unbidden.

"You should be safe." Dwalin murmured. “You should be safe."

Abruptly, he reached out through the bars, running his hand through Ori’s hair and pulling his head towards his, so that they were facing each other.

"You should be safe."
Ori understood, as the terrible words registered. He smiled, Dwalin’s rough thumb wiping the tears from his cheeks.

"No, men lananubukhs menu (I love you), the only place I should be is beside you."

The other dwarf too a shaking breath, his eyes widening at Ori’s words, and Ori continued.

"You should have known that. You should never have tried to send me away."

Again, Dwalin did not speak, looking into Ori’s eyes as though he were searching for something, and Ori stared back, until he opened his mouth to speak.

“Khuhaj ‘Igalul.’” He whispered, his words sending shivers through Ori, as he allowed the dwarf to run both his hands through his hair, pressing their lips together. Unthinkingly, Ori raised his arms to grasp at Dwalin’s chest, using his shirt to pull him down, to pull him closer, as he warrior’s hands untangled themselves from his hair and ran down his back, making Ori gasp.

"Dwalin…” He moaned against his love’s lips.

Drat.

it was enough.

"What are you doing to my brother?!” Came Dori’s cry from further away, as Dwalin chuckled, pulling Ori closer and kissing his nose.

"Nothing."

Chapter End Notes

I am under the impression that ‘Khuhaj ‘Igalul’ means ‘Warrior of Language’, but I am no expert and it took me a while to work it out...

So yeah that was horrifically sweet, in my opinion.
*Manly throat-clearing*
Gonna go tinker with the car now... Or something...

Also, I'm interested to know what you thought of Fili? So feel free to tell me any opinions, okay :3

Check out this fem!Bilbo fic if you want to read something else now (it's fab):
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Bilbo lay next to Legolas on his bed, blowing smoke rings at the ceiling, as they shared a pipe of Old Toby. She’d missed her old habit, wondering where Legolas had procured the pipe-weed, but didn’t ask. They weren’t speaking, but his hand in hers served to communicate between them all they needed to say.

He felt warm next to her, easily twice her height, their sides touching. It was nighttime, Bofur and Ori still where they had left them in the cells. Legolas would go to collect them before the guards were due to change at dawn, before going back down to uphold the story that he had sent them away for rowdy behaviour (which was, incidentally, true) and demand to know why replacements hadn’t been sent sooner. The righteous indignation of a prince would not be questioned.

Bilbo’s cheeks felt too dry, where tears had dried upon them, leaving invisible tracks of salt in their stead. She shut her eyes, exhaling deeply, as she passed the pipe back to her friend, trying not to think about what had just happened.

It didn’t work, of course, and Legolas, in that way he always could, knew that her mind was slipping back down the passage, to the cell where her love stewed.

"I’m so sorry." Came the elf’s words, and Bilbo frowned, sitting up on her elbows to look down at him.

"It isn’t your fault." She told him, staring into his wide eyes and wondering what on earth he was talking about.

"Yes it is." He smiled sadly, sitting up as well. “I was the cause of your argument, was I not?”

Bilbo hesitated, nodding with reluctance. “You were perhaps a catalyst, but not a cause, dear heart.”

"Then what was the cause?" The elf asked softly.

"I don’t know." Bilbo murmured, tired and abruptly cold, “I suppose a myriad of things, all too long ago and some too recent."
Legolas’ smile surprised her, as he pulled her against him in an embrace, pressing his face into the curve of her neck for a moment. “If he cannot see your worth, he must truly be blind.” The elf shook her then, as she stared at him, surprised slightly, not by his emotion so much as its outpouring, “Promise me you will make sure you are happy. Gellon ned i galar i chent gîn ned i gladhog, and so should he.”

Bilbo choked, clutching at her friend as she began to sob again. “What did I do, to deserve such a friend, astalder?”

Lying back on the bed again, she drew from the pipe again, as the elf answered her question, which she had not truly intended to be answered.

"I have been no great friend to you." His words were sad, and Bilbo shook her head.

"It is time to let go of old guilt, dear one. I have forgiven you; when will you forgive yourself?"

The elf’s next words would never truly leave Bilbo, and they left her wishing that she could do something, anything, to convince her friend that he bore no shame.

"When my actions no longer cause more sufferiing in your life."

Legolas had collected the two dwarrows from the cells, their bright eyes shining from being reunited with their Ones, and it tightened Bilbo’s chest to see. Ori sat by himself, dreamily sketching in his book, as Bofur came to sit beside Bilbo. They were in Legolas’ living quarters, which were ornately decorated, the stone intricately carved in delicate swirls and images. Bilbo was sat on a bench by the fire, and she smiled at Bofur as he came to sit beside her.

He smiled back, sighing as he reached out his hands to warm them in the heat of the fire.

"Your hat’s skewed.” She told him, as he chuckled, righting it.

They didn’t speak for a moment, Bofur rubbing his hands together in the firelight until they were pink, then reaching into his pocket. He pulled out a dark block of wood, small and rough, handing it to Bilbo, who frowned, confused.

"It’s oak.” He informed her lightly, and Bilbo’s frown deepened. Why was he giving her a block of oak; he must know that she had argued with Thorin. It was unlike him to be so cruel.

"Don’t look at me like that, lassie.” Bofur chided her, continuing, “It’s traditional, for those courting to carve a bead for their One. Now, as ye probably can’t carve all too well, design a bead and I’ll carve it.” His words were a command, not a question, and Bilbo’s frown lifted, as she fixed the dwarf with a smile.

"Thank you, Bofur. You truly are a wise dwarf."

The dwarf squirmed at her praise, going all bashful. “None of tha’, please, Bilbo, I’m just doin’ ye a favour.”

Bilbo chuckled, noting that when embarrassed he started talking with a more dwarf-like accent.

There came a quiet exclamation from where Ori was sitting.

"Oh!"
Bilbo and Bofur turned sharply to look at him, as he turned around, getting up to stand by them.

He was holding a small silver box, and shaking his head with a smile on his lips.

"Nori gave me this." He explained, pressing the box into Bofur’s hands, who opened it and snorted, muttering Nori’s name.

"What is it?" Bilbo asked, smiling too, as Bofur presented her with the box. Opening it, she saw a carefully maintained, gleaming collection of lockpicks. Giggling, she gave the box back to Ori.

"Of course Nori would smuggle you lockpicks." She grinned, as Bofur spoke.

"Aye, and now we can get them out of their cells, so we just need to work on getting them out of the palace."

That sobered the mood, somewhat, as the three sat, contemplating that prospect.

"Wait," Ori said suddenly, breaking their reverie, “Can any of us actually use these?” He asked, waving the box in his hand.

Bilbo frowned, as Bofur widened his eyes.

"Come to think of it laddie… Not I."

Bilbo shook her head. “Nor I. We’ll have to practice.”

"Where?" Asked Ori, as they shuffled along the bench to make room for him.

Bilbo frowned.

"We can’t very well go outside. The only place would be the prison cells - if we could get past the guards, no one would find us, so long as we hide at mealtimes."

"Aye." Bofur agreed, nodding. “But only one of us should go - we can’t risk all being captured."

Ori nodded, scratching his head. “I could -"

"No!" Bilbo and Bofur cut him off simultaneously.

"I will." Bilbo announced. “I’m the burglar, aren’t I?"

Chapter End Notes

So, I believe 'Gellon ned i galar i chent gîn ned i gladhog' means 'I love to see your eyes shine when you laugh.'
Also, I think 'Astalder' means 'Valiant one'.
Yo! Check this fem!Bilbo fic out, it's like mithril (and you know how much that means): http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Thorin was awoken by the feeling of eyes on him.

He sat up slowly, his eyes accustoming to the darkness, and saw an elf stood before him.

It was the same elf from before, tall, blonde and impassive.

Legolas.

Thorin’s eyes narrowed as he took in the elf’s slender physique and shimmery-ness. Damn tree-shagging bastard.

The elf cleared his throat, before speaking.

"You’re a fool, Thorin Oakenshield."

Thorin froze, deliberately not allowing himself to be goaded by the elf’s quiet words, ringing clearly over the cell walls.

The elf took a step forwards, and Thorin remained exactly where he was, sat on the bed.

"You’re a fool for treating Bilbo the way you did."

The elf remained impassive, his words sharp and, Thorin thought, too close to the bone. Why was it any of his business, anyway?

Because he and Bilbo were 'friends', whatever that meant.

"Bilbo Baggins," now the elf seemed to feel some emotion, as his pitch rose over her name, before continuing, “Is a truly remarkable hobbit. She is brave, kind and strong."
Thorin grew impatient, snapping, “I know all this, khulm.”

"Then you must know too that she is loyal.” The elf spat, fire suddenly bursting through his voice, his emotion unsettling Thorin somewhat. “You must know that her love is, once earned, true. Now, I know that you must have done something to deserve such love but, after hearing the way you spoke to her, I cannot think what that could be. You are a fool, Master Dwarf, and I will not have you hurt her.”

Thorin clenched his fists, glowering at the elf. "I would never hurt her."

The elf scoffed, eyes alight as he spoke. "You lie, dwarf, for you already have."

With those words, the elf turned on his heel and stormed out, leaving Thorin stood mute in his cell.

He plopped down onto his bed, sitting in a shell-shocked silence.

Damn tree-shagger might have a point.

Perhaps he shouldn't have pressed Bilbo the way he did. She shouldn’t have risked herself like that for him, it was true, but to raise his voice and address her so violently was unforgivable. Especially when he had promised to love her and keep her safe.

As the darkness swallowed him and he curled up to sleep, Thorin knew that his hobbit could not forgive his conduct, and that he would surely rot down in this cell, alone, never to see the imposing mass of Erebor, the Company, his sister, his nephews, or his One, ever again. He couldn’t even call up his anger, or his hate - all he was left with was emptiness.

And it tore at him worse than anything had before.

*

She wished there were lights. Candles, even, tiny flickering flames to guide the way. Not this, this seeping, almost gooey darkness draped over the stones. It was harrowing.

Bilbo stood outside the passage leading down to Thorin’s cell. Legolas was beside her; Ori and Bofur remained hidden in his rooms. He had sent the guards off on a wild goose chase, and they had at least a little while before they returned.

"Right." Bilbo said, squaring her shoulders as she clutched at the box of lock picks.

Legolas smiled. “It will be fine.” He told her, and Bilbo knew he wasn’t just talking about learning to pick locks.

She had to work on Thorin’s cell because he was the only one with a bed and blankets she could hide in when the guards brought around lunch and dinner, before she unlocked the cell and went to free the Company. Hopefully Ori and Bofur, as well as Legolas, would have come up with an escape plan before then, as tonight was a feast and possibly their only opportunity to flee.

