The Thief's fall to grace

by KusanoSaku

Summary

Nori started cross-dressing to bring in money eighty years ago. Now at age 87 he finds himself a single virgin Khazad dam with the tastes of Khazad male who prefers their own gender. To make matters worse his One is the guardsman who tried to catch him at his thieving tricks and hates him. His beloved baby brother Ori is soon to be engaged- that is if they can kill Smaug and reclaim their lost kingdom of Erebor. Nori just wants to see Ori happy before he disappears and takes his family’s shame with him. He really wishes that he could see Dori happy before he leaves for good. Now he has to join in this fool's quest and hope that he can live in close quarters with twelve male Khazad-dim without having his secret discovered. Would Ori stop nearly spilling it?

Notes

Thief's Fall takes place concurrently to Rejected Cornerstone.
Title: The Thief’s fall to grace
Pairing: DwalinXNori, implied KilixOri, ?xDori?
Summary: Nori started cross-dressing to bring in money eighty years ago. Now at age 87 he finds himself a single virgin Khazad dam with the tastes of Khazad male who prefers their own gender. To make matters worse his One is the guardsman who tried to catch him at his thieving tricks and hates him. His beloved baby brother Ori is soon to be engaged- that is if they can kill Smaug and reclaim their lost kingdom of Erebor. Nori just wants to see Ori happy before he disappears and takes his family’s shame with him. He really wishes that he could see Dori happy before he leaves for good.

Prologue

Having grown up making ends meet as a young Khazad, Nori had spent much of his young life since his mother died in childbirth and his father at the Battle of Azanulbizar on the same day dressed as a male. Due to the scarcity of Khazad-dams especially since the Longbeards lived in exile after being driven from Erebor by Smaug it was imperative to keep his true gender a secret.

Dori had been an age mate of Dwalin and the then young Prince Thorin of the Line of Durin.

Their family were Longbeards as well but they were much removed from the royal line. More distant then Balin, Dwalin, Gloin and Oin…

In the beginning dressing and pretending to be a male was just a way to get by and to help make money to feed Ori. During the three years his youngest brother needed to nurse it was the princess Dis who took him to her breast making him a milk brother to her son Kili who was barely a day younger.

Once Ori was three he was seven and he felt disloyal relying so much on the royal line of Durin. Nori had fallen in with a group of pick pockets who taught him how to use his nimble fingers in other ways.

It became more difficult once he was older to hide his true gender…

Dori hated what he had become but understood they needed the money, Ori was an artist and a writer. To keep him in books, paper, quills and journals as well as training needed money.

Dori had done his best to protect him by designing things he needed like an object that would feel like a cock when he was patted down in case he was caught.

Luckily it was against their culture to strip search another Khazad even one suspected of theft. He also wore layers, it was cold in the Blue Mountains and his brother had managed to weave something soft but strong to bind his breasts. Lucky for him due to his poor diet they were small. He was as close to an actual male Khazad as one could be without being born with a cock. Nori had always taken to eating less, he liked food but too much weight and his charade would be more difficult.

Nori always lied when he said he didn’t have a One…

He knew who it was but he kept it to himself, that person would never look at him
They wanted either a real Khazad male or Khazad dam; he was neither and was quite willing to
give himself over to the arms of Mahal once Ori was officially consort of the youngest royal Durin.

Once that was done and Ori’s future secured by the re-conquering of Erebor, Nori would give his
life up someway somehow even if it meant he were the one who killed Smaug.

All Nori wanted was for Ori to want for nothing, for his younger brother to have found his One and
to be unofficially betrothed was beyond his imaginings.

No gold or jewel had ever held him sway…except in the idea of how much food or clothes it could buy Ori.

He was a terrible smith having skipped those lessons willfully to practice his pick-pocketing skills
instead.

He was a capable duel swordsman like Thorin’s heir Fili and he was naturally weaker in muscle
but he could do a lot of damage with the long-handled mace Dori had crafted for him. It took a
long time and practice with Dori, Dwalin and Prince Fili to be stronger then most. He was stronger
then any Khazad dam he knew and he was stronger for now at least then Kili and Ori. The long-
handled Mace functioned as a sort of walking stick that had a metal spear-like point. It was handy
in dark alleys.

Nori had never beaten Dwalin physically but intellectually, that was another thing, Dwalin was a
member of the group of persons dedicated to keeping order among their people.

He had been trained by the elder dwarf but he hadn’t expected to realize that Dwalin had no idea of
his gender. Dwalin believed him male and a faithless thief who was not to be trusted.

Days on a journey here to this green land called by its strange inhabitants The Shire in his One’s
company had his nerves on edge. Never one for company or affection, as Ori and Kili grew ever
closer, Nori allowed Dori to mother him for once without complaint.

Dwalin belittled and insulted him at every turn.

Such words were common from the elder Longbeards but to know they came from his One made
the bite sharper then before.

Dori had no idea that he planned to die err long, Nori felt he’d lived too long. His greatest fear was
to have his physical gender discovered and forcibly joined with one of the many Khazad males. To
lose his freedom and be forced to bear children was his greatest fear.

Dori was scandalized by his behaviour, yet to have it become common knowledge was even more
upsetting to the pretentious Khazad.

Thankfully, his brother treated him as if he were male and helped him keep his secret.

The sooner they succeeded or failed in retaking the Lonely Mountain the better.

Months of experiencing his One’s abuse had made him short tempered and even more desirous of
ending it all but not before Ori was bound to his one.

XooooooX
When Dori, son of Stor spoke to Thorin, his shield brother about Ori and Kili being each other’s One, Dwalin was furious.

It happened the day before Thorin was to leave for the Iron Hills to speak with Dain.

It resulted in an ultimatum, only a successful re-conquering of Erebor would result an official betrothal of the youngest prince and the royal scribe.

Dori rarely let Ori travel anywhere alone and Kili refused to be parted from his One.

So when Fili announced to his mother that Nori would be joining their party to the meeting place, Dwalin insisted he join them.

Fili was worth too much gold as the heir to the Royal Line of Durin, he didn’t trust that faithless thief not to try to make a fortune selling him to the highest bidder. Mahal knew that Thorin and Dis couldn’t afford a ransom.

Not without the Erebor Treasury, they couldn’t…

Nori tossed back infrequent rejoinders to his insults, sometimes sniffing and inclining his nose. His former student had taken to tossing his training in his face.

If he’d known that Nori would have turned out like this, he would have refused Dori’s request to train him along side Fili.

At least Nori hadn’t latched his claws into the Prince, it grated to see Fili treat the thief with respect and even trust.

You couldn’t trust a thief, everyone knew that. It was an embarrassment that a Longbeard, a descendent of Erebor would be so dishonourable. Dori should have beheaded him as a traitor and cut him off.

Dori was too weak, not in battle of course, but he was weak-willed. No matter how many times he threw Nori out he always let him come back home.

To make it worse, Dori spent the entire time they were traveling fussing over Nori. With the obligatory fussing over their baby brother Ori of course but it was infrequent…

It was almost as if they had a secret weighing them both down…

Dori had always been a friend but the insults and glares at Nori were whittling that away.

He would not be sorry, Dori and Ori would be better off if that ne’er-do-well were dead.

To have such a person the brother of a royal consort offended him.

Nori was too well trained to fall victim of an orc raid…

Pity, it would save them all the trouble of his having to do in the miscreant.
When they arrived at the rounded green door, Nori wasn’t all that unimpressed.

It was clearly nicer than any above ground dwelling he’d seen or lived in. A part of him thought if he might find a home anywhere it might be here. He didn’t like mountains even if he’d had a few jobs in the Iron Hills or other Khazad mountain kingdoms.

The very idea of living permanently underground, unnerved him in a way that made him feel less then a true Khazad.

Dori was of the opinion he spent so much time pretending at being a male that his tastes were mixed up with his being a dam.

Nori doubted that, the older he became the more disassociated he became from his body. He’d done the obligatory spying on the elder Khazad-dim bathing; it was too dangerous to bathe without a door locked. He tended to avoid bathing outdoors or in a room with windows.

Often the only time he bathed was with a wooden tub filled with hot water in his room at Dori’s with his door locked and Dori as a guard.

He had been fifty when he started reacting to Dwalin’s pat downs, he’d been fiercely stoic the entire ordeal. Dwalin knew he was a bad egg and chased him mercilessly but Nori was nimble and quick. He was careful to never be caught with the goods on him; he usually hid his gold where Dwalin wouldn’t look. Usually in places he didn’t want to remember he had…

Speaking of a bath he was really looking forward to one…

When they were offered by the hobbit to wash up before supper, Dori thankfully dragged him into a washroom so he wouldn’t be forced to deal with Dwalin’s sharp tongue or fight for a washroom.

Why couldn’t his One be someone like Fili who treated him like a person rather then an embarrassment to the Line of Durin?

Dori would prefer if he went back to being a dam but he couldn’t, his life would be over. If Thorin knew it would be…

There were so few females of their race, they were lucky some of the males could bear children. Nori would hate to bear a child, he would rather die childless. It wasn’t like he could impregnate his One; Dwalin would sooner slit his throat then bed him.

He would rather die at his One’s hands then be with another or to take his own life.

Nori just couldn’t die until after Ori was Prince Consort…

They washed up and then they set out to help finish preparations for supper.

It was embarrassing to have his weakness be on display when Dwalin carried two and he could only manage one. He cursed his body…
Then to have Ori almost out him as a female bodied Khazad was almost too much. Ori knew he’d rather not have that banded around.

Unlike Dori who begrudgingly accepted his difference and helped him keep his secret, Ori thought he should go back to being a Khazad dam. Ori believed it was his duty to bear Khazad younglings. All the more reason to end his life as soon as Ori was betrothed to Kili…

Nori just wanted to keep his secret a little longer…

Nori hated that Ori knew his secret; at least Dori would keep it to protect them from scandal. Ori was unpredictable; Dori had to assure him that if Thorin found out the scandal would be so horrendous that his betrothal would never happen. The probable loss of his One to another was supposed to stay Ori’s tongue.

The close Ori became to Prince Kili the less safe Nori felt…

If anyone else learned it, Nori planned to end his life on his knives.

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Dwalin noticed Nori was strangely silent around him, addressing his words to others but Dori or Fili mostly.

His jibes about how weak the thief was merely earned him a growl…

“That’s because Nori is,”

Nori set the keg down with a clatter and snarled, “Ori that’s enough!”

The scribe recoiled, “I’m sorry. I’ll go see if I can help the hobbit with anything else.”

Dwalin’s eyes narrowed looking at the thief, “You’re a what thief?”

“That’s the guardian of the princes and the shield brother of Thorin, if it will put them in danger,” Dwalin snarled.

Nori scowled, “What Ori would have said doesn’t change anything. I’m the same faithless thief I’ve always been.”

“Peace. I understand that when we were in the Blue Mountains Dwalin for money you were an officer of the court. You’ve had more interaction with Nori due to his nefarious activities. Keep in mind whatever his crimes his family was poor. His mother was dead and his brother was not much older than Uncle was. Dori had to raise them both, and Nori sought to keep him feed by any means necessary. He never took from us, he never expected us to care for them when we could barely support ourselves. Times are still hard, but if we could retake Erebor then it would benefit us all.” Fili chided.

Dwalin scoffed.

Nori smirked, “You’re a decent sort for a prince. I’ll keep ya in mind. You’re good to Ori and that’s important to me. I don’t expect to ever have a One but I’m glad you’ve a good head on yer shoulders. In time you’ll be a worthy leader of our people.”

Fili inclined his head, “I will endeavour to lead our people well. Living up to Thorin will be a
challenge.”

“I suspect you’ll do well. You have been melded same as me, we’re cut and shaped by different experiences compared to your uncle and my brother Dori.”

Dwalin snorted, “What makes you anything like the Prince?”

“I’m merely a few years his senior. We’re not like you, we weren’t born in Erebor. We’re wanderers, Khazad-dim without a mountain. We’ve never even seen it. We’ve learned different things from you and your ilk. I think the prince knows more about fighting in practice and theory then he does war. He hasn’t quite learnt statesmanship but he does understand mediation and bartering. I know more are being invisible, having large ears and extracting information without the subject being aware. Ori is more scholar then smith, while Dori knows a little about a lot from having had to take work doing whatever he could to keep a roof over his head as well as see that Ori at least had some education. I had a sparse education, I can read but I don’t enjoy it. My writing is horrendous.” Nori tossed back.

“If we do reclaim Erebor I think you would be a keen choice for Spy Master. It would be wise to have someone who can have eyes and ears well everywhere. I am sure you could find a few roughly trustworthy persons to bring to Erebor or to send to the Iron Hills to keep an eye on our cousin Dain. There is just something about him I don’t trust. I have doubts he would give us any assistance in retaking Erebor. He’s more likely to claim it himself in some way after we’ve dealt with Smaug.” Fili scowled.

Dwalin gaped at Fili, “You can’t possibly trust him.”

“Why not? What loyalty he has is to his brothers, with the prospective betrothal his loyalty will be bound to Kili and then, extend to us somewhat. He would be an excellent resource when we retake Erebor. You can be Thorin’s general and Master of the Armoury. Balin can be his advisor as he has forever, Dori might also be one as well. Ori will continue as scribe and consort. Oin while he lives can be our healer but eventually he will have to retire he is getting on in years. Gloin can oversee the treasury I suppose. Besides if Nori is busy spying won’t he be too busy to raid the Royal Treasury?” Fili quipped.

Dwalin leaned over to hiss, “That is true, probably the most honest thing you’ve said thief.”

Nori’s eyes flashed, “Well as soon as the mountain is regained and Ori settled I’ll disappear for good. I’ll be dead and gone. Then you can go on with your life guard. You can curse Nori and call him the petty Khazad. I am no better then Mim of Norgost aren’t I?”

“You couldn’t turn your back on your bad companions. You would sooner die then give up crime. You’d never be happy working for the crown like that…” Dwalin tossed back.

“Probably but we’ll never find out because I won’t live long enough to enjoy such a position. I wouldn’t deserve it. I want nothing but for Ori to be bound to his One. I’d like it if Dori were to have a One but he claims his died at the Battle of Azanulbizar. I have no One, I know that. I’ve lived a charmed and cursed life for too long. I’ll be happy when Mahal takes me back and I’m given to the stone.”

“You’re a thief. Surely, there is something you want for yourself.” Dwalin drawled.

Nori shook his head, “Never. It’s always been for Dori and Ori. Nearly all I have I carry on my body. I’m content to go without if they will not starve. I don’t need any treasure…”
After Thorin and Balin finally arrived and filled their plates, Nori rose and walked over to Dori, “I think I’ll bathe and turn in after I help with the dishes.”

The silver haired Ri brother rose and followed.

Nori true to his word, helped Fili with the dishes and then put the last of the ale back in the cellar where Dwalin and he had fetched it from. Dori had gone to prepare the rooms with Bilbo and Bofur for them to retire.

Nori had just returned to the kitchen to find Dori talking about laundry with Fili.

The brothers then made their way to the inn to retrieve their packs from their ponies.

Everything was as they left surprisingly…

They returned to Bilbo’s hole and they claimed a wash room. Filling the tub with hot water from the large metal cauldron that was pumped into it…

Dori was the only person Nori would undress in front of, the only person who knew every scar and imperfection…

Nori removed each layer and it’s accompanying hidden weapons. Dori had made every sheath and knife. He made him clothes to hide his body and treasures from those keen to prove his guilt.

Dori tutted and undid the wrappings that hide Nori’s breasts, small though they were it was unsafe to not bind them.

Nori could really breathe now; he sagged for he was bone-weary, full of ale and good food. He worried about this quest. He saw little chance of their success no matter how much he prayed silently to Mahal for it.

“You know it’s unsafe to wear the bindings for weeks…” Dori hissed.

Nori lay back in the water, “I know. There is little I can do while travelling. Not with that dratted Dwalin around. He watches me like I’ll kill you all in your sleep. I wouldn’t though.”

“He doesn’t know you like I do. You’re a fool and a thief but you have a good heart. You never take for yourself.” Dori said as he took something that wasn’t soap but seemed to be for hair. He lathered his hands and kneaded it into Nori’s hair.

“I’m going to ask Balin for a contract that says I have no share…I don’t need it…” Nori groaned, relaxing as he felt the familiar mothering hands.

“Are you still bent on dying?” Dori asked quietly.

“Without a One, I have little reason to live on.” Nori said quietly, “I only choose this life to help you, to keep Ori fed and clothed. To keep a roof over our head but I want for nothing, for I need nothing.”

“Do you know how horrid it is to lie and say your One is dead when he is not?” Dori said quietly. “I name my One as one who has been given to the stone. My One sees me so little; he’s never seen me as I am. I am different, and yet not. I am your brother, yet I am as bearer and sire to you.”
“Sometimes, I wish you were with your One so I wouldn’t have to worry about leaving you alone. You did such a good job with Ori; you deserve to be an adâd in your own right.” Nori said quietly.

“What and raise dams? Mahal knows I can’t do that.” Dori grumbled.

Once Nori’s hair and beard was clean, Dori stood and took the clean but clearly worn clothes from Nori’s pack.

Nori shyly dried his awkward body that felt like it belonged to someone else.

Dori glared, “I won’t bind you and you can’t do it alone. You need to recover. You were bound more than three days.”

“I’ve been bound longer and you know it.” Nori grumbled.

“I know and I’ve lectured you more times about it then I have Ori’s burning candles at all hours of the night.” Dori glared, taking both of Nori’s bindings. “I will give them back before we leave this place.”

“See that you do. I swear to you if anyone learns of my secret, I will end my life. As many rights as dams are given historically in these times, it is not so good. The Princess Dis has it best being under Thorin’s protection, having already been bound and bearing two children.”

“Three.” Dori said quietly.

Nori blinked, “Three?”

“Gloin’s One, his wife is Fili’s elder sister. They were discovered to be Ones quite young. Oin fostered her. The Princess Dis fell ill for a time, we despaired of her life and all were in mourning that we would have to give her back to the stone so young. I think it was just the horror of the loss of Erebor; she was pregnant and young for it when we fled. Jili worried and fretted, eventually she grew strong but the bond between parent and child had formed between the Princess Alis and Oin who tended to her mother birthing the child. Being not close cousins, when Gloin and Princess Alis were discovered to be Ones, Thrain agreed to it. They were bound as soon as Alis was of age.” Dori shrugged.

“She seems strong, I would not have guessed…” Nori frowned.

“She is strong, raised by one of our greatest healers how could she not be?” Dori scoffed “True. How have you paid Oin to keep silent?” Nori frowned.

“Only Princess Dis knows. She birthed you. The Princess has some skill at Healing, second only to Oin. Oin was away tending to sickness that appeared in one of our more distant villages. The Princess was our bearer’s greatest friend; she took Ori to her breast out of love. If they had been male they would be like Thorin and Dwalin, shield brothers. I think she hold you in the highest respect, to sacrifice all to help me as young as you were to raise Ori. She could have kept him like Oin kept Alis but he was all we had left. It was the Princess who fought to keep us together. There were those who argued that an unbound Khazad with no One could not raise our treasures properly. Balin wanted you both fostered to Gloin.” Dori said quietly as he waited for Nori to dress in cool but loose close to hide his body.

“So I have an unexpected champion. I see her kind heart has passed to Fili. He is a strong warrior and the closest thing I have to a friend. Kili is reckless and lacks common sense. Ori is more level headed and I think he will balance Kili when they are older.” Nori said thoughtfully, “Were I to
choose my One and I were other than I am, I would trust Fili. Yet I am not and he is not, I will have to make do.”

“Should I force Dwalin to agree to leave you alone?” Dori said grabbing their things and unlocking the door.

Nori shook his head, “You are already too protective. I am glad somewhat that I spent little time at home. At least your mothering is well known…”

“Where as you have no skill…” Dori snorted.

“I have no need of it, Ori is the closest thing to a child I shall have. I have no regrets for that.” Nori shrugged.

They entered the closest unclaimed room; Nori sat on the bed and let Dori brush out his hair. He was already quite tired…

Dori put his hair up in simple braids, “Sleep…I wish Mahal had been kinder to us but would we have been of less use to all were it so?

Nori drifted off trusting his brother no matter how different they were to protect him.

Dori wasn’t the strongest Longbeard for nothing…

XoooooX

There was some secret about the Ri brothers, something that despite all of Nori’s thieving ways tied them together.

He’d almost discovered it…

Ori had almost let it slip, something he was sure that Dori would be furious about.

They had all been trained in smithing and war together; Thorin, Dori and Dwalin. Balin and Oin were nearly of an age.

Dis was Thorin’s elder, the eldest of the children of Thrain. She was of an age with Dori’s bearer; was it not hard to tell they were close when Dori was the name of her eldest? Dis and Stori were clearly the origins of Dori’s name.

Their family remained tied, did it not? Dori’s One was Frerin and Ori’s was Kili…

Was it true that Nori had no One? Perhaps he had once and the faithless traitor killed him. Dwalin could believe it, he was the backstabbing type. Petty Khazad like Nori had no honour.

He trusted him not, if they ever made it to Erebor and Smaug was dead or died then Nori would no doubt run with the Arkenstone.

Dwalin would kill him before he got far; he’d watch the faithless thief and if he made any such dishonourable move Dwalin would take pleasure in removing him from the living Line of Durin with his warhammer.

With Balin, Thorin and Gandalf closeted in the study and Nori with Dori; Dwalin bathed and went to bed.

Mahal’s hammer, he would never trust a thief…
Chapter two

Since he’d discovered Dwalin of all people was his One he’d had erotic dreams of violent but passionate couplings.

In all of them he had a male body; it was like a slap in the face. It shamed him that he enjoyed it so much and woke to find a cold bed.

Being eighty seven winters it wasn’t unheard up to have no sexual experience, Khazad courting could take years but they were usually bound by the age of 100 winters. Well the males, dams were often younger.

Had Nori been a real dam in tastes as well as body then Dori would have invited some of the more eligible nobles of what was left of the Erebor Longbeards and perhaps even those under Dain Ironfoot, Lord of the Iron Hills. Rumour had it that Dain’s son was near his age.

Nori was more likely to knife a suitor then bed them. He was terrified of his secret being known and he slept with one eye open a hand on his knives. Nori wore them on his skin, as well as tucked carefully in his clothes. Never had guards when he was held overnight found all his knives…

He’d been called Nori the knife-boned assassin more then a few times. He’d killed for money but they were always deserving, granted his employers weren’t always much better but their time would come. Who would want someone who killed without remorse? He stole but always from those who could afford it…

When he came upon a widow or widower struggling and he had money to spare, Nori slipped it neat as butter into their purse. He’d watched how Dori, Dis and Thorin struggled; Dori for Ori, Dis for her boys and Thorin for any who needed help.

Nori helped in his own way from the shadows.

Granted his wasn’t legal, it was dangerous and he was hated.

Dori loathed it but he never sullied his father or mother by using his birth name. Nor did he use his connection to Thorin or the Lady Dis to get out of trouble.

He was always suspected but nothing ever stuck, he was always out in a few days because Nori never left anyone who would or could nail him for anything being naturally skilled at changing his appearance and name. He was never foolish enough to be caught with things he didn’t honestly own. Nori was fleet-footed for a dwarf, silent too and he enjoyed running and jumping across rooftops. He was skilled with windows and preferred them to doors in all honesty, having always been slim due to small meals when he could get them.

Nori would have said he enjoyed his life…

He had until the day he woke up and saw his One.

He was dirty, he was unclean, a taint on the Line of Durin and a flawed piece that ought to be melted and remade.

He dare not curse Mahal or call his body a mistake but he felt that way.
Nori could not look at his naked body or touch it without disgust. He was cursed to have a body he felt didn’t fit; it was like a poorly made garment. One that made you argue with its tailor refusing to pay for.

Dori and Dwalin were real males; they were some of the strongest of their kin. They could break him easily, while Dori wouldn’t, Nori would rather die by Dwalin’s hands then anyone else’s.

He had a knife strapped to his heart day and night; it had been meant to kill him once. If he had to take his own life it would be the one he chose.

Ori had no idea of his plans for death, he had no right to be buried in Erebor and he planned to leave as soon as his brother was bound. It would be bad luck if he were to be known to die so close to a marriage ritual.

Nori didn’t wish to give Ori bad luck; he would disappear and then take his life far away from Erebor.

Due to his nefarious occupation and history of disappearing for days, weeks, months and years at a time, no one would guess or know exactly when he died.

Since his One knew him not, it could not harm him. In time surely, Dwalin would find someone more worthy to continue his line. Perhaps, someone like Dori who deserved to be cared for and protected more then anyone else…

Nori wanted nothing for himself; he had sold his soul and sometimes, his honour more then once. To keep his secret Nori held one thing sacred, his body. He could go to the stone with that innocence intact.

With that sacrifice, may Mahal forgive his crimes and sacrifices…

Despite not having his One, surely Dwalin could find some measure of happiness with someone worthier.

Nori wouldn’t be selfish enough to tie them together and ruin Dwalin’s life.

Imagine the horror if his crimes were ever stacked against his true name, as Dwalin’s spouse, he would ruin an honourable Khazad who was clearly beloved by Mahal.

Nori sometimes in the darkest hours of the night and his soul, wish he hadn’t been born. Then he realised how poor Ori and Dori would be if he hadn’t been there with money and gifts to make their life easier.

Nori would not cry, he buried his face in the pillow and resolved to go back to sleep. It was too early to be awake and he was tired of body and weary of spirit.

If his mace wasn’t needed or his skills at thieving possibly imperative, then Nori would hope he perished on the quest.

Nori swallowed and clung to the pillow, Mahal give him strength. He was set on a path, there would be no happy ending for him.

He would have no place to call home, no one to come home to, no lover and no family. In the end, he would die and Dori promised if he were there, he would go to the stone with his knives and his normal clothes. No fancy burial clothes for Nori…
That should be saved for honourable Khazad who did not embarrass Durin by living…
Chapter 3

Chapter three

With laundry to do and shopping for supplies, Dori woke Nori early, just about sunrise.
Nori grumbled but dressed in clean day clothes which varied little from his night clothes.
His night clothes were male attire.
Dori still refused to return his bindings, claiming he needed to wash them and Nori’s body needed to breathe.
Arguing would just bring more attention to him and that would jeopardise his secret. Nori gave in with merely a glower and chose a padded vest that minimized his chest to wear instead of the binding.
Nori hated any sort of chore and refused to do them, it was going to be a lazy day.
He made his way to the kitchen hoping to find something to eat…

XoooooX

Dwalin woke in a strange but comfortable bed.
He sat up and stretched, examining the room.
It was tastefully done but it was comfortable rather then fancy.
He decided that he ought to take advantage of their rest and do his laundry. It would be best to travel with clean clothes. He really ought to check his throwing axes for sharpness and make sure his warhammer was still in good shape. Once they left this distressingly unguarded and peaceful land they would have Orcs and wargs as well as other dangers.
As a warrior, it would be embarrassing to be unprepared when a battle arose…
He wished that that faithless thief would disappear from their sights.
He wouldn’t mind Ori becoming Prince Kili’s consort, he just resented that Ori was related to that damn thief.
He couldn’t prove Nori was a thief, he just knew he was…
He’d prove it somehow, the scoundrel admitted to being up to no good and that he was a thief. Too bad he hadn’t admitted what he’d stolen.
Dwalin couldn’t stand Nori; he was so self-possessed and contained. It was unnatural…
He left his borrowed bedroom and carried his dirty clothes with him having changed into something cleaner.

Dwalin was a bachelor who shared a house with Balin for simplicities sake; they didn’t see one another because he was usually at the guardhouse or prison while Balin was in what was left of their library or the forge.

He missed Erebor and prayed to Mahal that this fool’s errand would prove successful…

XoooooX

They; Nori, Dori and Dwalin practically met in the corridor since their rooms seemed to be across the hall from one another.