She nodded, tensing her whole body as she looked down the bleak, dark passage.

"Yes. I suppose so. Just fine."

With that, she was off, storming down the passage and deliberately not thinking about the infuriating, angry, damn unreasonable dwarf waiting at the other end.
So, according to the internet, 'Khulm' = 'Elf'.

Also, check this truly staggering fem!Bilbo fic out:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Bilbo knew Thorin could hear her coming before he could see her, her footsteps shattering over the stone walls. She straightened her spine, holding her chin high, and kept walking.

She stopped outside his cell, snapping around on her heels to face the bars.

He was sat on the bed, staring at her, but she refused to make eye contact.

Instead, she popped open the silver box of lock picks, selecting one at random. It was long, cold in her fingers, and smooth - it felt a bit like an embroidery needle, which brought her a strange sense of comfort. She’d always been rather good at embroidering doilies.

Then she knelt by the lock and inserted the pick, frowning as she found her attention divided between ignoring Thorin and trying to pick the lock.

He cleared his throat, but she did not react, jiggling the pick in the lock as before.

"Bilbo?"

His tone surprised her slightly, his voice more uncertain than she had expected, but she still ignored him, jiggling the pick with more vigor.

"Bilbo?" He asked again, and she sighed, turning her head to look at him.

"What?" She snapped, regretting her severity slightly, but not much. “I’m busy, you know.”

"Bilbo, I - I…” He trailed off, and she snorted, frustrated.

"Don’t interrupt me if you have nothing to say!" She straightened up, hands on her hips.

"I do have something to say." He grumbled, somewhat petulantly.

"Go on then. Out with it!" She tutted, glaring.
"I… That is, I…” He stumbled, and Bilbo felt her irritation magnify.

"Oh, for Eru’s-"

"Bilbo, would you let me speak?!" He interrupted her. “I’m sorry!” He yelled the words, rising up out of his bed to stand before her, very close.

"I’m sorry." He spoke again, this time more quietly.

Bilbo blinked.

She hadn’t been expecting that, but still the dwarf was not done.

"I shouldn’t have spoken to you that way. I should have trusted you, about the elf, and I should have understood why you did what you did. But, I… Bilbo, I…” He trailed off again, running a hand through his hair in stress, then reaching the same hand out through the bars to cradle her head, entwining his fingers in her hair instead.

"Bilbo, Bilbo, Bilbo, my Bilbo. Do you have any idea how much you scared me?"

She frowned.

"Scared you?"

Thorin nodded, drawing in a deep breath. Bilbo knew this couldn’t be easy for him - he was proud, after all, so she was interested to see how much he would give away. Not just interested. She was utterly invested.

"You could have died." He breathed, “For me."

And then she understood.

He had been afraid for her.

How had she not expected that?

Reaching through the bars, she grabbed his braids and pulled his head towards her, crushing their lips together. Their teeth clacked, but it didn’t matter, and Bilbo licked her way into his mouth, moaning softly when she tasted him, and again when he sucked on her tongue. She could smell him, that same dark smell of earth and musk, the smell that reminded her both of home and of strange places she’d never been.

When they parted for air, faces still very close, Bilbo whispered, “I’m sorry, too, dear heart. I’m not sorry for trying to save you, but I’m sorry for keeping a secret from you.”

She squeaked when Thorin pressed a kiss to the tip of her nose, failing to suppress a shocked giggle, as she looked up into his eyes, warm and full of love.

"Do you remember," He began, hands sliding down between the bars to brush her waist and pull her closer to him, “When we were eating dinner, just before the wargs attacked us?"

Bilbo nodded.

"I said something to you, in the language of the dwarrows, you remember? I said, ‘Menu tessu.’”

Bilbo nodded again, smiling at the memory.
"It means: you are everything."

—-

It was gratifying, Bilbo thought, that he hadn’t pressed her to tell him about Legolas. It meant that there had been sincerity in his apology; so she would tell him, in a little while. At the right moment.

As for now, her knees ached from being in contact with the stone floor, and she sighed in frustration, trying hard to get the damn lock open. Thorin had gone back to sitting on his bed when she’d broken away from him. He sat with his knees drawn up and his hands looped around them, and if she hadn’t know better she would’ve said that he was staring at her. The knowledge made her flush a little.

Okay. Time to regroup.

She removed the pick from the lock, reinserting it and turning it in the way she had before, then changing the movement slightly. With a sharp click, the lock opened, and she grinned, looking at Thorin, who raised a nonchalant eyebrow.

She stuck her tongue out at him. Damn dwarf.

Her reward was his indignant snort, followed by a wide grin. Ah, how she loved that smile.

Gently, she pushed open the heavy door, pocketing the box of picks and letting it fall shut behind her, barreling into the arms of the King Under the Mountain himself.

He wrapped his arms around her waist, and she put her arms around him, pressing a kiss into the dip at the base of his neck. He made a strangled noise, as she kissed his throat, feeling the vibrations of his groan against her lips. His arms around her tightened, as she tilted her head to let him press his lips to hers, allowing his tongue to enter her mouth, yanking on his braids to make him growl.

He did growl, and she yelped as he picked her up by the waist, depositing her on the bed and leaning down so that his face was before hers, a glint in his eye.

"I've missed you." He breathed, his lips close enough to hers for her to feel his breath on them, and she leant forwards to kiss him, but he pushed back on her shoulders so that she fell onto her back, pinning her arms to the bed in one swift movement before she could protest. Chuckling, he lay over her, the whole length of his body pressed against her, and kissed her nose again.

"Did you miss me?" He asked, his eyes glittering mischievously.

"Yes!" Bilbo blurted. She ached for him; she wanted his lips all over her, wanted to taste him and to touch every inch of him. She squirmed, trying to free her arms, and he chuckled again, before pulling her wrists up so he could hold them in one hand, the other hand wandering down her neck. Her giggle at the tickling sensation caused a huge grin to grow over his features, and he spent a moment running his fingers lightly up and down her neck, while she squirmed and laughed at the almost unbearable sensation. His lips followed, teeth grazing her neck as he ran them down to the base of her throat, where he planted one last kiss, before continuing the journey of his hand, over her sternum and to her navel. She groaned, as his hand grazed under the waistband of her trousers, skimming from hip to hip.

Unthinkingly, she parted her legs further, wrapping her thighs around his waist and bucking her hips into him. He gasped, a sound she’d never heard him make before,-countering her hips with his own and leaning down to claim her mouth again with his tongue.

That was when they heard footsteps coming down the passage.
Thorin swore, releasing her arms and quickly bundling her into a ball and throwing the blanket over her, before sitting before her, so that it looked like she was a pile of bedcovers, and nothing more.

It was uncomfortably hot under the blanket, bundled up, and Bilbo could barely hear what was going on as she struggled to regulate her breathing despite the pounding of her heart in her head. Eru, but she wanted to shuck off the blanket and have her dwarf, right this instant - but such thoughts were hardly proper. Anyway, she had to wait for the guard to leave.

Bilbo didn’t notice that she was dropping off, but soon she was asleep.

Chapter End Notes

So this chapter sort of ran away with me - I was all up for some emotions and arguing but Bilbo and Thorin were just like: 'No. We want to have sex now.' And that was fine by me.
Thorin watched the guard walk away, sat stoically on his bed as he eyed the meal he’d been left skeptically. It seemed gloopy.

No, he would not be giving it any of his attention.

He had something far more interesting to see to.

Turning, he began to unwrap the hobbit from inside her blankets, smiling when he saw that she had fallen asleep. For a moment, he debated whether or not to wake her up. He wanted to continue their previous activities, very much, and he wanted to speak to her - but she slept so peacefully.

No. He would let her rest.

Carefully, he rearranged the blankets over her so that she was covered again, gently stroking her mop of dark golden curls and planting a kiss on her forehead. She sighed in her sleep. He picked the courting braid up from where it lay behind her ear, careful not to pull it, and ran his fingers along it, kissing the bead when his fingertips reached it and tucking it back behind her ear. She hummed, a soft, gentle sound, and then was silent again, chest rising and falling.

He, very gently, held the bundle of sleepy hobbit in his arms, the rhythmic rise and fall of her chest lulling him into a wakeful, dozing slumber.

* 

Bilbo was woken by the sound of someone hissing her name.

"Bilbo!" The voice went. “Bilbo!"

Groggily, she sat up, constricted by blankets twisted around her arms and by the arms of Thorin, having to wriggle to be able to move to sit. When she did, she saw Legolas, stood before the cell.

Rubbing her eyes, she smiled in greeting.
"It is time." The elf informed her, as she slipped from the dwarf’s embrace and reached for the tin of lock picks, pulling one out and (not so adroitly) opening the cell door.

From his grumbling, she could tell that Thorin had awoken, so she waited for him to get up before pushing the door open and vacating the cell. They headed down the passage, a heavy silence settling between them, and made their way to the cells where the Company were being held.

Ori and Bofur were already there, and Bilbo set about opening the doors at once, the Company over the moon to be free. Deliberately, she freed Dwalin first, to allow he and Ori to reunite, because the moment she freed Dori she knew he would be after the warrior with a vengeance.

She was not wrong.

—-

A good while later, when Oin and Gloin had managed to detain a howling Dori and Ori was nursing a bemused Dwalin, Legolas turned to Bilbo.

"We worked out an escape plan, but you might not like it…"

He informed her that there was an entrance into the river, used as a trade route to Lake Town. He then suggested that the dwarrows be put in barrels and sent down the river.

There was an outraged uproar at this point.

Balin’s comment was the calmest, “Are ye sure that’s wise, laddie?”

Others were less tactful. Gloin, in particular, cried, “Mahal, that’s the stupidest idea I ever heard!” (And then repeated the words several times to Oin, who, once he understood, agreed vehemently.)

Bofur looked up from where he was cuddling - and Bilbo would refer to it as cuddling - Fili, causing a lull in the rucus by yelling, “Oy! I know it sounds like a bad idea, because it is, but it’s the only way out, and I ain’t havin’ you all rotting in these cells!”

Fili agreed, “I’m with Bo on this one, lads.”

Of course, he swayed Kili, whose admission swayed many of the rest. Eventually, a wide-eyed Ori was the one to crack Dwalin, and that - as well as the insistence of a particular hobbit - made up Thorin’s mind. They were going down the river.

Legolas led the way, then, taking them down murky passages, through the gloom, until they came to an empty room full of barrels, mushy apples coating the floor.

"Quickly, we have little time," he told them, “The king and his guards are feasting, but we cannot risk being caught. Open up a barrel each and get in."

Grousing and moaning at taking orders from an elf, the dwarrows complied, each pouring apples out of barrels and hopping inside in their stead. Bilbo stood by Legolas as he sealed each barrel with candlewax, watching as the Company were parted. Dori fussed over his brother, but eventually was subdued and persuaded to get in a barrel; Bofur and Fili had a long and overly personal goodbye; Bombur and Bifur had a gruff and touching word with each other; Ori and Dwalin shared a rather sweet moment - but then they were all in barrels.

Except for Thorin and Bilbo.
Bilbo turned to Thorin, kissing him softly, brushing her lips lightly against his.

"I'll see you soon, my love."

He placed his hands on her waist, pressing his lips to hers once more like he was a drowning man and she was air itself, before replying, "Be safe."

Legolas sealed his barrel, when Kili tapped Bilbo’s shoulder. She yelped, having not noticed that he was not yet in a barrel; she should have, but when she’d seen Fili sealed in she’d assumed Kili had been too. Stupid!

"Kili!" She noted that he was pale. “Are you alright?"

The dwarf swallowed, his round eyes meeting hers.

"Bilbo, I…" He trailed off for a second, seeming to steel himself. “I’m scared."

Bilbo’s heart ached. “Oh, Kili, why?"

"Well, you see, it’s just that…" He looked at Bilbo again, and she placed a soothing hand on his arm, which he relaxed into. “I don’t really like small spaces. Or the dark."

Bilbo smiled gently, rubbing the dwarf’s arm and nodding. “I see. I’m sorry, Kili, this is going to be difficult; but you’ll be fine."

His big eyes shone. “Will I, though?"

Bilbo couldn’t help but gather the princeling up in an embrace. “Of course, sweetling, you’ll be absolutely fine."

She felt him relax, letting him go after a moment.

"Here," she said, as inspiration struck her, “No one said you had to be alone."

Turning to Legolas, who she noted was watching the dwarf with an odd expression on his face, she told him, “Kili and I will be sharing a barrel."

The elf’s eyebrow shot up questioningly.

"Bilbo?"

"Oh, for Eru’s sake, Legolas. Don’t be so ridiculous."

The elf smiled, his skepticism dissolving. “Sorry."

He turned to Kili, and Bilbo noticed a hesitancy in his movement, a waver in his voice, as he asked, “Master Dwarf, please, would you get into the barrel?"

Bilbo nearly died when Kili took in a deep breath, reached out to touch the elf’s arm and said, “Call me Kili."

Legolas didn’t move for a moment, before smiling. “Please get into the barrel, Kili."

Bilbo thought that they remained standing there for a moment longer than necessary, before Kili had clambered into the barrel, pulling his knees up so that Bilbo could sit across him.
Bilbo turned to her old friend now, and she could see her parting sorrow mirrored over his features.

“Cormamin niuve tenna’ ta elea lle au’.” Legolas whispered, his voice trembling as he moved to embrace Bilbo.

“Lissenen ar’ maska’lalaith tenna’ lye omentuva, hallaer.” She sighed, trying not to focus on the pang in her chest or the sting of tears in her eyes.

She felt Leoglas chuckle as they moved apart, as he replied, “Aier, amin mela lle.”

Bilbo knew exactly what he meant, and replied in her own tongue. “And I you, my dearest friend.” She paused, trying to work out how to say what she needed to. “Legolas, you need to understand that you are my dearest friend, and that there is nothing you owe me, nothing to be sorry for.”

The elf shook his head. “No, Bilbo, I did you wrong.”

"Yes.” Bilbo reached out to hold his hands, trying to impress her message upon him. “You did. But I have forgiven you, and you have to stop carrying this guilt.”

"But Bilbo, you were so… You’d just escaped the most terrible torment, survived an unimaginable ordeal, and you relied on me. I let you down when you needed me the most!”

"I relied on you, yes! But you never let me down. Even when you explained it to me, you were still there for me, still there when I needed someone to talk to - for Eru’s sake, you spent months in Rivendell, away from your kingdom, just to take care of me!”

"I failed you.”

"It wasn’t your fault!” Bilbo yelled, losing her patience. “I was upset, yes, when you told me that we could no longer see each other in that way, but it was never your fault! By Eru, Legolas, you can’t help being attracted to males!”

"But I made a commitment to you, and broke it…”

"You had to. It would have been far crueler to string me along.”

Legolas sighed, pulling Bilbo into another embrace. “You may not be my One, hobbit, but you, too, are my dearest friend.”

Bilbo smiled, tears tracking their way down her cheeks as she realised she might not see the elf again for a long while.

"Take care of yourself, dear heart.”

"I will.”

With that, she dropped into the barrel atop a stunned-looking Kili (she’d forgotten he was there), and sealed into the dark. She heard his breathing spike and reached out for his hand, gripping it as it trembled, clammy and cold.

Then she felt her stomach drop as the barrels were released into the river.
Translations:
“Cormamin niuve tenna’ ta elea lle au’.” = "My heart shall weep until it sees thee again."
“Lissenen ar’ maska’lalaith tenna’ lye omentuva, hallaer." = "Sweet water and light laughter until we next meet, tall one."
“Aier, amin mela lle.” = "Little one, I love you."

I am no expert, far from it, so feel free to correct me on the Sindarin...

And what did you think of Legolas' backstory? (They went out for a while but he realised he was gay and broke it off - he feels really bad because she was in an emotionally unstable place at the time, but she's gotten over it and now they are very firm friends. Based on a true story, folks.)

Oh and, as ever, check out this awesome fem!Bilbo fic:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Legolas could hear the exact moment at which the guards discovered their prisoners were missing. There was an uproar from the dungeons, so loud it could be heard throughout the palace, and then a mass exodus as they searched frantically to find the dwarrows. No one came to search his chambers, so he sat, silently, awaiting the summons of his father.

Sure enough, there was a knocking on the door.

"Enter." He spoke, his regal voice echoing in the now very empty-feeling room.

A harried looking servant made his way in, bobbing his head. Legolas knew him; his name was Maeglin, and he usually worked doing odd jobs in the kitchens. He was out of breath, and out of place - the first sign that all was chaos.

"You have been summoned." He gasped, and Legolas realised he had no idea how to address him or the correct title to put before his father’s name. Of course not. The closest Maeglin had come to either the King or the Prince was fetching the seasoning for their supper. It was a shame, too - Legolas had observed that he was competent, and had a nice way about him.

Legolas nodded.

"Thank you, Maeglin. You can go back to the kitchens now."

The other elf’s eyes shot wide in shock, and he mumbled something, bobbing his head and leaving the room backwards, nearly tripping over his own feet. Legolas took a moment to smile - and to allow Maeglin to compose himself before returning to his duties - before he, too, exited the room and began to make his way along the corridor.

It was quiet.

Not the usual quiet of the gloomy halls, no - it was quiet as though there was no one around. And there was no one around. The corridors were unusually empty. Of course, that suggested that
everyone had gathered somewhere else.

Legolas turned the corner into the main hall.

Ah.

Here they all were.

It was chaos.

Elves were running to and fro, shouting and scurrying. There was no conceivable organisation. It was all very un-elvish (and undignified).

Legolas’ eyes were drawn to his father, sat on his throne and coldly looking down upon the scene unfolding before him.

He felt Tauriel come to stand by his side, her hair almost looking like flames out of the corner of his eye, as she filled him in on what was going on.

"The dwarrows have escaped." She barked in her matter-of-fact way. "And now we have received news that the Pale Orc is on his way to Mirkwood."

Legolas turned to her, frowning. The second piece of information was unexpected.

"How long do we have?"

"Yesterday, I was told we had a day at best."

Oh, so an attack was impending.

Then why were they so disorganised?

Legolas frowned, and Tauriel nodded, as if she could hear his thoughts and was agreeing. Quickly, Legolas led the way up to his father’s throne, and when Thranduil saw him, he smirked.

"My son, how good of you to grace me with your presence." His voice was cold and harsh.

Legolas furrowed his brow, unsure of the subtext of the comment. "Father, the attack of the orc is impending; we need to organise our forces."

"What a novel idea, Legolas. I had not thought of it." Again, his voice was unusually brusque and detached.

Legolas could’ve hissed in frustration. “Father! We don’t have time for this."

"You will not tell me what we do and do not have time for." Now an edge entered his voice, his eyes glinting dangerous.

Legolas faltered, but retained his conviction in his voice. “We are about to be attacked."

"If you wish to state the obvious, perhaps tell me exactly why you freed the dwarrows." Ah. So his father had worked it out; honestly, it wouldn’t have been difficult. Legolas had been hoping to avoid scrutiny, and hence not be found out, but that evidently was not an option.

His actions did not change the fact that there was an impending Orc attack.
"That is not relevant now."

"It is treachery." The words were so cold, so utterly terrible that Legolas was jolted in his very core.

"Father!"

"No! I am not your father. I am your king, and you have betrayed me. Tauriel, take him to the cells!"

Tauriel froze, eyes widening as she regarded her king, unwilling to do what he said.

"That is an order, Tauriel."

Resigned, Legolas raised his arms, allowing Tauriel to lead him to the dungeons. The chaos around them had ceased, every elf frozen, watching as the Prince of Mirkwood was led away to the dark cells. Maeglin, and many others like him, felt anger rise in them at the actions of their King towards the Prince, who embodied kindness and justice at many points - many others felt a smug satisfaction that the Prince was finally being exposed as a fake and would have to get off his high horse.

When Tauriel reached the dungeons, she stopped, looking about. They were alone, but there was no knowing who was watching. Innocuously, she hissed, "Strike me."

Legolas frowned, not turning, so as not to give away that they were speaking, and not responding.

"Strike me, run to the barrels, and I will seal you in and send you to Lake Town."

"I cannot leave my people at a time like this."

"What good would you be locked in a cell?"

Legolas considered that, nodded, and turned, striking Tauriel hard across her face, so as to ensure there would be no doubt that he had attacked and overpowered her. He then ran, feet flying beneath him, and heard her give chase, down to the cellars. He wrenched open a barrel, pouring out apples, which thudded over the stone floor, and jumped in, having to curl up tight. Tauriel paused over him, before fastening the lid with candlewax and opening the trapdoor.

She had said, "Quel marth."

* 

The barrel was rocking and bobbing; Bilbo could hear the slosh of water as it crashed against the wood. Hobbits have an inbuilt fear of drowning, so she closed her eyes tight and burrowed her head into Kili until she accustomed to the strange movement.

The dwarf was tense, still, his grip tight around Bilbo.

When she realised that she was not, in fact, going to die, she looked up - although she couldn’t see in the dark barrel - and spoke.