Dwalin scowled.

Dori sniffed.

Nori sighed.

It was odd to think that Dori and Dwalin used to be friends…

Was that something Nori should feel guilty for?

Dwalin wasn’t sure what Nori that damn sneaky thief had done to make Dori dislike him. Someday that blight upon the line of Durin would get his own, Dwalin was sure of that.

Dwalin was annoyed to find Dori also had dirty laundry.

Nori stalked off, chin stubbornly elevated and clearly on the prowl.

XoooooX

Nori was pleased to find Fili and Bilbo up.

Fili grinned at him, “Morning.” He was clearly nursing a cup of something.

“Tea or coffee Master Nori?” the hobbit asked.

Nori blinked and then his familiar smile crossed his face, “I think Dori and I would like a spot of tea. I’m partial to orange but Dori is quite found of Jasmine if you have it.”

“Tea was part of Mam’s healing practices… she was quite skilled with tisanes and decoctions.” Bilbo smiled sadly, “I have two large cupboards full. Do help yourself.” He gestured to the tea cupboard. “I keep them in sealed tins. I don’t know if you can read the labels but if you’ve got a nose…”

Dori had entered his ears twitching at the mention of tea. He opened the cupboard door, opening each tin and giving them a sniff. His face flushed with pleasure at the sheer number of options.

Bilbo smiled, he had learned that his guest Dori was found of something. He called out, “Perhaps you would like to select a few to take with us. You seem to know much about tea and a break from
coffee is always welcome.”

Dori gave the hobbit a huge smile. “That would be a pleasure.”

The other elders Balin, Thorin and Oin came in with Bombur the self professed cook at their heels.

“I have different options for steeping tea. There are the balls for one mug but I have paper that we use for mixing. Sometimes, I’ve used cheesecloth.” Bilbo offered, “Especially when using tea as a medium for medicine.”

“Did you say medicine boy?” the eldest Khazad asked.

Bilbo blushed, “Yes. My mam was a healer trained by Master Elrond.”

Oin snorted, “Elves. For all their faults, their skills at healing aren’t exaggerated. They are keener with grave wounds and poisoning. If you have even a little of their skill, you might prove to be worthy of this fool’s quest of Thorin’s.”

Thorin glared at the old Healer, “Watch yourself Oin. Cousin or no.”

Oin sniffed, “I am far too old to be afeared of you Thorin, I knew you in swaddling. It was my master and I who brought you into this world from your mother’s body, so don’t you be telling me a thing or two. King you maybe in name, but even a healer can restrain a king lawfully for his own good.”

Gloin barely restrained a snigger.

“Gloin you are not too old for me to put over my knee.” Oin snapped.

Bilbo chuckled under his breath.

Bombur had shuffled to his side, “Buns? My family is awful partial to me buns fer breakfast. I make sweet rolls. It won me wife.”

Bilbo smiled, “I’ll just make omelets with the eggs. You need anything besides flour, eggs and milk?”

“Eight eggs, a small bowl of butter, one mug of hot water, eight mugs of flour, half a mug of honey, half a small spoon of salt, one mug of sugar, large spoon of cinnamon, vanilla liquid and milk?” Bombur asked. “Oh and quick yeast if ya’ve got it.”

Bilbo fetched all the ingredients housed in the kitchen and set them upon the workspace with a large bowl. “I’ve got to fetch butter, meat and onions from the cellar. Master Fili I would be most grateful if you and master Nori would fetch me tomatoes and peppers from the garden.”

Fili rose grinning. “Anything to help Bilbo, I am as ever always at your service.”

Bilbo flushed again and darted down the stairs calling back, “Master Dori can help you with tea or coffee.”

Fili noticed Dori turn red and Dwalin glare at Nori who stiffened like he’d been stabbed. Something was up with the Ri brothers…he was certain of that.

“Come on Fili. I hate chores but the sooner we help, the sooner we eat.” Nori muttered darkly.

“Lazy good fer nothing.” Dwalin spat.
Nori stalked off, his fists shaking.

Fili followed at his heels.

Once they were outside in the garden and hidden from the windows, Nori fell to his knees shaking. “I can’t do this. I have to get away.”

Fili squeezed his shoulder, “So that’s how it is.”

Nori stiffened, a hand flying to his most easily accessed knife and then it fell. He snapped, “How what is?”

“Dwalin, he affects you so because he is your One. I never understood before; the pained looks you have when you think no one’s watching, the way you flinch at his barbs. His hate for you is tearing your heart to pieces.” Fili shook his head, “I am sorry my cousin is so hateful. I wish I were strong enough to beat some sense into him.”

“Dori would like too.” Nori said miserably. “They used to be friends before Dwalin decided I was worth more dead then alive and disgracing the Line of Durin.”

Fili snorted, “Dori would probably kill him. I’ve seen what Dori can do when he’s angry. He’s like a rockslide. I watched him crush a bear to death. Bears are huge and frightening to a dwarfling but Dori who is so much smaller in stature to take on a bear of all things.”

Nori chuckled, swiping the would-be tears from his eyes before they could fall. “That’s why I like you Fili. You’re different from the others, you see the good in them even if they are pathetic Khazad like me.”

“You know Nori were I in your place, I would have done the same. How can I judge when I could have been you? We’re close in age, we have brothers born nearly the same day and we’re both orphans after a fashion. Were Dori all the family I had in the world, I would have done anything I could to help. I was lucky that’s all to have Thorin, Balin and Dwalin. Though his treatment of my friend has lessened my respect for Dwalin.”

Nori, never much of a physically affectionate sort, hugged Fili impulsively. “Were I other than I am Fili, I wish I could be your One. If this insight is because you have found your Half, I wish you all joy. I am honoured as shameful as I am that you count me friend and would defend me even to a cousin.”

“We are cousin too Nori, distant yes but still kin. I would defend any of you. Once we retake Erebor, our brothers will be officially betrothed and we will become closer kin. I was surprised to learn how close kin we are to Gimli who is nearly an age mate of our Kili and Ori. I never knew I had a sister. Aman must have been quite young, she is frightful and you are lucky to count her as family.”

Nori moved away sharply, “Yes, Mahal help me I know. Let us hurry.” He began filling his arms with tomatoes. “Before Dori begins complaining I need to eat more than I do.

Fili frowned, he said something to upset his friend and he knew not what but he began picking peppers of various colours that felt ripe. The mention of Nori and food reminded him that his friend ate sparingly, far less than a Khazad living in poverty would. While they rarely ate filling meals, they always had something. When food was short, it was always Nori would silently went without…

They headed back to the kitchen with arms full of vegetables. To their gratitude, the door was
opened by Ori who was yawning and sipping tea.

Breakfast was quickly finished by the efforts of many willing hands.

Nori let Dori raid his dirty travel stained clothing but rescued his gold, he’d swore to follow Thorin and to do much of his work honestly. With nothing to do and unable to help prepare by doing laundry or other things that were best left to Dori, Nori decided he could pick up things that the Hobbit might not have.

He had money, gold was currency everywhere, right?

“Going somewhere thief?”

Nori sighed, “I have a little money saved and I thought I’d pick up some supplies. Some of our clothing should be replaced. I can’t sew but Dori can. I thought maybe I’d buy fabric, I know he has needles. Ori can always use more ink. Fili needs another oilskin for his violin. Dori could use some packages for that tea Bilbo offered. Is there anything I can pick up for you Master Dwalin?”

“I don’t need dirty money buying me. Bribes don’t work on me thief.” The guardsman spat.

Nori glared, “I was going to the market with money, planning to buy things honestly. All I asked was if you needed anything.”

“If I did I’d pick it up myself. I wouldn’t trust the likes of you.”

“Yes well then. Don’t thank me when the village blacksmith welcomes any of you into his shop.” Nori said before spiriting off.

Dwalin went to find Thorin and argue why allowing Nori to accompany them was bad for the quest.

XoooooX

Nori made his way back down the street Bag shot Row towards the town’s heart. He left a gold piece with the blacksmith, asking him to be good to his kin if they wished to sharpen their blades themselves. He looked in on the ponies the few they had and left another coin with the stable master so that the ponies would be well cared for.

There was a lady selling cloth and Nori purchased a few bolts as well as skeins of thread and needles. He found cheesecloth and knew that would do well for both coffee and tea. There were a few small bark pouches that he though that Dori would find intriguing.

Nori also selected a purple ink that was said to be made from berries that grew nearby. They had paper made from something called hemp that was different. Ori would like it.

For Kili Nori purchase some of the hemp cordage, it might prove handy if it worked to hold his arrows to its shaft. If not then surely Kili would find a use…
Gloin’s money bag was growing old and needed replacing. Nori chose a suitable one but knew that his companion liked him not.

Oin’s ear trumpet was vital for that old man and surely he might lose it in battle so he chose one. It wasn’t shaped like a cow bell but rather like a horn. It would do in a pinch until Oin could get another.

Balin needed a new cloak, Nori had noticed his had torn in such a way that it was beyond repair. Nori had enough money to purchase a similar colour, he wrapped it. perhaps, Dori would be talked into using it to replace Balin’s current one.

Dwalin needed nothing from him and the opportunity to visit the blacksmith if he desired was the most that Nori would do.

Thorin needed new boots. Nori purchased them and planned to replace Thorin’s current ones. His king was always hard on his foot wear and with Dis presiding over their people she would be unable to see that Thorin had new boots for the journey. Thorin put others ahead of himself always…

Fili was another who rarely thought of himself, Nori found the oilskin and then, with his arms full, made his way back to Bag End.

XooooooX

Dwalin found Balin, Oin and Thorin meeting in the dining room over a map with Gandalf.

They exchanged travelling tales; incidents with orcs, where they had observed Elven and human rangers.

Dwalin joined them and added his experiences.

The five of them discussed matters with the same easy comradeship that Thorin and his advisors had shared since his father and grandfather had passed on leadership. They had included him as he had been including Fili and now that Kili was slowly becoming more mature.

As much as Dwalin hated Nori at least Dori and Ori seemed to be honourable. Though they were entirely too loyal to that irresponsible thief…

Just because they were brothers didn’t mean that they should forgive his many indiscretions. Just because he hadn’t proven Nori was a no good Khazad didn’t mean he wasn’t.

"Dwalin!" Thorin snapped.

Dwalin blinked, “Yes, Thorin?”

“I asked you if you suffered any injuries while travelling.”

Dwalin sighed, “We had the expected altercations with orcs but we had Dori and myself. We guarded the princes well. Prince Kili made his attacks from a tree and Prince Fili was giving him cover. Ori had my war hammer and paired with Nori who had his long-handle mace. Dori’s like an army unto himself and Ori has his strength. If Ori wasn’t such sedentary bookworm then he would
be a fine shield brother to Kili. He is skilled with my hammer and not many can wield it.”

“Ori was only trained because Dis and I insisted you train them together in at least the rudimentary skills of a warrior. Then when they were fifty-five we had them enter their apprenticeships. A jeweller of all the things my youngest heir is…an archer and a jeweller. While I respect Fili a musician isn’t quite the trade I wanted my heir to have.” Thorin grumbled.

Balin sighed, “You forget yourself Thorin. Kili is a skilled Arrowsmith as well as a fletcher because he wanted to make his own weapons. Fili created his own duel swords, he maybe a musician but he can make his own weapons the same as his brother. They have their trades but they are skilled smiths in their own right just like their uncle. You are a sword smith, but you have been working as blacksmith have you not, these last years?”

“Dori is a weaver yet he is a tinker by trade. The Lady Dis is a healer and has taken up other duties since the fall of Erebor.” Oin chastised, “When we retake our mountain and you are King under it as you should be why does it matter what skills or trades your heirs have? You will be famous through out our people, hailed as Thorin the Reclaimer.”

“Yes, Balin has wisdom.” Gandalf said gruffly, “Your heirs are wise in their own way and will no doubt surprise you. They have skills that will come in handy. Having a second healer is always wise. Hobbits are swift of foot and silent as your nephew is no doubt learning since you sent him to test Bilbo’s skill with a bow. If he even has a small amount of his mother’s skills, Aüle will have surely blessed you. Perhaps, Fili can teach him some swordsmanship. He may have need of it.”

Thorin scowled, “I have not agreed that this hobbit may accompany us.”

“Then we shall remain unlucky thirteen.” Gandalf retorted.

“Bah! I do not trust these hobbits. They know nothing of the real world. They live in their peaceful worlds and their borders lay wide open.”

Gandalf chuckled, “Ah you have never met a Brandybuck Militia member or a Took ranger. They protect the borders. You were observed and allowed entrance to the Shire because I informed them that you were coming and under my protection.”

Balin stroked his beard thoughtfully, “Rangers?”

“The First Thain received his title from the kings of Arnor. They were trained by his rangers as spies and fighters. They no longer report to the King of Arnor but they still keep the training. The Master of Buckland was founded by a previous Thain and he too ensured that his militia was properly trained. They are required to drill as well as serve patrols just as the Tookaborough Rangers do. This area is guarded by the Sheriffs but it is the same. The prospective sheriffs are trained by either the rangers or the militia whichever is scheduled to train new recruits. They are quite selective, not all hopefuls are taken.” Gandalf reprimanded. “Bilbo was once invited to join the Rangers but chose to stay with his mother after his father passed to help her. He is not a layabout lord but rather a master who works along side his men and encourages them by working just as hard.”

“Hmph.” Thorin grumbled.

“We will need farmers and those skilled at such things perhaps despite the distance we can talk some of these hobbits into coming to Erebor in time.” Balin mused.

“Perhaps,” Gandalf said dryly. “I still am of the opinion that the map must be looked over by Lord
Elrond. If you travel with Bilbo who is his apprentice’s son you will be welcomed.”

“I don’t trust elves. Especially after how Thranduil abandoned us and refused to help when Smaug attacked. They wouldn’t even grant us safe passage though their forest. They shut their borders and turned their backs. I have not forgotten.”

“Thranduil is not Elrond and he has never denied assistance when he can give it. Elrond has fought beside dwarves and has learned that they are worthy allies.” Gandalf clenched his fist about his staff, “He can read your map as I cannot. If I knew you would be so stubborn I would not have returned it.”