"Kili?" She asked tentatively, not sure if he wanted to speak.

"Yes?" He replied, and she could hear his smile.

"Well, I hope you don’t mind my asking, but… You see, it’s just that, as I understand it, Erebor is a… mountain?"

There was no response from the dwarf, so she kept going.
"And well, you see, I was just thinking that, under a mountain, it could be quite dark… and there might be some small spaces…"

"I know." His words were heavy.

There was silence for a moment, and then he spoke again.

"I know," he repeated, his voice cracking slightly. "But all the other dwarrows used to say I wasn’t a proper dwarf, and I suppose they were right."

"What?" Bilbo asked, confused. Not a proper dwarf?

"They used to tease me," Kili whispered, as though these were words he’d always held inside and never spoken aloud. "The other dwarrows, when we were young, because I didn’t like the dark. And then they did again, later, when I couldn’t grow a beard, and I got taller instead of wider, and I learnt to shoot arrows instead of wield axes." He paused, inhaling deeply. "I’m not a proper dwarf, Bilbo, and I cannot stay in Erebor. I shame the line of Durin."

Bilbo gasped, reaching out to whack what she hoped was Kili’s arm. "Kili! The other dwarrows may have said bad things about you, but you must never say them about yourself!"

Kili replied wryly, sadness saturating his voice, "Not even if they’re true?"

Bilbo sighed, slightly regretting her violent reaction and squeezing his hand. "Listen, Kili, I don’t know about dwarrows and their ways, but I can tell you that, among hobbits, you’d be quite a catch."

"Really?" Kili asked, his tone brightening somewhat.

"Oh yes. I imagine you’d have quite the train of young lasses and lads proffering you with flowers and cakes and the like."

Kili chuckled at that image, but Bilbo knew that she could never solve this issue; it was one Kili would have to overcome himself.

"They’re very proud of you." She whispered, in the hope that the knowledge would help him along. "Thorin and Fili. They love you. And from what I’ve seen, you are brave, strong and you bring light to the darkest of places. You have no need to fear the dark, Kili - you light it up for everyone around you. The only shame is that of those who would tell you otherwise."

They didn’t speak much after that, and Bilbo wasn’t sure if Kili had believed what she’d said, or even cared what she thought.

Chapter End Notes

So, "Quel marth" = "Good luck".

Check this out, it's a brilliant fem!Bilbo fic:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
The quiet slosh and slap of water against the sides of the bobbing barrel was rhythmic, lulling Bilbo into that dreamlike, dozy state one enters just before sleep. Being a hobbit, with their inbuilt aversion to water, she couldn’t quite drop off, but she dozed nonetheless. Sighing, she closed her eyes, for it was too dark to see anyway, resting her head against Kili’s chest. It was surprisingly warm in the barrel, and he was surprisingly soft.

She felt him relax as she closed her eyes, and felt his arm awkwardly maneuver through the tight space to wrap around her, his forehead resting against the top of her head as he, too, found himself suspended in the moment just before sleep.

The gentle bobbing of the barrel through the water was oddly soothing, as Bilbo found herself being dragged down into the depths of unconsciousness. It was so warm and dark, the soft lapping of waves against the barrel becoming a noise detached from its meaning, as she began to forget that she was surrounded by water, her mind calmed by its sound.

Just before she fell deep into sleep, she jolted, in that way you do sometimes.

The change was instant.

The barrel began rocking harder, its movements more violent as bobbing turned to all-out rocking. Kili stiffened, and his movement caused the barrel to crash onto its side, so that Bilbo was on top of him instead of next to him. She felt him begin to panic, felt him catch his breath and his heart rate race, as he began to move, as though he were trying to rock the barrel back up and right its angle.

Before she could say anything, there was a great cracking sound, followed by a sharp cry from Kili.

Suddenly, water was filling the barrel, cold, and with it rose panic in Bilbo’s chest, as she felt Kili’s arm around her tighten, yanking her out of the barrel with him. She saw that a rock had smashed into the barrel, directly behind him, leaving it broken.
She then noticed the blood trailing behind him as they kicked through the water, and how his hold on her was weakening.

Abruptly, his grip went lax as his hand slipped away; Bilbo reached out to grab him, but missed, and he began to descend, down into the darkness of the river.

Her lungs felt like they were burning, so Bilbo kicked with all her might, pushing down her abject terror and kicking as hard as she could, breaking the surface of the water and gulping down as much air as she could. Then she dived back into the river.

Unused to swimming, because hobbits avoid water, as a rule - and with good reason, she thought - she felt all her muscles ache as the water pulled at her from all around. She reached out with her arms, kicking wildly, and trying not to let the current claim her. It was hard, and, inch by inch, she felt herself being pushed further downstream.

There!

In the darkness, she saw a flash of colour.

Kili!

She pushed herself down further, doing her best to ignore the strange pressure in her skull and ears, the burning in her lungs. White spots seared themselves into her vision, and she fought the urge to implode. Kili was close; she hooked an arm around him, using the last of the strength in her arms to push him up, then kicking with her legs until she surfaced beside him. She gripped him tightly, but couldn’t feel him moving.

Panic began to bubble within her again, as she looked about and realised that the relentless current was dragging them faster now - the banks of the river were too far for her to swim, if she had to carry Kili, even in water.

That was when a grin broke out over her face.

Dwarrows!

There they were, on the shore - Bofur, Bifur and Dwalin - holding out a long branch further upstream.

Bilbo braced herself, watching it draw nearer as the current sucked at her, never letting her iron grip loosen around Kili, and grabbed the stick when she rushed before it, the dwarrows dragging the pair of them towards the land.

She scrambled up the banks, sloppy with mud, dragging Kili’s limp body behind her and laying him down on the dirt.

"Kili?!" She shouted, voice raw from the cold water.

"KILI?!"

Bifur was beside her then. She didn’t know what he was doing, but watched in horror as he placed his hands on the young dwarf’s chest, pushing down quickly several times and grunting in Khuzdul.

Bofur came to sit beside Bilbo where she knelt on the ground, holding her shuddering form, absorbing her tremors into his warmth and murmuring, also in the secret language of the dwarrows, as he watched Kili’s unmoving body being administered to by Bifur. Dwalin crouched on the other
side of Kili, his whole frame taught and razor-sharp, his eyes focused solely on the princeling.

It seemed like hours later that Kili spluttered and sat up.

Bilbo let out a breath she didn’t know she was holding, as Dwalin gathered the dwarf up in what looked like a bone-breaking embrace.

Once he had been released from said embrace, Bilbo noticed how pale he was, his face pallid. Quickly, she asked him to take off his shirt, not even blushing as she did so, to expose the injury to his back.

When he did, they all stared in silence for a moment.

The rock had scraped off a layer of the skin, leaving a large area of his back raw and bloody. Quickly, the five cast around for things to use to bandage the wound, giving up extraneous clothes - overshirts and scarves and the like - to wrap around the wound, after cleaning it as best they could with the river water. Yet Bilbo knew, if untended, it would become infected. Were they in the mountain caves, she could have found a remedy for such a thing, but she was not used to survival in the forests, not familiar with many of the plants not indigenous to the Misty Mountains or the Shire - she felt horribly helpless.

Looking around, she began to realise that a good proportion of the Company were missing. As though he were reading her mind, Bofur told her, "We hit that rock too, lassie. My guess is that the others didn't and continued up to where we were supposed to wash up."

"Aye," Dwalin added, his deep voice serious and heavy, "But as it stands we don't know where they are. Gloin, Oin, Nori, Dori, Balin, Bombur, Thorin, Fili, Ori..." He trailed off, pain evident in his voice.

Bilbo felt her every muscle tense at his words. He was right. The others were, at the present moment, lost to them.

They were alone.

A shout from behind her had her wheeling around.

"Bilbo!"

She could hardly believe what she was seeing. There, floating through the river, blonde hair pooled around him, was Legolas. The remains of a barrel, obviously having encountered the same rock they had, bobbed alongside him in the water.

"Bilbo!"

Oh, yes, the stick.

In the nick of time, she grabbed the stick, using it to haul the elf ashore. How the elf managed not to get any mud on himself was both a mystery and a miracle - Bilbo was caked in the stuff.

He stood before her, hair dripping, sodden robes clinging to his person, but before she could ask him what on Arda he was doing here, he was by Kili’s side. Blood had already soaked through his makeshift bandages, and Legolas crouched next to him. Immediately, the elf’s hands went out to peel the clothes off the dwarf and inspect the wound, when Dwalin growled.

"We don't need the help of an elf."
Almost simultaneously, everyone expect Bifur rolled their eyes, as Legolas continued anyway. His sharp intake of breath upon seeing the wound was his only reaction, before he abruptly stood up and walked away into the forest, leaving the five stunned behind him.

In a flash, he was back, holding some broad, dark green leaves and a tiny purple flower. Placing the leaves over Kili’s back, where they stuck - whether due to their own natural adhesive or the blood, Bilbo didn’t know - plucking the petals off the flower and extracting some small, white ball from its centre, turned to Kili.

"Open." He instructed, placing the object on the dwarf’s tongue. “That," he explained, “Was for the pain, and the leaves are to prevent infection." With that, he wrapped Kili back up in the mixed fabrics that were serving as bandages, helping him to his feet.

"We need to get to Lake Town." He spoke, sharply. “There’s no time to waste."

"What do you mean?" Bilbo asked, even as Legolas began to walk in what she assumed was the direction of Lake Town, wherever that was. (Bilbo didn’t know where the river went, she just knew that it was away from Mirkwood, and that had seemed like a good enough plan at the time.)

"Orcs have attacked Mirkwood." Legolas told her, stopping. “My father knew I had helped you and had me arrested; I escaped through the trapdoor like you did."

“Ed’ i’ear ar’ elenea!" Bilbo exclaimed, not noticing that she’d spoken in Sindarin instead of the Common Tongue, nor that the dwarrows had all jolted around her. Legolas did not mention it, continuing:

"When the Pale Orc discovers that Thorin is no longer being held in Mirkwood, he will work out how you escaped and set out for Lake Town, I am sure of it. We must find the rest of the dwarrows, before it is too late."

Bilbo nodded, beginning to walk quickly, as they all picked up their pace.

Kili groaned, his breath juddering.

Legolas stopped, appraising him thoroughly, before muttering, “Esta." In one swift motion, he gathered up Kili in his arms, despite squawking from Bifur and Dwalin, and guffawing from Bofur.

They were faster that way, Kili’s head drooping as he nodded off, Legolas, Bilbo noted, very determinedly not looking at the sleeping dwarf in his arms.

Chapter End Notes

Soooo...
“Ed’ i’ear ar’ elenea!” = ”By the sea and stars!”
“Esta” = ”Rest"

And check out this fem!Bilbo fic - it's still awesome XD :
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Hello! How are you?
Here's the next chapter.
Now, I'm afraid I must tell you that I'll be leaving for my holiday this Thursday, so this could be the last update for two weeks to a month. I'm very sorry, but please don't forget that I love you and the FIRST THING, yes the FIRST THING I do when I get back (other than pass out from jetlag and have a cup of tea) will be write another chapter, okay?
So, I just want to say thank you for those who have left kudos and comments, and for just reading, it means a lot - I hope to see you soon(ish).
Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Something was decidedly not right. Bilbo had reached this conclusion based on indisputable evidence:

1. The weather was pleasant.
2. Nothing had attacked any member of their little group.
3. They were making good time, and should arrive at Lake Town by nightfall.

All things considered, this was very suspicious.

The sun was shining warmly, the heat pleasantly carried by a cool breeze; the river gurgled happily, winding through not spectacular but not horrifically diseased woodland; there was lilting birdsong and her feet didn’t ache.

Yes, this was very worrying indeed.

Of course, not all was rosy. Far from it - Bofur walked in uncharacteristic silence, brow furrowed as he worried about Fili and his brother, while Dwalin and Bifur walked at the back of the group, secretly growling about Legolas’ shameless manhandling of Kili.

Bilbo didn’t mind afore-mentioned manhandling, instead finding it rather adorable. Legolas had surreptitiously shifted his hold on Kili, from holding him over his shoulder to carrying him like a bride, when Dwalin and Bifur weren’t looking. Still, however, Bilbo noted that he stoically didn’t look down at Kili, who, in turn, stared up at the elf with his half-conscious eyes.

Bofur elbowed her, gesturing with his eyes to the pair. “Lake Town, two silver pieces.” He whispered.

Bilbo giggled, shaking her head. “That’s hardly appropriate.” She chided him, also in low tones. “Besides, I have no silver, and I’d wager sparks’ll fly before we even get there.”

At that point, Dwalin had loudly cleared his throat, before going back to grousing with Bifur in Khuzdul, so Bilbo and Bofur, both being thoroughly mature and sensible, had dissolved into mirth.
and debated when exactly Bifur and Dwalin would actually turn into gossiping Sackville-Bagginses (which Bilbo had explained), until Dwalin had yelled something about meddling toymakers and jumped-up grocers.

His roar of consternation was obviously louder than he anticipated, because it was followed by Kili crying, “Orcs!” And leaping out of Legolas’ arms, attempting to reach for his arrows. When the dwarrows - and a hobbit who really should have known better - were finished laughing at the spectacle, they went to check the princeling was alright.

Of course, he was more than alright; a rather tall, striking elf-prince was leaning over him, face inches from his, a pink blush spreading over the dwarf’s cheeks.

"Mister Bofur!" Asserted Bilbo triumphantly. “It seems you owe me two silver pieces!"

Bofur guffawed. “Come now, lassie, you never agreed to the bet."

Kili muttered something about the lot of them shutting their mouths, staggering to his feet and swiftly falling over again, straight into the arms of said elf-prince.

 Cue more laughing from Bilbo and Bofur, along with considerable eye rolling courtesy of Dwalin and Bifur.

Words were exchanged between the two lovebirds - which Bilbo would insist on calling them from now on - before Kili begrudgingly allowed himself to be picked back up by Legolas, his face turning red as a tomato.

The rest of the walk was passed amicably, Dwalin and Bifur somewhat thawed by the sight of the prince’s rosy blush.

At nightfall, as Legolas had predicted, they came to a small hill, from which they could see the outline of Lake Town. It appeared to be fairly large - to Bilbo, anyway, who had come from the Shire - but relatively shabby, the buildings made of wood. As they drew nearer, this impression grew; the structures seemed weak and unsteady. When at last they reached the streets, Bilbo noted that the people seemed poorly dressed, hurried and thin. They were all unhappy-looking, and Bilbo thought that the place could do with a clean. It was dirty, making Bilbo think that the people could have very little money or means. Her mind wandered to her (pre-dwarf) bulging pantry in Bag End, far away from here; surely her own personal supply could have fed many people here!

The temperature of the air was dropping, and Bilbo found herself shivering, slightly jealous of Kili, who was snuggled up against Legolas' chest and sleeping. She didn't think his injury had been so bad he had to sleep through everything and snuggle so unashamedly, really - that dwarf was taking advantage of the opportunity to get away with being idle and cuddle up to Legolas, in her mind. Not that she would begrudge him that. Were Thorin here, she would have pressed herself up against him and promptly fallen asleep in his warm arms.

The sight of Kili so comforted brought to her mind her own daughter, back in Rivendell. Her heart gave a sharp pang.

Eru, she missed her. She worried about her. Each moment that she walked further away from her felt strange, heavy. She wanted nothing more than to scoop her up in her arms, to tell her that everything was going to be alright - no, to show her that everything was going to be alright. She had pictured her, playing in the sunshine among the flowers of the Shire, so many times that the image was almost real, playing out in her mind over and over. Yet always, she would remember her thin wrists, her gaunt eyes, her terror - and always she would wonder what her voice sounded like. Absently, Bilbo
stroked her right forearm, wishing more than anything that Melissa was by her side, so she could
know she was safe - but that was ridiculous. Melissa was far safer in Imladris than she ever could be
here. Still, Bilbo missed her, feeling her absence deeply. It was a weight upon her, a stone dragging
her down.

As they wandered, the sky grew darker, the streets emptier.

The group then realised that they had no way of finding the others.

"We must go to the Master." Legolas announced. “He will know where they are.”

"The Master?” Asked Bilbo.

"The master is the leader of Lake Town.” Legolas explained. With that, he led them along the streets,
up to a house that was significantly more grand than the rest. It was large, painted white, with wide
windows and decorations - which seemed almost crude after the ornateness of Thranduil’s Halls -
adorning its surfaces sparsely.

On their way through the gate, guards ran up to meet them. They stood before the door, in what
Bilbo was certain they believed to be a threatening manner.

"Halt!” Called one. “Who enters the dwelling of the Master?”

"It is I,” Legolas replied, in what Bilbo considered to be his most cold and regal voice, “Legolas
Greenleaf, Prince of Mirkwood, with my companions Dwalin son of Fundin, Bifur of the Brothers
‘Ur, Bofur of the Brothers ‘Ur, Bilbo Baggins of the Shire and Kili sister-son of Thorin Oakenshield,
King Under the Mountain.”

Well, if that didn’t sound impressive, Bilbo wasn’t sure what did.

The guard who had spoken seemed to be of the same mind, visibly paling.

"Erm,” He hesitated, looking about to his fellows for help which didn’t come, “Please come in.”

They really should have recognised Legolas, Bilbo thought, or been politer to him, considering that
they lived in such close proximity to Mirkwood. It only made sense.

Thus they were led down the corridor and into a large room, the function of which Bilbo could not
divine; it seemed to be a large, empty room with one chair.

A throne-room? How idiotic.

"Please," The guard spoke, his voice more imploring than commanding, “Wait a moment.”

He was gone then, and after a few minutes a man entered the room, seating himself upon the ‘throne’
at the far end of the room, which Bilbo thought to be plainly ridiculous. Why did anyone need a
whole room for a fancy chair?

"Greetings." He spoke, his voice oily, “Legolas Greenleaf, Prince of Mirkwood. To what do I owe
the pleasure?”

Bilbo took a moment to take in the man. He was opulently fat, she noted, dressed in almost
obscenely decadent furs and tresses. Bilbo instantly disliked him; he had a shrewd glint in his
otherwise flat eyes, which made her feel most uneasy.

Legolas stepped towards the Master, speaking. “I am here to find some of my companions.” He
explained, his voice carefully balanced.

"Oh?" Said the Master. “How odd, to have lost them."

Legolas did not pause, his tone unyieldingly soft and even. “Indeed. I wonder if you might be able to
tell me where they are?”

"But of course." The Master smiled, the expression sliding over his face like fat on a chopping block,
“But first, you must introduce me to these companions I see behind you!”

Legolas turned stiffly, gesturing for them to walk towards him. This was hard for Kili, who could barely stand as it was, but he made the short journey unaided, to avoid the appearance of weakness.

"This is Dwalin, son of Fundin," Legolas said, indicating with his hand, “Bifur of the Brothers ‘Ur, Bofur of the Brothers ‘Ur, Bilbo Baggins of the Shire, and Kili, sister-son of Thorin Oakenshield, King Under the Mountain."

Bilbo thought that it was strange, his referring to Bifur as being one of the Brothers ‘Ur, considering that he was their cousin, not their brother - but she supposed Legolas wouldn't have known that. His name did end in ‘ur’, after all. Why dwarrows couldn't just have sensible family names like hobbits, she would never know. Laregely because they would probably never tell her.

The Master clapped his hands together.

"Ah! I have seen those for whom you seek; why, they were in this very hall not long ago."

"And where are they now?" Asked Legolas, voice strained.

The Master paused for a long moment, evidently enjoying the suspense. “The Inn.” He said, “Where they have been offered free lodgings on account of their honorable quest. However, since these lodgings were offered when there were only nine of them, so I cannot offer you the same courtesy, for tonight at least, for the sake of the innkeeper. However, I am more than happy to offer you a room here, Prince of Mirkwood.”

Bilbo did not miss the fact that he only offered the room to Legolas.

Neither did he, apparently.

"I’m sure we’ll manage.” He said sharply. “I thank you for your hospitality, Master of Lake-Town.”

Then, quick as a flash, he was leading them away from the Master and through the streets, until they arrived at the Inn.

It was quiet, due to the late hour, but open, and so they inquired and were given the dwarrows’ room numbers. It was agreed that Bilbo could share with Thorin, Bifur could room with Bombur, Dwalin with Balin. However, Bofur expressed that he would quite like to be in Fili’s room, and, while Kili didn’t mind, he said he’s hate to get into an awkward situation with either of them, and so would rather room with someone else.

Bilbo noted that Legolas was more than happy to pay for a room to be shared by him and Kili.

So that he could heal him, of course.

*  

Kili felt himself being laid down on a bed.
He opened his eyes, tired beyond belief, to see Legolas stood before him, concern etched into his eyes.

Mahal, he could feel a blush spreading over his cheeks. Damnation!

He looked down, doing anything but meeting the elf's eyes, when he felt the elf catch his chin, forcing him to meet them.

"How do you feel, Prince of Erebor?" Came his question, his eyes burning with that same concern.