“That map is my inheritance, it is rightfully mine.” Thorin snarled reaching to his hip for the sword he did not have presently.

“Stubbornness of dwarves! You fool that map is just as much your nephews’ birthright as it is yours.” Gandalf tossed back.

“It is for their sake that I retake Erebor!” Thorin roared.

“Have you asked them if they want this mountain? Have they ever seen it? They weren’t born there. They don’t see it the way you do. To you five, Dori and Gloin it is home. To Dwarves like Nori, Fili, Kili, Ori and Gimli it is not.” Gandalf snapped. “Nori follows out of loyalty to his brother. Fili follows for love of you. Kili and Ori come because if this company fails they believe that you will deny them the wish of their heart.”

”That damn Nori! He comes for the thrice cursed dragon’s treasure.” Dwalin spat.

“I have met Nori on my travels and he is a far kinder and reliable dwarf then you give him credit for.” Gandalf glared at the warrior, “Tread carefully Dwalin, son of Fundin before you find yourself the one with a lost treasure.”

“Ha! Nori will steal something of mine! When he comes for it I will kill him.” Dwalin punched his palm with satisfaction.

Gandalf snorted, “You will not have the chance, have you not looked at Nori, son of Stor? He has the face of a soldier going to war who knows he will die. Nori has given up his hope, his desire for life. He has chosen a path that will end with his death. He is going to seek death not treasure. His eyes are empty of life, his heart bereft of hope. He found his One, the one Mahal himself made for him and he recoiled. He is going to the stone; he has all but breathed his last. Nori is already dead and his companions know not.”

Balin, Ori’s mentor frowned, “He has abandoned his One? How can he do so?”

“He feels that he will never measure up to them and that they deserve better. A pity because they would prove the greatest weapon Erebor had ever seen. Nori has no future because he will throw it away, the first chance he gets he will seek death either on his blade or an enemy’s. He cares not, such a one is a danger not only to himself but to his companions.” Gandalf sniffed. “A pity that he is only worth that of an axe, when he falls who will mourn? His brothers and his friend, is it a shame that only three, perhaps four will mourn him? A dwarf who sacrificed his own honour for his family? As Dis’ favourite of her friend’s children has he ever called for you when he was in trouble? Never. You are all fools, Dwalin most of all. Nori is the strongest of you all, he has faced challenges and dangers you know not and yet you call him weak, a coward and worse for you call him petty.”
Dwalin crossed his arms and continued to scowl.

“Tell me Oin what happens when a One that is unclaimed dies.” Gandalf asked glaring at each of them in turn.

“Of course it is nothing.” Dwalin spat, “If they aren’t recognized, why would it affect their would-be One?”

“Their hearts become stone.” Oin snapped.

Thorin blinked, “What? Dori claims his One was my brother Feirin who perished at Azanulbizar.”

Oin waved his hand, “Stone chips and splinters, I have known that was a lie for a long time. He must, like Nori, think he is unworthy, he told that lie to avoid being courted. A Khazad who has outlived their One is rarely courted unless it is necessary. Who would want him? He was an orphan with no powerful relatives; his father died at Azanulbizar, his mother in childbirth and he was left to raise two young dwarflings alone. I withdrew my objection when I learnt he would go so far and that he had the Lady Dis’ support. To sacrifice his own happiness, so that his siblings might have some stability, was something few would do. I was lucky when I took your niece in Thorin, had a mate who helped rear her. Granted I have lost him since, he did not have my constitution but he did live to see our foster daughter bond and give us a granidchild of sorts. For all my skill, we never had a child between us. Gloin’s wife Alis was a gift and so to is Gimli.”

“Dori is the strongest of us all.” Balin mused.

“Yes, that strength is in Nori as well. If he felt he had something worth living for, he would prove a great weapon and a shield of Erebor.”

“Is his One among us?” Thorin frowned.

“Perhaps, yet even you Thorin can’t force them to be Ones if they would rather die.” Gandalf chided.

“I was thinking more of helping.” Thorin glared, “Is it Fili?”

“No. Fili has found his elsewhere.” Gandalf rose. “I have something I must do.” He disappeared leaving the dwarf council full of debate.

XooooooX

Nori returned to Bag End find Fili and Gloin hanging laundry but no Balin or Dori.

Fili set down an empty basket and ran up to him, “Why did you get so much?”

Nori scoffed, “Best skill about being a reformed thief is that I notice when things are too worn to be of use. He set his packages down on the bench near him, Nori pulled out the bag he’d found for Gloin. “Here. It’s paid for honestly. Yours is not going to last longer. You’re a banker by trade and you need to have a stronger bag.”

Gloin blinked, taking it. “Thanks Nori. I had noticed it was growing thin but I hadn’t had time to find a replacement.”
Fili hugged him, “I keep saying he’s a sharp axe. He notices things we might miss.”

Nori wiggled free and handed the wrapped oilskin to his prince, “I thought since your violin was so precious, you’d like this.”

Nori knew it was his father’s, that the violin was a memento that was all he had of Jili.

Fili bit his lip, “Thank you.”

“I have other things. I tipped the blacksmith so he should be good to you if you need to use it. I picked up a bolt of cloth for Balin. His cloak is torn beyond repair. I thought that Dori might make him a new one if we have time.” Nori admitted reluctantly as he held out a large package to Gloin. “He’s your cousin. You can look it over if you like. I have a spare ear trumpet for Oin. I thought he might not have packed a spare and if he looses it somehow he’ll be troubled.”

Gloin frowned. “Is this what Dori meant about always knowing what was needed?”

Nori shoved the boots at Fili, “See that Thorin gets these.”

Fili chuckled, “He does need them. Good for you. You’re brilliant.”

Nori scowled, “I judge objects on how much I can get for them. If they are worth less than my effort to steal, then they ought to be replaced.”

Fili put the slightly elder Khazad into a headlock, “Brat! You worry about us in your own way.”

Gloin’s chest rumbled with laughter, “You’re still just kids at heart, aren’t you? Still the same as ever. I remember you two tumbling around the village and camps always up to mischief.”

The two embarrassed Khazad broke apart.

“Sorry.” Fili muttered.

“You remind me of Dori, Thorin and Dwalin years ago. I was younger then they were of course. Oin raised me as well, father and mother were lost when Smaug attacked and I was young, maybe twenty winters. He and his One raised us: Alis and I. Oin knew what was healthy and what wasn’t, when there was no meat, Oin always could find food for us.” Gloin smiled, “I watched those three and I wished I could grow up and have friends like they did. Yet Thorin was brought into Thor and Thrain’s councils, Dwalin was trained as a guard and Dori was charged with weaving to keep us warm as the seasons were quickly changing. There was little hope we could survive a winter out in the open. We have regained our strength, thanks to Thorin. He is a great king.”

Fili sighed, “I know and I doubt I could do half as good a job.”

Nori punched him in the shoulder, “I would be better given the chance.”

“Indeed.” Came Gandalf’s voice.

“Tharkun.” Fili bowed.

“I must try to meet a friend who is near these parts and ask what news he has. I shall return in two days. I suspect Thorin will be ready to go then.” Gandalf frowned. “Nori do not give up hope yet. Perhaps, there is always time for hope.”

Fili turned to Nori, give up?
Nori scowled storming off, “I’m going in.”

Damn nosy wizard!

Chapter End Notes

So any guesses as to who Dori’s One is? Does anyone think that Gandalf’s admonitions might be heeded? Or will the stubbornness of dwarves win out?
Chapter 4

Nori fell asleep beneath a large tree, if he hadn’t been already depressed he would have tried to sleep in it. He was an odd Khazad since he preferred heights to depths…

*He slipped into a familiar comfortable bed…*

*“Miss me?”*

*The large tattooed guardsman rolled over, “You know I did…”*

*They stripped each other; Nori had a male body as he should…*

*Dwalin pushed him back on the bed kissing and caressing him.*

*Nori liked to fuck as much as he liked to be fucked…*

*Luckily Dwalin had a topping kick that Nori filled like a glove. He was the type to top from the bottom as well as the top…*

*He rolled them over and smirked down at Dwalin, “Tell me you want it…”*

*Dwalin’s eyes darkened in the candlelit, “I know I do…”*

*“Then you missed me?”*
“Of course I did. It was successful then Nori?”

“Have I ever failed in my duty to the True Line of Durin?” Nori glared.

“Never…now do me a favour my One. Fuck me…been sleeping with a plug for weeks. Wanted to be ready when you returned…”

Nori smirked, “That is good news.” He tugged the plug out roughly.

Dwalin groaned, “Fuck me damn it.”

Nori rolled them over, pushing Dwalin into the bed and thrust into him. The sensation of being inside his One was almost as thrilling as being having Dwalin inside him.

Dwalin groaned as he entered him, the plug being smaller then Nori was himself. “Nori…”

The reason being was that they both preferred it when Dwalin was bit tight…

“You feel so good Dwalin.” Nori smirked, “Who would imagine that a strong man like you would enjoy being an anvil almost as much as Dori?”

Dwalin’s reply was just a gasp as his cock drilled his One’s prostate.

Nori took great pride in his ability to satisfy a Khazad like Dwalin, it always humbled him that Dwalin accepted him. That Dwalin had put away his suspicions and allowed him the sanctuary of their rooms. Here they weren’t the General of Erebor’s Army’s or even Spymaster but they were merely each other’s One…

Dwalin was no virgin when they finally came together, yet he had been pleased to know that Nori was…
Dwalin had taken pride in his abilities to teach him what felt good whether one was an anvil or the hammer in bed…

Nori had been shy but Dwalin had been good to him…

Nori knew by now what Dwalin wanted, needed and loved in bed, thank Mahal it also fit with what he wanted to give.

Dwalin was a mess by the time they were done…

“Next time tie me up first.” Dwalin muttered sleepily.

Nori chuckled, curling his much smaller body against Dwalin’s. His One made him feel protected rather then wary…

Nori woke up and turned punch the tree beside him, as pleasant as those dreams were, they would never be…

Dwalin couldn’t want him, not with the level that the burly Khazad hated him.

Nori couldn’t bare himself like that either…

He was lost; he had no home and no place to belong, Ori would soon no longer truly need him or Dori. Would Dori finally approach his One?

Nori never could, Dwalin would call him a liar to his face…

Nothing could tempt him to do something so rash, he couldn’t even be sure that Dwalin preferred male Khazad or not. Nori couldn’t go to his bed as a female…

Why Mahal? What good was it to be born with a body like his and the desires of a different gender? How could he find a One or have a life without fear as handicapped as he felt by his body’s gender when he identified as a male?
He felt like a mistake…

But Mahal, their maker didn’t make them…

Eru it was unfair to be burdened in such a way with cares beyond his years and personal troubles that would likely never be resolved…

Dwalin could never love him…

XoooooX

Dwalin had been watching that lazy Nori sleep from his place at a window…

At first the younger Khazad seemed to sleep peacefully, then his expression became one of pleasure.

He felt an uncUSTOMary anger at that…

He was surprised to see Nori wake; his expression seemed to be a mixture of angry and sorrow. The punch he gave the tree he was sleeping beneath had bruised and bloodied his knuckles.

Nori flung himself back against the grass of the hill, scowling with his eyes filled with pain.

The thief never looked at his bloody hand or seemed to notice its injury.

It didn’t seem to matter to him, he’d always thought of the thief as weak…

The tree had recoiled and shuddered from the punch, leave and twigs falling like it had been blasted with a strong wind.
Perhaps, Nori had some of his family’s physical strength…

Dwalin pulled himself up short, Nori had no good qualities. He was a thief, a petty dwarf…

He turned away from the window, but not before shooting the dwarf a death glare.

Before his eyes had left the window, he saw Nori flinch as if struck…

Odd…

XoooooX

Dori was torn…

He had once valued his friendship with Thorin and Dwalin…

Dwalin’s insistence that Nori was a petty Khazad was painful…

Dwalin was certainly not his One and he knew his old friend had good qualities. Dwalin was as loyal to the House of Durin as one could be; after all, he was shield brother to Thorin. Dwalin would still be his friend if he would stop tormenting Nori.

While he couldn’t understand his sis…brother, Dori did his best to help. He accepted the tarnished money and gifts that Nori brought even if he knew they were ill-gotten. He wasn’t too proud to accept help from family even if he rarely asked. Nori and the Lady Dis were very much alike in their way of noticing things that were needed. Dis had helped tend the injured at the Battle as well as birth Ori. Yet it was Oin who had birthed Kili having arrived just in time…

Dis had out of love for her friend, his mother taken Ori to her heart and breast. Lady Dis had insisted that he be given a chance to prove he could care for his siblings; she looked in on them often and brought them what she could spare when she came to feed Ori the year he was being weaned. Before then, they had practically lived with Dis. It was wiser, after all Ori needed to be fed and a virgin Khazad male or female couldn’t feed a babe naturally.
Dis had treated him like an equal, talking to him about parenting, offering advice about things and showing him how to run a house. Before given their age differences, Dori had been more involved with his craft then his parents. He’d been living with his master before the Fall of Erebor…

It wasn’t until they went into exile that he reconnected with his parents. They’d stayed together in an attempt to keep their family together. Despite Thor’s gooldsickness, they hadn’t blamed the royal Durins for their misfortune rather they’d cursed Smaug. He’d been surprised when his mother fell pregnant, first with Nori and later with Ori.

The two friends, his mother and Dis had celebrated having children near the same ages. They’d hoped that they would grow up to be friends as they were if not more. His mother would be so happy to know that her Ori would be bonded to Kili, he was sure of that. She’d admired what a strong warrior Dwalin was, and had mentioned hoping that someone like that would be Nori’s One.

How far they had fallen…

He blamed himself for Nori’s gender disassociation, he had gone wrong somewhere.

Ori was well-adjusted; an emotionally balanced Khazad who would make a fine consort in time if neither Fili nor Thorin had offspring.

Dori was proud that Ori would be a prince-consort.

He was still afraid that if he told the truth to his One that he would be dismissed.