Kili grunted, rasping, "Kili. Fine."

The elf smiled, not moving his hand. "I am glad to hear it, Kili."

Oh dear, the things hearing his own name in that voice did to Kili were perfectly scandalous.

"Where are we?" He forced himself to ask, already knowing part of the answer. Wherever they were, they were alone.

"The Inn, in Lake-Town." Legolas answered, his voice soft.

Kili nodded, his eyes drooping. "M cold." He mumbled, as the elf's smile grew.

"Well, we can't be having that, can we?" He replied, and before Kili knew what was happening, Legolas was lying beside him on the bed, arms hooked around him as they both lay on their sides.

Kili stiffened at first, very aware that Legolas - Legolas! - was in bed with him, but soon sleep began to claim and befuddle his mind, so he simply sighed, turning over (with some difficulty) to snuggle into the elf's chest, and fell asleep. He dreamed that he was in Rivendell, with Legolas beside him in bed, but they were doing other, slightly racier, things.

Legolas liked hearing Kili moan his name as he slept. He could feel that the dwarf was having good dreams, because he was pressed up against him, and, although it would be totally inappropriate to do anything about said dreams at the present moment, it was nice to know that he was having such good dreams, and dreaming of him. The elf allowed himself to relax around his little bundle of dwarf, marveling at how warm he felt, and how right it felt to hold onto him in sleep.

So, that's it for a little while, I'm afraid...
Have a good time for the next few weeks and I'll see you :3

And check out this wonderful fem!Bilbo fic that will leave you on the edge of your seat:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
A great roar arose, shaking the streets and rickety buildings of Laketown that night.

It ripped through the walkways, the very plants shuddering and wilting as the rats scurried away in panic from the almighty sound.

It was Thorin.

"Bilbo!"

She had made her way up the corridor, along which all the rooms in the inn were situated, chanting his room number in her head.

Her knock had seemed loud in the empty space, in the quiet of the night.

And now, abruptly, she was engulfed by dwarf, as he dragged her further into the room, muttering in the language of the dwarrows.

He held her tight, her arms pinned to her sides, and she sighed deeply, relaxing into his frame in much the same way as a liquid assumes the shape of its container.

Thorin was warm, and she was freezing, the cold having diffused through her very bones. She was also tired, and it felt incredible to let the tension in her muscles abate for a second.

After a long moment, he released her, his eyes suspiciously round. He placed a kiss on her lips, gently, and she smiled at the feel of his beard scratching her chin. Their foreheads rested together for a moment, before Thorin whispered, low and as though the admission came from his very root: "I have been out of my mind these past few days."
Bilbo kissed him again, her fingers instinctively winding themselves in his hair. "We are fine."

Her use of the pronoun 'we' reminded Thorin of the others - not that he hadn't been harrowed over their fates as well, of course.

"The others?" He asked, his forehead still against Bilbo's, his hands making their way around her waist, his arms crossing tightly around her and pulling her against him.

"They're well." She said, thinking of how to tell him about Kili's state of affairs. "Kili was injured..." She felt Thorin go rigid, "...but Legolas is treating him."

"Legolas?" Thorin asked, his voice dangerously without intonation.

"Yes. Legolas. The two of them are sharing a room now, so he can tend to Kili." Bilbo thought it best to leave out the fact that Legolas might not only be inclined to tend to the needs of Kili's health.

It really was downhill from there.

"My nephew is sharing a room with an elf? Not just an elf, but the Prince of Mirkwood?" Thorin growled dangerously, although he still held her close.

"That's about the gist of it, yes." Bilbo replied, keeping her voice light. She sighed. "Please, dear heart, we can discuss this when the morning comes."

She felt him stiffen, then nod.

"I should go and meet the others." He declared.

Bilbo nodded as they released each other from their embrace, his hand finding hers.

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The dwarrows really were a rowdy lot, Bilbo thought, not for the first time. They were drinking enthusiastically, all going a telling shade of pink. Hobbits, of course, knew how to celebrate, but the dwarrows took it to new heights. They were all singing, eating what Bilbo could only assume was all the food in Lake-town, and drinking. The point really could not be stressed enough. They were drinking a lot.

Ori and Dwalin were sat at the other end of a long table - Dori had stormed away from his brother and was now engaged in a drunken disagreement with Nori. Bilbo suspected it had something to do with Ori's hand on Dwalin's thigh.

Bombur had been overjoyed to see Bofur and Bifur, chiding and fussing, before he had passed out. He was now face-down and snoring into a plate of food.

After that, Bofur and Fili had both happened to go missing from the celebration, not that she thought anyone else had noticed.

Thorin turned to her, mumbling something about something, and she decided it was time for bed. Hoisting up the drunken King Under the Mountain, she bid the dwarrows good night and half-dragged him to the bed, where he promptly fell asleep. So much for the night she had anticipated. Amused, she pulled the blanket over him, deciding to check on Kili before she joined the snoozing drunkard. Honestly, what had she gotten herself into?

Her smile remained on her face as she made her way along the corridor to Kili and Legolas'
chambers.

Knocking, she received no reply, so she tried the handle, finding the door unlocked, and slipped inside.

Her smile only brightened when she saw the two inside the room.

Candles still burned on the tables beside the bed, on each side, the dwarf prince and the elven prince curled up together in a tangle of limbs, both sound asleep.

Quietly, she extinguished the flames, wary of both their flyaway hair being too close to the candles, and left the room softly.

Returning to her chambers, she locked the door, lifting up the blankets and lying beside Thorin. He sighed contentedly in his sleep. Before she knew what was happening, one of his arms had locked around her and, as easily as though she were a doll, she had been lifted to lie on top of the dwarf king himself. His arms clung to her like a child to a toy, and there was no moving, she soon discovered. Instead, she allowed herself to fall asleep to the gentle rhythm of his breathing, the warmth and the slight smell of soap on his hair, as well as ale, reassuring her that everything would be fine.

At least for now.

Chapter End Notes

So yes, this was short and my updates will be sporadic and unreliable from now, I fear. Feel free to yell at me if you want another chapter, as due to the amount of time this has gone without update, I'm not sure if anyone cares to read this story anyway, so will only be continuing it if it seems that someone wishes to read it ^_^ happy holidays everyone!

And I would encourage you to read this truly fabulous fic:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Debt

Chapter Summary

Hangovers and hugs

Chapter Notes

Thanks for reading, and for all the lovely comments last time ^_^- I'm glad there is still an interest in this

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After Bilbo had awoken, and roused a grumpy Oakenshield from his slumber, managing to drag him out of bed and down the stairs, she had taken breakfast with the Company. They were all sat around a table, in various stages of hangover, grumbling and grousing worse than hobbits in a bad tomato year, Bilbo thought. Honestly, they were just hungover. Bad tomatoes were a tragedy, beyond measure. Bofur and Fili, having disappeared early the previous evening, were chirpy in an incredibly suspicious manner. Dwalin was sporting a new black eye, which Bilbo thought, from the motherly way Dori was cooing over Ori and the daggers he was sending Dwalin, was courtesy of one of Ori's brothers. Nori was sat near the two, and as usual, Bilbo didn't know if he was making schemes to expand a criminal empire or steal some of Bombur's scones.

Bifur, not particularly eloquent at the best of times, was nigh-on lifeless; Balin, too, was uncharacteristically quiet, but non-enigmatically, so Bilbo knew he wasn't just thinking as he sometimes did. Bombur, probably due to his snoozing the night before, was cheerfully making his way through incomprehensible amounts of food; some things would never change. Oin and Gloin were both, surprisingly, hardier drinkers than the rest, and so were no less animated than usual, although Oin's loud roars of "Whaaat?!" did have the whole Company groaning.

Had Bilbo not known Thorin well enough, she would have thought him brooding and enraged, but as it was he was simply sleepy. He really had to work on his facial expressions.

Kili and Legolas were missing, a fact that was loudly not acknowledged. Bilbo did notice, however, that Thorin kept turning to watch the staircase a tad more than necessary, so it was on his mind.

It was begrudgingly, slowly and quietly that Bilbo was given a synopsis of the events she had missed in Lake-town. Every so often, Fili would loudly chip in with detail, causing a delay as all the other dwarrows bemoaned his youthful inconsideration.

From what Bilbo could glean from Thorin's informing of her, they had arrived secretly in Lake-town, smuggled in by a Bowman in barrels of fish (she was glad to have avoided that), caught by guards trying to rob the armory, arrested, then welcomed by the Master due to some kind of prophecy. Bilbo put little to no stock in prophecies, but this one seemed convenient and fortuitous, so she was inclined to accept it. After this, they had been put up in the inn and treated to all the delights of the Town. Which, she could deduce from the general atmosphere, were few.
Including Mirkwood, the Goblin Caves and Rivendell, she'd never felt further from the Shire.

Anyway, after she had been briefed, the dwarrows had continued to sit around in silence, and she had risen to check on Kili.

For this, Thorin sent her a grateful look; she knew he was worried for his nephew, but also knew that he didn't want to have to see Legolas just yet. Despite her anger at his anti-elven prejudice, she knew it was best that she check on Kili and remove Legolas from him before Thorin could see him. No one was in the mood for loud arguing today!

Kili awoke slowly, groggily, but warmly. Opening his eyes, he saw nothing, realising that his head was pressed against Legolas' chest. He felt the elf's arms wrapped around him, the rise and fall of his chest under his head. Kili closed his eyes again, just for a moment, as he was in that dozing state when it is so hard to maintain what is expected of you because you simply don't remember. For that moment, he felt very rested, very comforted, and, I dare say, very happy.

Then his eyes opened widely as he realised exactly what he was doing.

He was lying on a bed with Legolas, Prince of Mirkwood! He was lying on Legolas, Prince of Mirkwood!

Mahal save his sorry hide when Thorin found out about this.

Not wishing to wake the sleeping elf, he sat up slowly. When he looked down, he realised that the elf was, in fact, not sleeping. His eyes were wide open, a small smile playing on his lips.

"How long have you been awake?" Kili asked, tentatively.

"Longer than you." Came the reply, as Legolas sat up, hair how Kili imagined molten gold would look, but much paler, as it ran in rivulets over the pillows and flowed as he sat up.

Kili felt his face redden as he realised he had been staring, looking away but not moving from where he was seated, beside the elf on the bed.

"Your injuries are largely healed." The slightly clipped tone of Legolas' voice was a shock to Kili, and he looked up, to find that the small smile was still there. It reassured him.

He realised he would have to give some kind of response.

"Ah. Good. My thanks."

The elf chuckled.

"It was nothing at all, Spangaer." Legolas replied.

Kili's eyes narrowed. "What did you call me?"

Again, the elf chuckled, which was a sound Kili really thought he could get used to.

"Worry not, it means 'Bearded One.'"

"Oh." Kili said, this time growing red at the compliment, for his beard was quite terribly short and had always been a sore spot.
Then the seriousness of his situation dawned upon him.

"My friend," he began, face growing grave, "Were you a dwarf I would say 'demup telek menu', for honour acts through you. You have saved my life, so a life debt is now owed to you."

Legolas began to speak, but Kili silenced him.

"No. This is a matter gravely important to my people. From this day forth, I swear a life debt to you, Legolas of Mirkwood, which may take whatever form you choose." He bowed his head. "By Mahal, so it is done."

Legolas inhaled sharply. "Kili, you do not have to--"

"Nonetheless, it is done." The dwarf cut him off. "So, Legolas of Mirkwood, name your price."

There was an uncomfortable moment when it dawned upon them both just how much power this now gave the elf Prince over the dwarf; life debts were a grave thing indeed to dwarrows, and could not go unfulfilled. One such as Thranduil, Kili knew, would take the chance to claim whatever he could of the dwarrows' kingdom - power and riches were an easy thing to gain from such a debt.

It was to his great relief, therefore, when he heard what Legolas said.

"Spangaer, Kili, I ask nothing more than for you to honour this debt by making sure you are alive at the end of your journey. No matter the outcome, all I would ask is that you live to see past it."

Kili was truly taken aback; the elf could have asked for anything, anything at all, and he asked for this.

Without knowing what he was doing, Kili threw his arms around the elf.

"My friend, you are as honourable as stone!"

A knock came at the door, Bilbo opening it, the pair springing apart in a flurry of motion. She stood, grinning in the doorway, as Kili cleared his throat.

"Bilbo." He said gruffly, in a voice slightly lower than usual, reddening.

Her grin widened.

Meddling hobbit!

"Kili, I just came to check on you." She said, "But I take it you're feeling better."

Thankfully, that was Legolas' cue, and he walked off with Bilbo talking about herbs and health and boring things.

Kili sat on the end of the bed, gathering himself.

Another knock came at the door. This time it swung open to reveal Thorin and Fili, who both gathered Kili up in a not-so-gentle hug, updating him on the events he had missed.

(When Thorin had gone, Fili also updated him on what he'd been up to that night with Bofur, which made Kili go a deeper shade of red than should really be natural, or possible. He didn't even hear any of the gory details. Fili was most disappointed by his brother's mettle.)

Eventually, Kili had been solicited into venturing downstairs and rejoining the Company. They had
all decided to celebrate.

That was when Bilbo gave up, yet again, with the rock-like obstinacy of dwarrows.

Chapter End Notes

Also, read this awesome fem!Bilbo fic (yes that is an order):
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978

And I saw the new film (again) at the IMAX, oh my, I love it so much! Just had to get that out there...
Bilbo had managed to drag Thorin away from the celebrations before he was totally incapacitated this time, as they made their way up the stairs to their room. Bilbo heard a crash and turned to see Kili and Fili dancing on a table together, sending crockery flying everywhere. She shook her head.

"Kili's going to end up even more injured than before if he carries on like this." She tutted, linking her arm through Thorin's.

He snorted. "The lad's just having fun."

She nodded, unlocking their room when they came to it.

As she entered, Thorin sat on the bed and drew in a long breath. "Bilbo," he began, "Your return has brought me great joy. Yet, I am also reminded of the past - how we have had misunderstandings that have led to arguing. This is why I wish to speak to you about something that troubles me, not to anger or insult you, but so that it does not cause miscommunication."

Bilbo stood very still, utterly shocked.

From what she'd just heard, it sounded a lot like Thorin had learnt from his mistakes and was diplomatically trying to be honest with her.

She didn't understand this change of heart, which seemed to defy his very nature. Yet, thinking about it, despite his stubbornness, he had been raised to be a king, and so he had been raised to not only be proud, but to have the ability to be diplomatic if there was a greater priority than his pride.

That all ran through Bilbo's mind in moments, before she smiled easily, sitting beside him on the bed and lacing her fingers through his.

"What troubles you, love?"

"It is... It is the elf." His words were blunt, and Bilbo tried very hard not to become angry by anticipating where he was going. She kept ahold of his hand, waiting for him to elaborate, which he did. "It is hard for me to tolerate, you see; your elves in Rivendell are, while still elves, not known well to me, and I find your attachment to them makes them unworthy of my hate. Your daughter, of
course, I would have as my own, so please do not think this hate blinds me - it has for a long time, but this is changing, I feel, due to you. Nonetheless, the elves of Mirkwood," his voice became darker, "They abandoned my people in our time of need, left my mountain to burn, and now, now, the son of their very king rests in the chambers of my own nephew, second in line to the throne of Erebor."

Bilbo took a moment to absorb that. While she knew his hatred for all elves ran deep, she also knew that he really was trying, for her. She also understood that Legolas' presence would be particularly troublesome for him.

Squeezing his hand, she spoke. "I understand that Legolas' presence here is difficult for you. But, look, he's an old friend of mine. I would trust him with anything. And he is helping Kili. Your nephew probably wouldn't have survived without him."

At that, Thorin sat bolt upright.

"He saved his life?" He asked quickly, his tone businesslike, alarmed.

Bilbo nodded, unsure where this was going.

Abruptly, Thorin surged to his feet. Without a word, he swept away, leaving Bilbo feeling very confused.

She was aware that she should probably go after him and prevent him doing something stupid, but he hadn't seemed to be in an unreasonable mood. Quite the contrary, in fact.

So she sighed and fell asleep.

*

Thorin stormed towards Legolas' chambers with a sinking heart.

Had the elf truly saved Kili's life? This was a grave thing indeed.

He knocked curtly, and was bidden to enter by the elf within.

Thorin couldn't help but walk stiffly as he was greeted by the elf, who gestured that he should sit in a chair beside him. Still, Thorin did so, mustering the strength not to glower too strongly.

"Legolas." He said.

The elf nodded, no smile upon his face. "Thorin."

"It falls to me," Thorin selected each word carefully. "That is to say, Kili is my nephew, so it is my responsibility to protect him from things..." Diplomacy was hard. He cut to the point. "Master Elf, would Kili have survived if you had not come to his aid?"

To his credit, the elf did not dally around his answer. "No, he would not."

Thorin nodded.

He knew what he had to do.

Slowly, he stood, going to look out the window into the dark streets.

"Then it would seem that a life-debt is owed to you, by the line of Durin. I will be the one to pay the
debt, as Kili is too young to bear such a weight." He turned, looking into the elf's eyes, surprised when he elf began to speak instead of listening.

"There is no need." The elf began.

Thorin was about to cut in and argue that there was a need, but Legolas continued. "For a life-debt has already been paid, by none other than your Kili."

Thorin's nostrils flared as he advanced to the elf, roaring, "What did you make him swear to you? What did you make him do?" Absently, he was aware that spittle was flying in the elf's face, but his rage overshadowed his every other impulse; this elf had taken advantage of Kili, injured and vulnerable, too young to know the weight of his words...

"Please." Legolas said calmly, "Master Oakenshield, be still. He swore to me a debt, that in return for my saving his life he would ensure he is still in possession of it at the end of your... venture. That is all."

Thorin's eyes narrowed.

That couldn't be right.

"That is all?"

"Yes."

Thorin snarled, "If you are lying to me, elf..."

"I assure you I am not. You may ask him yourself." Legolas was perfectly composed.

Thorin sat down again, processing this.

"Why?" He asked finally, after a little while.

This elicited a smile from the elf.

"Why indeed." Was his reply, and Thorin felt that it was enough to tell him what he needed to know.

Thorin still wasn't sure about this elf. He knew he had some kind of connection to Bilbo, and inwardly the thought of what that may have entailed rankled him. Yet, in this gesture, he had exhibited honour. Although Thorin suspected his intentions and relationship with Kili, and wholeheartedly did not approve of anything furthering an acquaintance, he knew the elf had done him a service.

Therefore, he decided to extend some kind of amiability.

"Call me Thorin."

"Call me Legolas."

Well, it was a start.

Bilbo would be pleased.
The Master, Bilbo was told, was throwing them a farewell dinner before they had to leave in order to get to Erebor before Durin's Day.

She felt a sense of trepidation towards this development. The Master struck her as a conniving fellow, who she didn't really want to get too involved with.

Thorin sat beside her on the bed, an arm draped around her frame; they had come back up to their room after breakfast and the announcement from one of the Master's messengers; there hadn't really seemed to be anything better to do. Bilbo was glad they could just sit for a little while - she'd missed Thorin's body, of course, but what she'd missed more was simply being close to him, being with him in the simple, everyday ways. She was a hobbit, after all, she was not built for grandiosity.

"The Master did not seem a particularly likable fellow when I met him." She mused.

Thorin chuckled, the reverberation of his voice sending strange shivers through her. "I believe that is understating his character."

She hummed in agreement. "Must we go to this dinner?" She asked hopefully.

Unfortunately, Thorin's reply was, "We must." He sighed, "I'm afraid, for now, we are dependent on his good faith."

Bilbo turned to kiss Thorin's cheek, smiling into the roughness of his beard. "But for now, just for now, I believe we have absolutely nothing to do," she enjoyed the way his breath hitched as she ran a hand through his hair, "And a rather comfortable bed on which to do just that."

"Nothing." Thorin grinned, flipping her and pinning her beneath him on the mattress, blue eyes boring down into hers.

"Nothing what-so-ever." She sang, allowing her words to be lost in his lips, crashing down upon hers.
Smiling, she allowed herself to get lost in him, as he lost himself in her.

---

The Company were in the dining room of the Master's house, and more than one of them, including Bilbo, were steadily regretting that fact more as each moment passed. The table was laid with a frankly abhorrent volume of food. Bilbo, being a hobbit, was not accustomed to such opinions, but having seen the abject poverty of the people of Lake-town, the Master's gluttony seemed truly horrendous. It was far removed from the hobbit attitude. There were fish, different types of bread, cheeses, fruits, baked goods, jam and even tomatoes, laid out among other foodstuffs on the table. There was also a decanter of some kind of spirit, which Bilbo thought an odd choice of drink to accompany dinner.

The disgusting man sat at the end of the table, wittering. Another man sat beside him, dressed all in black - he looked decidedly weaselly.

Bilbo and Thorin were not sat together; the Master had taken it upon himself to assign the seating, so that Thorin, Legolas, Kili and Fili were sat near him. Bilbo was at the other end of the table with Ori on one side and Nori on the other, opposite Bofur. That suited her just fine; she didn't want to be too close to the Master anyway. He chilled her very bones.