He doubted his own worth even more with Nori’s problems.

Could his One, were he to talk to him as Ones, could he accept Nori? Could he be trusted with the secret? They were honourable to be sure, but would they put Nori’s feelings above the needs of their people?

Dori could see the emptiness in Nori’s eyes increasing; the more time passed, the more of Nori slipped away. All the playfulness Nori used to have was gone, soon all that would be left would be an empty shell that breathed and barely ate.
Dwalin was such a stubborn Khazad that Dori doubted he could even shake sense into his former friend. He doubted Nori’s One could accept him given the enmity that Dwalin showed.

All Dori wanted really was to see them happily settled; even Ori round with child would be a blessing. His little brother giving birth to an heir to the throne of Erebor would be beyond his wildest imaginings when he’d first held Ori and swore to look after him.

Nori had tugged on his sleeve and asked for Aman. His heart had broke, he’d told him that Aman had been sick with grief and after Adad was hurt, they’d gone to the stone together.

It took Nori time to understand they didn’t have parents…

When they were little, he had weapons training with Fili but as Fili spent more time with Thorin learning how to be a ruler after Thor and Frerin died in the Battle of Azanulbizar, Nori fell in with pickpockets.

He should have put a stop to it early but every penny helped in those days. Nori’s help had saved him from having to ask for money or food from Dis many times…

He shouldn’t have to do this alone! Dori was lost; he had no idea how to help them. Ori was fine but when it came to Nori and Dwalin, he was powerless. He was afraid of interfering and making it worse.

He had no one to turn to for guidance, he wished for Dis…

Why hadn’t he talked to her before they left about Nori? She would have given him advice, the more Nori related with his male role that he played, the more worried he had become.

Dis was needed in Ered Luin but he needed her here…

He’d grown apart from Dwalin and Thorin due to his unexpected parenthood…
He couldn’t go to them; Thorin was his king and had more important things to deal with such as their impending quest. As for Dwalin, well he’d rather wring his neck then discuss this with him.

Dori was afraid of talking to someone like Balin…

Gloin was younger then he was, a bonded Khazad and a father but he was uncomfortable sharing confidences with someone he hardly knew…

He was stuck between a possible cave-in and a cavern of poisonous air…

XoooooX

Ori fretted, he hated having secrets from Kili…

He really, really believed that Nori should stop being irresponsible and use this quest to become a new person.

Nori needed to stop pretending to be a male, she should admit to being female and beg forgiveness. Nori should approach her One and ask what she must do become acceptable.

No, his sister was stubborn and refused to do the right thing. Dori had been adamant that if anyone learned about Nori that Thorin would never let him be with Kili.

Ori just wanted his family to be normal; he wanted Dori to have a One, Nori to act like the female she was and his parents to be there for his betrothal.

However, Mahal had decided that he was to be an orphan, Dori was to be single and Nori was confused…

Ori snuggled into Kili still holding his book.

“Something on your mind kitten?” Kili asked.
Ori blushed, “No…”

“That always means ‘yes, but I don’t want to talk about’.” Kili’s voice had a frown.

Ori laughed, “You know me too well.”

“You’re worried Ori, is something the matter?”

Ori felt just awful, he was upsetting Kili. He shook his head, “Not really, I just wish this was all over and everything was the way it ought to be.”

Kili sighed, “I know what you mean…”

They fell silent…

Ori closed his eyes, that was true and yet, not the truth all that the same time.

Nori! Stubbornness of Khazad-dim!

Chapter End Notes

Anyone want to offer a guess at Dori's One?
Nori disappeared immediately after Luncheon…

Dori knew that if Kili and Ori were ignored, they’d slip back to their room and do what Mahal knew.

He decided since their laundry was dealt with, that he’d help Bombur, Bifur and Bofur with the dishes.

They worked well together and he watched the cousins interact with jealousy.

Bofur would tease Bombur who blushed and threw a towel at him. Bifur was clearly the eldest and would tease or chide in inishmek.

Once they finally finished cleaning up after Luncheon, Dori put on water for tea. A cup of tea would be good to soothe the throat while negotiating. He’d always offered persons who came to discuss weaving tea…

Bofur grinned and then filled up a tray with cups, saucers, napkins and even a plate of biscuits.

Dori blushed, “You’re quite at ease in a kitchen, aren’t you?”

“I’ve worked a lot of jobs.” Bofur said shrugging. “I’ve seen that hobbit around but I didn’t know what he was. I thought he was a young Khazad. He’s so good looking.”

“Really? I hadn’t noticed.” Dori sniffed.

“Of course not.” Bofur said elbowing him teasingly in the side. “You’ve only got eyes for Master
Dori spun around and threw Bofur to the floor, “Never say that again.”

Bofur winced, “Sorry. I won’t. Bifur’s always telling me I talk too much.”

Dori covered his face with his hands, “He’d never look twice at me. I’m practically invisible.”

“Yer a good sort Master Dori. You seem ter take good care of yer brothers.” Bofur said stretching out his back still wincing.

Dori let out a sardonic laugh, “It seems that way doesn’t it. Ori’s spoilt and Nori’s going into this quest hoping to die. Which seems quite fitting since Thorin’s likely leading us to our deaths. Let’s just hope this turns out better then his grandfather’s crusade to take back Moria.”

They picked up the tea things and headed back to the dining room.

Thorin frowned at them, “Yes?”

Dori swallowed, “We thought you’d be thirsty so we brought some tea.”

“Yes of course. Thank you.” Balin said absently.

Dori had expected that, being invisible to Balin was normal despite having been friends as a young Khazad before beginning his apprenticeship with Balin’s younger brother.

Bofur followed Dori around holding the tray.

Dori set down a teacup and poured the tea, setting a biscuit down on a napkin in front of each person.
Just as he was setting Balin’s down, the elder Khazad looked up.

Dori watched as the advisor to the rightful king of Erebor’s eyes opened wider.

Balin blinked, “That’s why you always seem to hover around me.”

Dori stumbled back, “Excuse me…”

XoooooX

Bofur stepped forward to finish serving tea to them. To his pleasure, it was the cute one’s turn. “Here you go. Bofur at your service.”

Ferumbras looked up, “Why thank you.”

Balin started to get up.

Bofur held up a hand, “No no, you have work to do no doubt. I’ll look after Master Dori. I’ve got an idea of what is wrong with him. Come find me before you go Master Ferumbras. Maybe you could show me that pub I’ve heard about?”

The hobbit blushed, “The Green Dragon? I’ve got plans to stay there a day or so.”

Bofur grinned, “Then when you’re done with business, maybe we can spend sometime together.”

Thorin cleared his throat. “You were saying we could only have eight ponies?”

Bofur left them to negotiate and went to find Dori.

Dori was racing up the hill.
Bofur took off after him, “You can’t run away forever. He’s seen you.”

Dori froze. “How can he want me? How could someone like me be worthy of someone like him?”

“So you gonna admit to having a One?” Nori’s voice came from a tree.

Dori glared, “Nori! Get your arse down before you break your fool’s neck.”

“I’m quite comfortable really. You get a different perspective from up here.” Nori drawled.

“I’ll admit to it when you figure out how to shake sense into yours.” Dori retorted.

Nori flinched, “That will never happen and you know it.”

Bofur glanced from one to the other, “You’re just really stubborn, aren’t ya?”

Dori sighed, “We’re a bunch of misfits, orphans. We’re no good to anyone, not even each other. Ori’s the best of us and he’s spoilt.”

“He’ll get more so being prince-consort.” Nori observed dryly.

“Well, it can’t be helped.” Dori shrugged.

“What you two need is serious help.” Bofur frowned. “Do you two even know how to smile or laugh at yourselves?”

Nori sighed, “I used to… until I realized that my One would sooner behead me with his axe then want to be with me.”
“What about you Master Dori?”

“Not since Erebor fell.” Dori shrugged. “My friends and I had already begun growing apart. My family needed me, then my parents were gone and I was left with two young ones to look after.”

“I’m going to have to help you learn then.” Bofur frowned. “You both need to learn to laugh more.”

Nori snorted, “You won’t be around me long. After we succeed at Erebor and Ori is properly betrothed to Kili, I’m taking off.”

“No you won’t.” Bofur said sternly, “You can’t leave your One anymore then Dori can. You’ll want to stay as close to him as you can even if you think he hates you.”

Nori leapt from the tree landing like a cat and laid a knife on Bofur’s throat. “You don’t know me. Don’t you dare talk like you do.”

“I’m an observer.” Bofur said quietly. “I see things that most don’t. We’ve just met and I can see who is sensitive to one another, their relationships to one another. I know…I think that he’s being hateful. You’re a lot like Dori, you’re using anger to hide your pain.”

Nori flinched and stepped back, sheathing his knife. “Don’t talk to me if you value your life.”

Bofur and Dori watched him go.

“You’re right, he’s just waiting to die. He’s looking for it…” Bofur frowned.

“I don’t want to have to give him to the stone…” Dori whispered.

Bofur gasped. “That’s why he’s planning to leave… so you won’t have to.”

Dori flinched. “That means…no…he wouldn’t. Not Nori…”
“He thinks he has nothing left, that he’s worthless. Someone’s managing to convince him that he’s better off dead.” Bofur said shaking his head. “He seems like he’s a good person…”

“Nori is.” Dori said fiercely. “He’s the kindest person you’ll even meet. He’s also the strongest person I know. He’s given up all hope of a family of his own, he’s put everyone else ahead of himself. He’s never once been selfish. He always does everything for me and Ori that he can. The only person besides me who sees that Nori has any worth is Fili, they’re close in age and well Fili sees that they could have been each other I think. It was just fate that had them born into the family that they were.”

“Fili is a good kid.” Bofur nodded. “I think that our host will be good for him.”

Dori sighed, “If Thorin lets them… I think Thorin would rather his heir be joined with a Khazad of higher lineage. Not Dain’s family but perhaps, another Khazad Lord’s family…”

“I wonder if Ferumbras has anyone…” Bofur grinned, “If not, well I’d like to get to know him better…”

Dori wondered if this Bofur was Mahal’s answer to his wish to have someone he could talk to…
They left the morning following the arrival of Ferumbras with ponies and supplies…

When they finally left Bag End, Nori rode at Dori’s side.

Balin insisted that Dori ride behind him.

Dwalin said nothing but gave Nori a glare.

Nori turned his nose up at him and silently ignored the elder Khazad.

Because Bilbo’s riding skills weren’t quite satisfactory, Fili insisted that the hobbit ride with him until he was comfortable.

A rope tied Bilbo’s two ponies to Fili’s pony.

Óin was insistent on taking one of the supply ponies and loading it up with as much of the healing supplies as Bell could spare as well as some small emergency kits to each supply pony.

Dori had with Nori’s assistance packed a variety of teas and plenty of coffee for the journey.

The way Thorin was talking well it didn’t seem like they’d be shopping or stopping anywhere. Well the sooner they reached Erebor, the sooner they might succeed or fail in the attempt. Either way Nori cared little whether he lived or was given to the stone…

They rode out at dawn, passing through Bree, which was almost at the edge of the Shire around mid-morning.

They rode with Bombur and Bifur distributed sandwiches that the former had made during the luncheon hour.

They rode for hours until Balin finally sent Nori back to tell them that they’d decided to call it a night and were going to find a place to camp. Nori was glad to be riding away from Dwalin after having to ride near him all day…

It was quite dark and only with a torch lit by Gloin, which helped them find enough wood for a fire.

Fili, Kili and Ori set out to find more wood while Nori and Dori found stones for a hearth.

The hobbit went to help Bombur choose the makings for a quick dinner. They had some dried meat and a few flasks of water that they poured into an iron pot. They tossed in spices and with the wood that the three younger Khazad brought back they quickly build a roaring fire. They had some wrapped biscuits that they warmed in a skillet on the side of the fire and tossed in some vegetables from the packages unloaded from the ponies by the ‘Fur’ brothers.
Dori put on a pan of water presumably for tea because coffee would only keep them up longer.

Soon the smell of the stew was making them hungrier.

They all brought out cups and bowls to have Bombur ladle the stew into.

Nori watched as Bilbo sat beside Fili on a log and blew on his stew for a bit warming his hands. He sat silently beside Dori, and Balin joined them.

Since Balin had realized they were Ones, Balin had sought out Dori’s company often, which made Nori happy for his brother but jealous as well much to his shame.

After they’d eaten their fill and the pot was empty Bifur and Bofur went to wash the dishes in the stream before setting them aside.

Dwalin volunteered for first watch, which pleased Nori, he and Dori laid their bedrolls near the packs that had been stacked close to the fire.

Fili and Bilbo put their bedrolls together, as did Kili and Ori.

Balin had lain his right beside Dori’s which somewhat surprised some of their company but not Nori, Bofur or Dori really. Thorin’s bed was beside his.

Bombur, Bofur and Bifur had laid theirs together as well.

There was a lot of huddling for warmth really, it was spring but warmth disappeared quickly after the sun set.

Nori was keenly aware of Dwalin as the elder Khazad added more wood to the fire so it blazed just enough to keep animals away.

Gandalf merely leaned against a tree and closed his eyes.

Nori curled up planning to sleep, with one eye open and his hand on a knife.

Xooooox

Nor was woken by the smell of porridge and coffee but most were already awake.

Nori immediately rolled up his bedding and helped with cleaning up the camp.

Bombur and Bifur were seeing to breakfast while Bofur was helping the others load the ponies again.

Thorin was impatient to leave and after a quick wash they loaded back onto the ponies again and took off with Gandalf and Thorin leading the way.

Nori held the private opinion that Thorin was acting more like he was rushing to meet someone rather then to reclaim some stupid mountain from a dragon…
They travelled for days with each seemingly a repeat of the previous day.

XoooooX

It was a seemingly normal camp…

Nori set out with Bilbo to fetch Ori and Kili who had slipped away no doubt for some privacy by taking the ponies to graze.

They found Kili atop Ori whose clothes were open and they were clearly much distracted.

Nori frowned counting the ponies in the moonlight. “We’re short ponies.” He stormed over to Kili and pulled him off Ori who yelped and tugged his clothes to cover himself.

Kili glared, “What was that for?”

“You were supposed to be watching the ponies! Not fucking,” Nori hissed.

“You’re just jealous.” Ori glared as he tried to dress.

There was a loud plodding stomping and Nori threw a hand over Kili’s mouth. “Shush.”

A large creature that resembled stone grabbed four ponies two in each arm and left.

Bilbo had his bow over his shoulder and hissed to Ori, “Go get the others.”

Bilbo crept over to Nori, “Come on. Tell me how to deal with them. Kili you can come with us and help fix this or you can go after Ori.”

“That was a troll.” Nori whispered. “They can be defeated best by sunlight but that’s hours away.”

“Well, the bigger they are, the harder they fall.” Bilbo mused. “I’ve got a bow.”

“Mine’s in camp.” Kili frowned.

“Then go help Ori.” Nori snapped. “You’re useless. Bilbo and I will follow the Troll’s trail.”

A pouting Kili took off at once.

Bilbo followed Nori who skulked through the path that the troll seemed to have taken.

Nori whispered as they hid among the tall grass that had grown up around a tree. “What do you think we should do?”

“Thereir eyes look like weak points. I think I could hit them. Can you hamstring them?” Bilbo hissed.

Nori smirked, “Does a chicken have feathers?”
Bilbo nodded, “Good. Just help me up this tree, would you? I’ll have more cover that way.”

Nori let Bilbo climb onto his shoulders and then stood as tall as he could.

Bilbo jumped and caught a branch hauling himself up into the tree. He climbed from branch to branch searching for the best place to shoot from.

Nori had disappeared.

Bilbo strung his bow and took aim at the eyes of the nearest troll. He let his arrow fly and quicker then a blink he was already stringing the arrow for the other eye. He would have time to be afraid later. He then took aim at the second troll and quickly blinded him but the third had moved.

Nori let out a battle cry and was running between the legs of the troll with two knives that clearly bit into the flesh of the trolls who immediately fell.

The one that Bilbo hadn’t blinded fell into the fire with a yell.

Nori’s yell was followed by the shouts of their comrades.

Bilbo was already climbing down.

Fili was yelling, “Bilbo! Where are you?”

Nori smirked, “Up a tree.”

Dori was shaking Nori and trying to lecture him about recklessly endangering himself.

Bilbo stood on the closest branch to the ground and waved, “I’m up here Fili.”

His lover let out a sigh of relief, “Thank Mahal. Jump down, I’ll catch you.”

Thorin took charge, “Kili, Ori free the ponies. Óin look them over for injuries.”

Gandalf had ridden off ahead of them on his horse around noon and said he’d join up with them in a few days.

“Ori!” Dori turned to yell at the youngest of them.

Ori flinched and glared at Nori.

Nori ignored him and went to join Fili and Bilbo.

Oin was still looking over the ponies after Kili and Ori freed them.

Once the ponies were freed, Thorin and Dori lectured the younger Khazad about how their indiscretion might have doomed them.

It didn’t take long before the two young Khazad were looking quite browbeaten.

“We should return to camp and move the ponies closer.” Dwalin drawled.
“I think Ori will sleep between Balin and myself.” Dori said sternly. “Obviously he can’t be trusted.”

Ori flinched once more.

“Kili will sleep beside me.” Thorin growled. “Things could have been a lot worse. We might have been dinner instead of having dinner.”

“Thorin’s pony has a sprain. Some of the ponies have bruises but they’ll be fine. We have extras for a reason.” Óin declared.

“We better head back before Bombur eats everything.” Bofur advised.

The elder Khazad minus Óin each led a pony back.

Dori had Ori by the ear while a petulant Kili walked beside Thorin.

Fili threw an arm around Nori’s shoulders and the other around Bilbo’s waist. “The heroes of the occasion!”

They were cheered as they entered the camp.

Thorin poured Nori and Bilbo a cup of ale it was high honours indeed for Nori knew they had a very meagre amount with them.

They partook of their dinner and then gratefully went to bed.

Dwalin as usual took first watch.

Bilbo lay curled up in Fili’s arms and both passed into blessed slumber, leaving Nori to stare at the stars until exhaustion claimed him.

The Quest was starting to get spine tingling for those who hadn't lived Nori's wild life…
While breakfast was being made, Dwalin and Gloin announced their intentions to search for the Trolls’ horde.

Thorin agreed at once. “Trolls have been known to waylay all sorts of travellers. We might find anything.”

So Nori set out with Fili, Balin, Gloin, Dwalin and Bilbo to search for the horde.

Kili was being made to repack the ponies while Ori was forced to help with breakfast as punishment for their failure to watch the ponies properly.

They followed Nori back to the Trolls’ camp.

Nori who had a nose for gold found the horde right away, with Gloin not far behind.

They hauled everything out into the early morning light to get a proper look at it.

They found a pile of weapons, chests of coin and jewels mostly.

Thorin fished out a dusty sword. “I’ll take this.”

Fili pulled out a knife, “Here Bilbo, you should have this.”

Bilbo blushed, “I’ve got your knife and my bow already.”

“Always good to have a second blade.” Dwalin grumbled.

Fili nodded, “Dwalin’s right. I’ll try to teach you how to duel wield if we have time.”

Nori picked up a knife as well and tested how sharp it was. “This is all I want.”

“What no gold thief?” Dwalin sneered.

“Got what I need. Don’t want anything else.” Nori retorted.

Balin grabbed a long sword, “I’ll take this. I think it would suit Gandalf. Seems the right size anyway.”

Thorin shrugged, “If you like.”

Gloin and Dwalin filled the chests and shut them.

“We’ll bury them right quick.” Gloin announced. “The Earth will cleanse the taint of the Troll.”

They all went back to enjoy a mug of coffee and a bowl of oatmeal before they started to ride.
They rode for three hours and had just finished their luncheon on the road when they heard howls in the distance.

Dwalin spat, “Wargs.”

Thorin scowled. “Where there are Wargs, there are Orcs. Ride!”

They urged their ponies on.

Gandalf appeared beside them, “Follow me if you want to live!”

Thorin grunted.

They rode faster but the sounds of the wargs were still growing louder.

Then they heard the sound of horns.

“Elves.” Thorin snarled glaring at Gandalf.

“Reinforcements.” Gandalf snapped.

Balin pulled the sword he’d been wearing on his back when they neared the elves on horseback, “Prepare to fight!” He held out the sword to Gandalf.

Gandalf took it and held it up as he whirled around. “Make a stand here. Ori! Bombur take the supply ponies head west”

“Kili arrows.” Thorin barked.

The party made ready for a stand.

Nori had tossed his long-handled Mace to Dori just before they went into battle with the Orcs and his brother was swinging it like a club at his enemies. Dori wasn’t as good with his sword and flail on a pony but the long-handled mace was easy to use, especially since Dori made it.

Nori was hurling knife after knife at the oncoming Orcs, he had quite a number and it enabled him to remain a distance fighter. Each knife landed true, felling a warg or an Orc.

Nori realised that Dwalin was in a tight spot; just as the Elves arrived Nori threw a knife that whizzed past Dwalin’s ear to embed itself in the heart of the orc that was attempting cleave his One in half with a scimitar that was attacking Dwalin behind.

The elder Khazad spun round to clew the orc in half with his battleaxe before glaring at Nori who sniffed and flung another knife at another orc.

Let their archers deal with the Wargs, Nori would deal with their riders.
Thorin, the other Khazad and Gandalf were joined by Elves with swords while Kili and Bilbo were joined by archers who helped them rain arrows down on their foes.

It didn’t take long after the arrival of the elves for the wargs and orcs to lie dead on the plains.

Nori fell upon the orcs and retrieved his knives tossing them into a stained waterproof leather bag that had borne bloody knives before until washing them was possible.

“A mere scouting party.” One of the elves frowned.

“Elladan?” Gandalf asked.

“Yes Gandalf. My father thought that you might be in need of assistance but we merely arrived in time to finish the battle that was already in your favour.” The elf bowed. “Any reason to strike a blow against those who slew our mother when she was already sick with grief and was on her way to the Grey Havens. We have a chosen mission to rid Arda of as many of them as we can.”

“Every axe counts in a battle.” Fili said politely. “Bilbo and Kili wouldn’t have taken out as many of our enemy without your assistance.”

“You have the look of a Durin.” The matching face to the one called Elladan said.

“Fili, son of Jili. Heir of Thorin Oakenshield.”

“Elrohir, son of Elrond. We were told to invite you to Rivendell if we came upon you.”

Thorin scowled.

“Your assistance was greatly appreciated.” Balin said gruffly.

“It was wonderful to work together like in the stories father used to tell us of the Great Alliances when we were young.” Elladan said proudly. “He would tell us of Khazad heroes like Azaghâl who fought the dragon Glaurung. He also told us about the skill of Nogrod before it fell; of smiths Gamil Zirak and Telchar.”

“Those were mere Broadbeams.” Dwalin snorted.

“Wasn’t your great-grandfather Dain killed by a cold-drake? I never heard the entire story but surely like Azaghâl he went down fighting.” Elrohir asked excitedly.

“Of course,” Thorin said pompously, “just like his son Thror died in battle against Azog.”

Gandalf seemed smug as the two parties rode together in the direction of Imladris.

They followed the Elven Rangers across the plains to the Fords of Bruinen.

They rode along a path that followed the course of the river gently sloping until it came level with the falls.

The falls were an awe-inspiring sight; they seemed to be created more then natural. As they rode by them it felt like they passed through something, what had seemed like just hills, mountain
slopes and trees gave way to what seemed to be a delicately constructed village with gazebos, balconies and the loveliest architecture.

Nori was impressed; he’d seen cities of men and Khazad-dim in his travels but few cities of the elves.

There was some exchange between one of the Elven twins and Fili’s hobbit but Nori marked it not.

They were nearing the city rather suddenly, no doubt due to their having been guided by those who no doubt called it home.

They had no sooner approached the very edge of the city then simply dressed Elves appeared.

Their Elven companions leapt from their steeds and tossed their reins into their comrades’ hands.

The other twin bowed, “Welcome travellers to Imladris, the Last Homely House East of the Sea. Come and be welcome.”

A tall dark-haired lady with starry eyes approached, “I am Lady Arwen Undomiel of Rivendell, Daughter of Elrond.”

“Thorin Oakenshield, Lord of the House of Durin. These are my nephews Fili and Kili.” Thorin said begrudgingly.

“Balin, son of Fundin.”

“Dwalin, brother of Balin and son of Fundin.”

“Oin and Gloin, sons of Groin.

“Dori, Nori and Ori, sons of Stor.” Dori said introducing the Ri ‘brothers’.

As long as he was deemed a son of Stor Nori was fine with letting Dori speak for them.

Their other companion Bofur introduced himself and his cousins.

“My father is awaiting Gandalf and Thorin Oakenshield in the rotunda. I am to show our guests hospitality; you might say I am my father’s hostess.” Arwen said politely.

Bilbo was exceedingly excited and once Fili helped him down he entwined their fingers and looked around like an excited hobbit child at a party.

They immediately unloaded their personal belongings and slung them over their shoulders then their ponies were led away.

“You are a hobbit are you not?” Arwen asked with a smile.

“This is Belladonna’s son sister.” Elrohir replied.

Arwen glowed, taking his hands in her, “How is Bella? Is she well?”

Bilbo’s face fell.
The elf maiden searched his face, “The gift to man has claimed her and she is in Mandos’ hall.”

Bilbo nodded.

“Well out of friendship I greet you. We welcome all who come in friendship or seeking aid.” Arwen said, “I will show you your rooms and baths while your leaders meet with my father.”

Bilbo and his Khazad companions followed Lady Arwen into the village.

Arwen led them into a very open building that had no windowpanes or outer doors really.

It was far more open than he was used to, Bag End was warm and cozy but this was breezy?

Arwen threw open a door, “This is for you Bilbo.”

Bilbo tugged on Fili’s hand pulling him towards the door.

“There are baths down the hall; they are heated by natural hot springs.” Arwen said with her glowing smile.

Bilbo blushed, “Thank you. Mam always said what a friend you were to her.”

“I hope I maybe counted among your friends as well.” Arwen bowed, “Dinner will be served in one hour. I will come to fetch you to show you to one of the many dining areas.”

Nori shut the door of his room and slid down it.

He’d never been shaken by a skirmish even with orcs, the very monsters that killed his father and he felt claimed his mother. The traumatic loss of her One coupled with trauma of childbirth had sapped her life and she’d gone to the stone leaving behind two younglings to be raised by Dori who was barely an adult by their culture’s standards. Dori who had said his One had been given to the stone because they fell at Azanulbizar so not to trouble them with two younglings not their own.

Nori hadn’t processed until that moment that had he not acted his One would have perished and would have been given to the earth for there was no stone to give him to where Dwalin would have fallen.

He could not have born the death of his One if he could have prevented it.

Dwalin had been angry with him for saving him; it felt as if the elder Khazad, his One would have rather died them to be saved by him. Why had Mahal decided they would suit? Why were they each other’s other half?

The Universe hated him; mate to the Khazad who lived by the laws and had them no doubt memorised to throw in an accused rule-breaker’s face?

His brothers were far luckier then he was…

XooooooX
Dwalin claimed a room for himself.

Once the door was shut, he tossed his rucksack on the floor at the foot of his bed. He fumed.

It offended his honour to have been saved by that petty Khazad.

To owe that worthless excuse for an axe anything much less a life debt was intolerable.

What evil had befallen the Houses of Ri and Or that they had birthed such a one as Nori?

Why had Dori not found a way to be rid of him before he became such an embarrassment? Why did Dori treat him as family? Why did he not cast him off? What did Nori have over his old friend?

Dwalin clenched his fist, he would find out and free Dori from the petty Khazad’s clutches.

But given Dori’s behaviour of late and his anger at him, would Dori want to be freed from Nori’s control? Dori had looked at him lately as if he’d like to throttle him. Him!

The whole situation was intolerable! He would not be attacked by the likes of Dori on the behalf of someone like Nori, son of Stor.