She couldn't hear what he and the others around him were speaking about, so turned her attention to the dwarrows around her.

Ori was chirping across her at Nori, about something or other he'd read; his brother was listening intently, and Bilbo was sure he drew more meaning from the words than Ori had consciously injected them with. This was not, however, out of the ordinary, and it was not what caught her attention.

It was Bofur who caught her attention, by catching her eye.

He was smiling, yes, but his eyes were sober, lacking their usual mirth.

Bilbo knew that look. Bofur could see something brewing on the horizon.

She cocked her head to the side in inquiry, and he nodded down the table. Frowning, she followed his gaze.

When she saw what he was pointing out, her eyes widened, her sharp intake of breath alerting Nori to the situation, while no one else noticed.

Thorin was sat perfectly still, looking calm and reasonable; in his right hand, he had completely crushed a drinking goblet.

Oh, dear. Thorin was angry.

Not just angry.

He had silent steel in his eyes, boiling fury, his knuckles white.

Thorin was irate.

This could not end well for the Master, who did not seem to have noticed, and was still talking.

Bilbo willed him to cease, but he did not.
She was not startled as Thorin's voice boomed over the gathered guests, halting all the conversations into stunned silence.

"How dare you question the mettle of the dwarrows?" He growled, "You shall touch not a coin of the vaults of Erebor!"

Ah, dear.

Bilbo wished Balin or herself had been sat near Thorin for the meal.

There may have been a different outcome.

(She doubted it very much.)

Chapter End Notes

And don't forget to check this out:
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978
Chapter Summary

Lots happens, plans begin to become actions

Chapter Notes

It's been a while, but I'm here ^_^  
Hope you enjoy this

As always, have a read of this wonderful fic:  
http://archiveofourown.org/works/748780/chapters/1396978

Bilbo had hurried after Thorin after he had stormed back to the inn, quietly opening the door to enter their room after he slammed it behind him, and shutting it carefully behind her. He was sat on the bed, eyes wide and wild, almost tangibly quaking with rage.

She didn't need to say anything to get him to start talking.

"That ozodl burm tunzul-menemu!" [vile man... pit of the offspring of bugs]  

He continued to rant loudly and not altogether in a language Bilbo could understand, before he stopped.

She sat beside him on the bed. "Come now, Thorin, you're working yourself up."

"Don't speak to me like I'm a child, Halfling!" He spat.

Bilbo glared at him, rising to her feet. "How dare you speak to me like that? I demand you take that back!"

Thorin surged to his feet as well, replying, "Or what?!"

After a moment of them both standing there, Bilbo began to giggle, and Thorin, much to his chagrin, felt his kingly composure crumbling as a chuckle or two escaped his lips.

"Oh, you silly dwarf," Bilbo smiled, wiping tears from the corners of her eyes, taking his chin between her thumb and forefinger, "Or I'll have to teach you a lesson." She smiled, leaning into his lips and forgetting their argument for a while.

* 

The Master was sat at his table, Alfrid pacing behind him.

He hated that squirmy little man, but he was a flatterer with no moral compass, which served the Master's needs very well.
"If the dwarf will not reimburse us for our hospitality as I had hoped," the Master mused aloud, "We must find other ways to ensure their generosity."

The vile little man behind him smirked, "Perhaps if we were to acquire something they prize dearly?"

The Master smiled now, beaming as he turned to Alfrid, understanding what was being suggested.

"We must get to it at once. Make the arrangements." He ordered.

"Right away, Master, right away..." The little man scurried off, leaving the Master with his liquor and his lies.

*I am the Master, I am invincible, I am infallible, I will be rich*...

*B*

Bilbo smiled, rolling over to face Thorin in the sheets as he mumbled sleepily.

He looked younger while he slept, she thought, hair spooled over the pillow, eyes fluttering as he dreamt. He almost looked like Kili. Thinking of Kili, she decided perhaps she should check on him, make sure he was recovering. There was no doubt that Legolas was tending to him well, but it would put Bilbo's heart at rest to know how he was.

Gently, she kissed Thorin's cheek, quickly pulling some clothes on and going to the door.

It shut behind her with a soft click.

The corridor was dark.

From beside her, a voice said, "You've made this too easy."

Then there was a blow to the head, then nothing.

*B*

Bain shuffled around, trying to ignore the relative chaos about him. All the Master's servants were scurrying about like the rats in the canals, ordered to do this, that and the other. It had all started when those strange dwarrows had come into town, with their elf and the tiny woman with big feet.

He felt a hand grab his shoulder, dragging him up.

Drat! Alfrid!

What could the sniveling, conniving snake want now?

"Boy," he barked, obviously in a hurry, "Take these!" He shoved a tray of bowls of stew into Bain's hands, "We've had to reshuffle duties. You are to take meals to the dungeons from now on." He paused, as though waiting for a response. When he did not receive one, he snarled, "Well get to it then!"

Just as Bain was about to turn and carry out his task, the man grabbed his shirt, pulling his face close as he hissed, "And not a word of this to anyone!" His breath smelled like off fish and stale brandy. Bain nodded, dropping his head and hurrying away.

Father was right. He never should have taken this job, but they did need the money.
Bilbo awoke in the dark.

Wherever she was, it was dank, the dripping of water immediately irritating. She was shackled on a longish chain, as though she were in a dungeon.

Shuddering, she suddenly recalled other dark spaces, but forced them from her mind.

The past is past.

Where was she?

She tried to think back, for any kind of clue.

The person who had hit her had been male, but that didn't tell her much.

Their voice had come from above, so they were a Man, no dwarf or hobbit.

They had said, You've made this too easy. So the attack had been premeditated. Also, the wording and the tone suggested that whoever had taken her was a little on the insane side; definitely slightly sadistic, at least, with a dash of malevolent.

Oh dear, she wasn't becoming jaded, was she?

Anyway, that was not a particularly pertinent issue. The pertinent issue was working out who had captured her.

Why would any Man wish her harm?

If it was premeditated, then it had to be someone she'd already seen, someone with something to gain from her capture.

Then it hit her. Thorin had rejected the Master's terms at that dinner.

It was the Master.

Eru, what a sorry mess.

What she wouldn't do for a nice cup of tea and some pipe-weed.

Aware of the water slowly seeping through her clothes - thank sweet Yavanna she'd dressed properly! - she shifted until she was relatively comfortable and tried not to think about the cold, or the dark.

That was when she heard a sound.

Footsteps.

The light of a candle came into view, a boy balancing it along with several bowls of stew on a tray.

His eyes were wide and scared.

"I have your dinner," he told her, voice shaking, not making eye contact.

As he placed the bowl down, she caught his wrist, eyes blazing into his.
"Where am I?" She asked.
Farewell

Chapter Summary

I'm so sorry.

Chapter Notes

Hello my dears. I'm so sorry to have completely let this fic go. I have massively appreciated every kind comment that has been sent my way, and everyone who has read this fic. I've decided that, instead of leaving all you wonderful people hanging, this will be the last chapter.
I hope you enjoy it, and I'm sorry for leaving it so long.

Frodo Baggins was not so little any more, nor was he naive. He'd been raised hearing the tales of Auntie Bilbo's adventures; how she, with Gandalf, had destroyed an evil ring, as well as helping a group of dwarrows reclaim their homeland and slay a dragon, overturn tyranny in Dale, and finally, how she'd taken back the silverware from Lobelia.

He'd grown up in Bag End, and he was on his way back from the market now. It was a warm day, the Shire as beautiful and homely as ever. He'd waved hello to all his neighbors and friends, sharing a few words with Sam, his closest friend in the whole of Middle Earth. Yet, not everyone was kind.
He was familiar with the whispers, of course.

There's a strange creature living in that hobbit-hole. They say he's a dwarf, if you can believe such a thing. They say he's a king, a mad king, a monster.

They say he's married to Bilbo Baggins.

The sun was shining, high in the sky, as Frodo breathed in the scent of wildflowers, smiling. If only they knew.

This was the best part of the stories.

Auntie Bilbo had told him that the gold sickness had nearly driven her husband mad, making him do terrible things, but he'd had one moment of clarity, and that had been enough. It was after she'd left for home, heart ripped in two to be forced to leave the love of her life. He'd come chasing after her, fear and love equal parts in his eyes, and never returned to the mountain.

Uncle Thorin. Frodo stretched, pausing on the path, not sure if he wanted to go home just yet. No, not quite yet. Instead, he took a left fork in the road, following it around until he was stood before a field. He didn't need to look at the names on the stones as he found his Auntie, sitting cross-legged before her grave.

Bilbo Baggins, mother, aunt, wife and friend, barrel-rider
The inscription had been designed by her daughter, who was to visit soon. She now lived at Rivendell, and Frodo loved it when she visited. You could tell that Thorin loved it too, the crow's feet around his eyes deepening as he smiled. He was old, for a dwarf, and living quietly. Dwarrows lived longer than hobbits. Sometimes, he would do blacksmith work for the hobbits of the Shire, but more often than not he would sit in Bilbo's old study. He wouldn't tell Frodo what he was working on, but Frodo thought it might be important.

After a moment, Frodo stood, muttering a goodbye he thought might be futile. Wherever Auntie Bilbo was, she certainly wasn't under the hill. He made his way home, looking at the mark Gandalf had made on the door, all those years ago. No one had ever painted over it.

Thorin was inside, in the study, as Frodo had predicted. There was a letter on the table; picking it up, Frodo saw that it was from Kili. He was working out a long-distance relationship with an elf, Legolas, as his brother, Fili, ruled Erebor with the help of his consort, Bofur. It had all worked out rather well.

Frodo looked up as he heard Thorin open the study door.

"Thud."

Thorin placed a book on the table in front of Frodo. It was thick, leather-bound, and handmade.

"I've been working on this for a while. Bilbo did the first bit, but she didn't finish it. I wrote in the ending."

Frodo smiled, picking it up and flicking to the first page.

*In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit...*

By the time he came to the last sentences, penned in Thorin's heavy hand, it was too late to tell the dwarf what an impact the story had upon the hobbit. Tears rolled from his eyes and onto the grass, on another sunny day, as he sat before two headstones, Sam beside him, and read:

*The mountain, the gold, the ring; all these things were important, but none will last forever. The promise to love one another always, between the hobbit and her dwarf, that is what will outlast Mahal himself, and until they meet again, neither shall grieve, for neither will ever truly be without the other. In a hole in the ground, there lives a dwarf, and he will see his hobbit again. Dayamu Khuzan-ai menu, the blessings of the ancestors upon you.*

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