XoooooX

After finishing his meeting with the Elf Lord Elrond and his King Thorin, Balin asked the elf maiden, which room was Dori’s.

He opened the door and left his things planning to find the lavender-haired Khazad who was no doubt bathing.

He found the first bath locked and heard Prince Fili and his Hobbit. The next was Prince Kili and Ori, then beyond that the sons of Groin and finally the cousins Bofur, Bifur and Bombur.

He was stunned silent at his first sight of his naked One, then he whispered, “By Mahal’s Hammer…”

How could he have been so blind? His One was more gorgeous then he’d ever dreamed; Dori’s lavender hair was floating on the steaming water.

Dori’s eyes snapped to him, “What? Balin?”

Balin smirked, “You forgot to lock the door.”

Dori swallowed, “Oh… why are you here?”

“The others were occupied? I left the empty one for Thorin. I hoped that my One would be willing to allow me to share the bath and his bed. Is that permissible?”

Dori’s eyes dropped, “Given what your brother thinks of us, I don’t understand how you could want me.”
“Your brothers are grown, you have done more for them then one ought to have expected given your age at the time you were orphaned.” Balin said stripping his dirty clothes away, “You have proved that you would make a splendid bearer. One only needs to look at Ori.”

Dori scowled, “But not Nori…”

“Nori’s worth will remain in limbo, he has not proved himself to be what Dwalin has implied.” Balin shrugged.

Dori smirked, “Dwalin must be furious, I saw what Nori did.”

“That he killed the orc that nearly beheaded my brother?” Balin chuckled, “Dwalin can’t be taking that well. He would not accept that calmly. He would rather have perished.”

Dori spat, “Which would have given Nori more of a death wish. To think I once called him friend.”

“I hope our children will inspire such a passionate defence.” Balin said winking as he scrubbed himself and poured bowls of hot water to rinse before slid into the pool of hot water.

Dori became even more nervous.

Balin seized his chin and kissed him firmly.

The tea-loving weaver melted.

Balin sat on the seat carved into the stone of the bath and pulled Dori into his lap.

Dori’s body felt as tense as one of Master Fili’s bowstrings.

“Relax…” Balin said, running his fingers through Dori’s silk-like hair.

“I don’t…I haven’t…I never…” Dori mumbled.

Balin smirked, “I know enough for the both of us. I will be the perfect teacher.”

Dori’s innocent, shy kisses affected him more strongly then any whore’s ever had. Sure he had taken his pleasure as any male might who is unattached and others that foolishly wished they were. Yet the relief gave him no pleasure once his fire had been quenched. Dori’s inexperience made him all the hotter. He toyed with his One’s hair, feeling his prick swelling beneath Dori’s arse. The feel of his One’s cleft was like no other; he longed to sink into his untouched heat.

Dori moaned, why had he denied himself this? Why had he lied? He’d spurned all offers to bed him or bond to him despite his protests. Being in Balin’s arms rivalled his wildest dreams…

It was embarrassing that Ori, his youngest sibling had lost his virginity before him.

Balin’s lips left his, leaving nipping kisses down Dori’s throat. Rolling his hips so his prick rubbed against his One’s arse, one hand trailed down Dori’s chest pausing to run a nail over an untouched nipple.

Dori gasped at the three-fold assault of pleasure on his body, his prick twitched and dripped.
“Beautiful.” Balin said before tracing a slightly harder bite with his tongue.

Dori whimpered, it was too much…

Balin was smug; Dori was such an innocent it seemed. That pleased him; he’d rather an innocent then a whore.

Dori moaned loudly when Balin pinched his nipple and bite his shoulder. “Please…”

“Please what Dori?”

“I need…”

“What do you need?” Balin asked, with a slightly frown.

The bear-challenging Khazad blushed, “I want you inside me…” he whispered.

Balin kissed him reaching for the olive oil that some used for cleansing. He coated his fingers with it before he used them to gently prepare the beautiful Khazad in his arms.

Dori moaned at the feeling of fingers breeching him first one, then two and finally three thick fingers.

Once Balin was certain Dori was properly prepared, e got more oil and then he slicked his cock as best he could before holding it to Dori’s entrance.

Dori was impatient and pressed down until he felt the thick head enter his body. He hissed and then he felt Balin’s bollocks against his arse. He could hardly believe it, he was united with his One, their bodies joined…he felt a sense of peace.

Balin inhaled sharply as Dori took him into his body impatiently; the embrace was tight, as he knew it would be. He held his One close for three heartbeats before he started to move.

“Balin…” Dori gasped, his body shaking.

“I’m here beloved, trust me.” Balin said in a gentle voice that shook. He rocked his hips up into Dori, one hand cradling his One’s neck and he kissed him with desire. The other hand took Dori’s sex and stroked it.

Dori’s gasps came with a more pronounced hitch, “Mahal, oh Mahal…Balin…”

“Ride it Dori, just ride it.” Balin counselled his inexperienced mate.

Dori came with a scream of pleasure.

Balin felt his own pleasure crest and crash, there was no emptiness, no shame left in it’s wake. Just a sense of coming home…

Dori leaned heavily on his chest, his eyes closed as he gasped for breath.

Balin held the younger Khazad tightly, he would not lose him. Dori was his to cherish: to protect, to provide for, to prize and to take pleasure in.
The strongest Khazad he knew lay limp and gasping, winded by him. To have someone so strong submit to one such as he was thrilling, yet not to be taken advantage of. It was a privilege that could be withdrawn at any time…

Balin let his hand slide from Dori’s neck to his arse, he held the other close, “Beloved, why did you make me wait so long?”

Dori whispered, “I felt unworthy…you would go far and I did not want to hinder you by saddling you with Nori and Ori thus preventing you from rising through the ranks of royal advisors. I was far too young for you, to ask you to allow me to raise them was too much to ask when I ought to have been tending to your children instead.”

“Promise you won’t make a decision like that without consulting me.” Balin said sternly

Dori blushed kissing him shyly, “I hear and obey.”

“Don’t let being my One crush your spirit beloved.” Balin chided, “I want your passion not your immediate assent. I want to be partners; I want us to trust one another. When we succeed: I will be Thorin’s chief advisor and Ori will be Prince-Consort. You must retrain your strength or else we will be seen as weak. I want your strength beloved, your spirit and your fiery nature.”

“As you wish Balin,” Dori blushed, “I will do my best to do your will.”

Balin cleansed the evidence of their joining, helping a languid Dori from the bath and drying them both before slipping into robes.

Dori leaned heavily on Balin; his legs were unsteady as they made their way to his chosen room.

Where to his lack of surprise given Balin’s insistence on being near him at night, were the elder Khazad’s things.

Balin led Dori to the bed where they spent their time engaged in kissing and petting. Well Balin’s calloused hands touched Dori and explored his body…

Which Dori permitted, he enjoyed the way he felt in Balin’s hands. His One didn’t ridicule him for his lack of experience, nor did he overly chide him for not giving him a choice before.

Was this how Ori felt? Treasured? Beloved? He had done right to go to Dís…

Poor Nori to be denied this because he was born with a female body and to be hated by his One…

No wonder his brother seemed more closed off if he dreamt of being in Dwalin’s arms.

Dori choked, he felt such anger at Dwalin, his old friend. Sometimes he felt more like their bearer then their brother…

Balin frowned, breaking their kiss, “What is wrong beloved?”

“I want this for Nori…” Dori said quietly.

“It is in Mahal’s hands.”
“Mahal…” Dori whispered, “I take it back. I was wrong, so wrong. Poor Nori, I can’t help him, I can’t do for him what I did for Ori. I can’t help him; I’ll have to watch him die every day. I can’t bear it if I have to give him to the stone. I can’t beat sense into Dwalin…” he buried his face in his hands, “What am I to do? There is only so much I can do and Ori…he feels his greater loyalty is to Kili then us.”

“Where is one’s greatest loyalty? One’s king? One’s birth family? One’s mate? One’s children? To each person the answer is different, if you asked me before who I was the most loyal to; I would have said Thorin first, Dwalin second and then our cousins Óin and Glóin.”

“And now?” Dori asked softly.

“Thorin first, then you and your kin second. My blood kin third.” Balin said simply.

Dori felt guilt fill him, how would Balin take Nori’s secret? It wasn’t his to tell, but would Balin take the historical response or would he decree that Nori be taken before Thorin?

Balin frowned, “Is something wrong beloved?”

Dori swallowed, “I… I wish that we could have no secrets between us.”

“I take it that we can’t?”

“Some secrets are not mine to tell…” Dori whispered.

Balin sighed, “Then you must not tell, I will not hound you for them. I wish that you might confide in me so that you might share your burden.”

“I wish I could, I fear I have done ill and yet I wonder if I did not. Sometimes I am so confused, I want to help and yet I feel powerless. I can’t lose Nori… I want him to have what Ori and I do. Why must he suffer so? Why must he be hated? He sacrificed more then I have…I have you…what does he have? His knives and a cold bed. His One hates him…”

“No he doesn’t, Dwalin wants to believe he hates him. He resents him, he is jealous of him. Nori was playing while Dwalin had to be an adult. Nori got to escape while Dwalin was forced to take the role of a protector. They see traits they wish they had in each other. That infuriates them so they hide behind walls of hate, jealousy or unworthiness. I would wager that Dwalin once subconsciously recognized Nori for who he is to him but Nori did something that raised his ire. So Dwalin lashed out and he kept lashing out. Now, he could lose Nori forever. Nori would die for him, for any of us because he doesn’t feel that life has a purpose anymore.” Balin admitted thoughtfully.

Dori flinched.

“He takes too many chances: the trolls and the orcs. He might have died during both incidents. He would have gone willingly, leaving no thought to the rest of us because he has given up. Like Gandalf said, he is already dead, he is walking to it. Will we pull him back, or will we let him fall?”

“I want to help him Balin, I have done everything I can to help him. He sacrificed his own honour, bloodied his hands to feed us and to give Ori what we could. How can I look at Ori and know that
his apprenticeship was paid for that way? How does Ori repay Nori?” Dori shook, “By threatening Nori’s hopes and dreams, putting us all at risk. He won’t understand. I try, Mahal help me I try. Is it my fault? I don’t know.” He buried his face in his hands.

“They are more child then sibling, I know. You learned raising them, everyone makes mistakes at first that’s how we learn. Many siblings your age at the time would have abandoned them. You took Ori and Nori in sacrificing so much, just as Thorin took over responsibility of Fili and Kili. The only difference was that his sister still lived…” Balin said quietly as he gently pried Dori’s hands from his face, “Our children will be ours to parent. Ori and Nori, you know them best so I shall leave them to you unless you ask me to stand with you. You are their parent, your word is law.”

“What if it is the law that I fear?” Dori whispered.

“The Law is merely words. Some are and have been bent or ignored due to the times. That isn’t always right; Dwalin is a prime example of how living by the law can go too far. I think that the first thing we ought to after we reclaim Erebor it to review the old laws and see how they really apply to a New Erebor.”

“Can we even do that? Retake Erebor? Or is it just as foolish a dream as Thor’s attempt to retake Moria?”

“Gloin’s One Arisa said it was right. We consented none but followed Thor. Not only do I believe in Arisa, I am sure that it is not madness that draws Thorin home but something more powerful. Mahal’s will perhaps.”

“Mahal’s will.” Dori said sadly, “I’ve hear those words so often that some days I’m sick of them.”

“It was Mahal that made us for each other, he saw that we were born in the same stone halls. You were my brother’s playmate, is it any wonder that you were mine as well as Nori is Dwalin’s?”

“Nori, it always comes back to Nori. How can I be happy knowing he’s in pain?” Dori asked clinging to Balin.

“Beloved, I wish I could tell you all will be well. I am not Arisa, I cannot see as she can. I will do my best to temper Dwalin but like Nori, he is of age.”

“How can we have grown up so different? Thorin isn’t the adventuring prince anymore, with a gold-mad grandfather and a spoilt father who had to take the reins early. Dwalin doesn’t remember the games and tricks we used to play.”

“He does, the loss of Erebor and the war with the Orcs changed him, changed us all. It made a soldier out of Dwalin, a parent out of you and a leader out of Thorin.”

A knock came from the door.

“Yes?” Balin called out.

“The Lady of Imladris bid me to invite you our evening meal.” Came the voice from the other side of the door.

“How can I face them?” Dori scowled.
“By putting for the same strength you had when you told Thorin that you’d be raising your brothers and your One was dead. Were you less gentle I might have believed it, as loyal of a Khazad as Frerin was, he would have never have been up to your weight. You were too strong for him physically and mentally. He would have become jealous of your strength.”

“Will you?” Dori asked quietly.

“Never, it is your strength that always impressed me. As well as your courage to demand to be given your brothers, the way you never once gave up and how hard you tried to be independent from Thorin’s assistance. Though I suppose to me, the fact that struck me the most was how protective you were. I was there when Fili ran in and told Dís and Thorin about the bear.”

Dori flushed, “Oh Mahal, I was terrified. The bear was going to attack Nori and Fili because they wandered off and too close to a bear’s den. I did what anyone would do…”

“Not everyone would wrap their arms around a bear and kill them by shattering their bones. I pity anyone you ever see as a threat to our future children.” Balin mused.

Reluctantly they dressed. Balin took out Dori’s prized silver comb that had once been Ari’s. Gently, he combed out his beloved’s hair, out of his pack he removed the courting beads he’d made when he came of age. They were silver and amethyst, setting off Dori’s lavender hair.

“You can put in the matching ones…” Dori said biting his lip.

“Which set?” Balin asked curious as to Dori’s response.

“The betrothal. I’m allowed to consent for myself, I’ve lived Ori’s whole life without you and if you wish…”

“If it would not offend proprieties, I would braid the bonded beads.” Balin said as he weaved the betrothal set into Dori’s silk hair.

“It’s not right to let Ori be bonded first. It didn’t bother me before because I had no hope.” Dori said toying with the new braids.

“Beloved, we’ll ask Thorin the moment we set foot in Erebor. He’ll agree that an elder sibling should bond first.”

“Dori, son of Stor, bonded of Balin… I like the sound of it.” Dori said blushing.

“So do I. Though Dori, son of Stor, betrothed to Balin has an excellent ring as well.” Balin said kissing him.

Dori swallowed, as he broke the kiss and fumbled in his bag for a small burgundy pouch, “I made these after I knew. Mahal came to me in a dream as you. Yet, when Erebor fell I knew… well, thought I had no chance.”

Balin spilled maroon rhodolite garnets and silver betrothal, bonding and courting beads into his palm. “I thought you were a weaver…”

“I am… I drew them but had not the skill to fashion them so I traded a fine tapestry for them. I was
teased that they were more like a dam’s beads for her One.”

With worshipful awe, Balin tilted his hand so that only the bonding beads returned to the velvet pouch. “Would you do the honours?”

Blushing, Dori wove both braids for Balin after combing his hair out and then looked up into his One’s proud face.

“I have claimed and been claimed in return. We’ll announce our intention to bond on Durin’s Day.” Balin said kissing him.

Dori could hardly believe that Lord Balin, cousin and advisor to Thorin could want him but Mahal help him his body knew it.

They dressed in the nicer of their travel clothes before leaving the room with Balin’s arm around Dori’s shoulder and Dori pressed into his side.

Ori blinked upon their emergence into a dining hall.

While Nori looked on them with a sad sort of happiness and Dwalin, ever stubborn was scowling.

“I hope someday to see you so pleasantly situated.” Balin said teasingly.

“Don’t you think both braids are too soon?” Dwalin snarled.

“No.” Balin said sharply in low guttural Khazadul, “He was your friend growing up, I’ve known him his entire life. Orphan he maybe, and without powerful relatives, but that matters not. You may have forgotten but I have not, that Ones are more precious then mithril. You maybe content to live without yours but now that I’ve truly seen mine, I plan to spend every day making up for the over seventy years that I had to wait for him, At least mine is already practiced in parenthood, yours at least is quite practiced in unselfishness and that children are always first.”

Nori flinched and Dwalin went to rise.

“Sit down.” Thorin snarled, “You have not been dismissed and you will eat.”

Each in their own way, Dwalin and Nori were subdued while Kili and Ori merely looked intrigued.

Fili and his Bilbo looked pleased…

Óin smirked, “Took you too long enough… I wondered when Mahal would open Balin’s eyes.”

Dori gaped at him, “You… knew? Why didn’t you say anything?”

“I thought that you must be exceptional to refuse to speak to Balin and insist that Prince Frerin was your One so that we might agree to let you raise your brothers. Mahal were you young for it, but a more dedicated guardian could not be found. You could have left them to Dís but you didn’t, you tried to become as independent from the Durins as you could. That promising young weaver has grown into someone more then I expected, how Balin could take Ori in as an apprentice and not see always made me chuckle. He lived as a widowed Khazad and you lived like you’d taken a vow of chastity and Mahal knows that isn’t an easy state for a Khazad.” Óin chuckled.
“Speak in Westron.” Thorin grumbled.

The teasing fell away at Thorin’s chastising.

There were fruit, vegetables and fish on platters but little red meat and more wine than ale. Guests must be grateful for the food their host provides and so they joined the others in eating without complaint.

Later they returned to their shared room, where Balin stripped them both, carrying Dori to bed and proceeded to spend hours yet teaching his One more about the pleasure that could be found in his bed.

Each time they came together, Balin felt younger, light-hearted and more hopeful…

With each touch, kiss and shudder of pleasure, Dori felt his heart swelling, Balin loved him… wanted to be tied to him and for them to be the first Khazad-dim to be bound in Erebor.

To know that he’d loved Balin for longer than even Nori had been alive and to now know what it was like to be together with his One, Dori knew that he would do anything to give this to Nori…

XoooooX

Given the Troll situation, both Ori and Kili had expected to be forced to share a room with Dori or with Thorin respectively.

Yet Dori seemed to have become wrapped in Balin, and that made Ori jealous.

He was perfectly happy with Kili, he loved him and he was content in Kili’s love.

Yet he was upset that Dori would have lied! He said his One was dead and even named them, only to be proved a liar. Dori’s One lived and was his mentor! How could Dori do that to Master Balin? It was monstrous…

Compared to Nori, Ori had thought that Dori was perfect…

Kili wrapped his arms around him and kissed his neck…

“What do you think of my brother and Master Balin?” Ori frowned.

“What? I have eyes for only you…” Kili said with ardour.

“Are they trying to recapture their lost youth?”

“Balin’s more alive then ever, the way he looked at Dori, it reminds me of how I feel about you. Dori’s more relaxed, I think letting Balin in is good for him.”

“You don’t care that they lied?” Ori gaped.

“Everyone lies. It doesn’t mean its right but its true, sometimes its small things and other times its important things. Sure Dori lied but he had good intentions.”
“How can he have had good intentions?” Ori fumed.

“Imagine you were Dori’s age, you just lost both parents and they left two children. Knowing you love me, could you come to me as my One and ask my permission to take care of your brothers? To ask me if I would be willing to be responsible for them? If I would let you focus on them and wait on children on our own?”

Ori scowled, ”Of course I wouldn’t do that! My first duty is to you.”

“Fili would. If he were loads older and we’d lost Aman, Uncle Thorin and our cousins Fili would have done it.” Kili said quietly.

“I’m not Fili.” Ori snapped.

“I know. Your relationship with your brothers is complex; Fili was both playmate and protector despite being only five years older. I used to be a bit jealous, Dori was like a papa so protective and Nori was always having adventures while Fili wouldn’t let me do anything that might be adventurous. I love you for your beauty, strength and intelligence.”

That his beloved Kili should side against him upset Ori dreadfully, “How can you not be appalled at Dori’s lying? It’s repugnant! No wonder Nori lives as he does.” Ori glowered.

“It’s what a good brother would do.” Kili shrugged, “I didn’t say that it wasn’t wrong, I said that Dori had good reasons. He was trying to do the right thing and he felt that saddling Balin at the time with two younglings was unfair when his attentions were needed elsewhere. If Uncle Thorin hasn’t yelled at him for it and neither has Balin, why are you angry?”

“Wouldn’t you be if your Aman was going to have a relationship now?”

Kili shook his head, “No. Aman deserves to be happy; she lost a beloved brother, her One and her best friend. She’d already lost a daughter to be raised by a cousin and I would not begrudge her anything. She raised us as milk brothers and not many would have done that.”

Ori pushed Kili away and dressed for bed.

Kili frowned, “I don’t understand your anger. I thought you were the calm, mature one while I still suffered the temperament of a younger Khazad.”

“If I’m so unsuitable, then go sleep in Thorin’s room.” Ori said coldly.

Kili sighed, “I didn’t mean it that way. I’m concerned. Are you sure this isn’t because you were told to take the ponies and flee with Bombur?”

Ori stiffened and ignored him as he climbed into the bed.

“Ori I love you and I’m trying to understand.” Kili said quietly as he changed.

“Why can’t you be angry with me?” Ori muttered darkly from beneath the covers.

“Because your motivations for it don’t make sense to me. That doesn’t mean either of us are wrong, I think its our differences that make us strong.” Kili slipped into bed and wrapped his arms
around Ori only to find him stiff.

Kili was hurt, he loved Ori so much and to see him upset made him worried. He didn’t know how to help because he didn’t understand. He wished he did, but how could he?

For the first time he wondered if Fili was right and that they were too young, he didn’t want that to be true. Ori was his One and he wanted nothing more then to be betrothed to his beloved Ori.

They’d never gone to bed like this, usually it was him who was angry for some silly reason but Ori always managed to get him to calm down.

Kili’s heart broke at his inability to help, Mahal help him he loved his scribe.

A single tear fell down his cheek as he fell asleep.
Nori’s door opening unexpectedly before dawn had the Khazad pulling knives out…

“Peace Nori,” Gandalf whispered.

Nori flinched, “What do you want?”

“Raid the kitchen, pantry and storeroom for supplies. You have less then an hour to have such things readied before you wake the others. All of you must be gone from here before sunrise. The White Counsel is coming and they will prevent you from continuing on the quest.”

“You mean for me to steal?” Nori scowled.

“No, the supplies were set aside soon after your arrival. You must retrieve them and reload the ponies quickly. You know as well as I do that you’ll finish a lot sooner, you know where all the storerooms are. The others do not. Go quickly, the success of the Quest now hangs on you.”

Nori dressed quickly, pulling his clothes on as quickly as he could and repacking his knives. He did not put on his boots because he would be far more silent without them.

To his surprise, the ‘guards’ that he’d seen previously were all absent. Were this a real job, Nori would have suspected a trap. He always suspected a trap, that was how he managed to survive this long.

Nori made sure to only take from the previously prepared supplies, silently taking them from the kitchen and storeroom to the stables where he quickly repacked all of the ponies even tacking them up.

The ponies stayed quiet as he led them in groups of four to tie them to the fence while he went to wake the others. He had his lock pick so he slipped silently into each room, starting with Thorin…
He crept into the room calling out, “Thorin?”

Immediately, their leader was up and reaching for his sword.

“Stay, I have a message from Tharkun. We must be far by sunrise.” Nori whispered.

Thorin scowled, “I see. Gandalf mentioned that might be the case some day soon yesterday. I’ll be out presently.”

Nori bowed, “Understood sir.”

His next stop was Balin and Dori’s room.

Why? Because they would have better luck rousing Dwalin and Ori who would waste time arguing with him when haste was needed…

He unlocked their door and called out in the darkness, “Dori?”

His ever attentive brother woke at once, “Nori?”

Balin roused as well, “What is it Nori?”

“Well, Tharkun told me we must be gone ere dawn. Thorin is packing.” Nori reported.

“I see. You need me to rouse Dwalin and Dori to wake Ori?”

Nori nodded, “Yes. I’ll wake Fili. I suspect he’ll be very displeased to end our days of relaxation but the quest hangs on a swift and unseen departure.”
“Understood.” Balin sighed, “We’ll dress and pack.”

Nori bowed, “Off to bother Fili.”

He closed Dori’s door and crept across the hall.

With deft hands, he picked the lock on Fili’s door, no sooner had he opened it, did his keen ears discern a change in Fili’s breathing.

Fili’s voice held a frown, as he called out softly, no doubt to avoid waking Bilbo, “What do you want Nori?”

“We must leave. Tharkun said.” Nori scowled.

“Before dawn?” Fili whispered.

“He said we must be away from the valley before dawn. He told me to fetch the supplies and load the ponies before waking you. Claimed I’d do it faster alone since I knew where everything was.” Nori muttered darkly.

“I see. Are you going to wake Kili?”

“No, thought I’d leave that to Dori since Ori would argue and waste time. He usually obeys Dori though.”

“Dwalin?”

“Left him to Master Balin.”

“My Uncle?”

Fili’s voice sounded as if it were muffled by Bilbo’s neck, “Wake up Bilbo.”

“Tired. No more…” Bilbo pushed him away as he muttered in his sleep.

“I’ll carry you to the pony naked.” Fili warned.

That was the last that Nori heard as the door closed leaving them alone…

His next visit was to Gloin…

XooooooX

Dori was exhausted, his lower back and arse ached pleasantly but they were going to irritate him something fierce since they would be riding fast.

He couldn’t pick a lock like Nori could but he would see to it that this door was opened. He banged on the door to the room at his youngest brother shared with his One, “Kili open this door this instant. Don’t make me fetch Thorin.”

A crash came from inside and then the lock was heard before it was torn open.

“What’cha want Dori?” Kili yawned.

“We’ve got to leave now. Pack. Wake Ori and see that he’s dressed. No excuses. You have five minutes before I drag you both out. I don’t care what you wear but you will be mounted up in less then ten minutes.”

The sternness of Dori’s voice compelled Kili to obedience.
Kili swallowed, “What about Uncle Thorin?”

“Nori woke him after loading the ponies. He went to wake Fili and Bilbo after he woke me. It will be a long day and probably uncomfortable, we’ve been indolent far too long.” Dori grumbled.

“I’ll wake him. Ori will be annoyed but there is little I can do other then obey.” Kili sighed.

“I’m cold.” Ori’s petulant voice reached them both.

“Then get dressed.” Dori snapped. “You’ve got four minutes to be packed and outside. Move it.”

Ori groaned, “It’s too early.”

“If you don’t move right now, you’ll never be betrothed because the quest will fail.” Dori glared.

Ori fell out of bed at that announcement.

Dori snorted, “brat.” Then he shut the door heading back to fetch his bags.

XoooooX

Balin knew that Dwalin was a horribly grouchy person in the morning before his coffee. Unfortunately, there would be no coffee today…

He banged on his brother’s door, “Dwalin! Thorin said we’ve got to leave.”

Gruff curses in Khazadul came from within and then the door was ripped open, “Why?”

“Tharkun said that we had to leave or else the quest would end prematurely.” Balin shrugged. “You’ve got five minutes.”
Dwalin glowered. “Fine.” Then he shut the door in his elder brother’s face.

Balin sighed, Dwalin was always at his worst when he was woken early and had to forgo coffee.

XoooooX

After waking Fili’s cousin Gloin who offered to wake his brother that left Bofur, Bifur and Bombur…

Nori did so speedily before slipping back to his room for his bags.

Ten minutes after waking Balin, the rest of Company joined Nori outside.

Fili lifted Bilbo into the saddle and then climbed behind him; one hand holding the reins to his pony and the other arm was wrapped around Bilbo’s waist.

They were mounted up, with supply ponies tied to their saddle horns and they road away from the place that had been their resting place for the last week.

To their surprise ,two horses appeared out of the darkness.

“Who goes there?” Thorin hissed.

“Elrohir and Elladan, sons of Elrond. We have been charged to escort you from Imladris to Mirkwood on Ranger paths.” Elrohir said softly.

“Very well.” Thorin grumbled. “We’ll follow.”

The Elven ranger twins leaned close to their horses’ necks and with gentle kicks spurred them forward.
With Thorin’s Company following their lead out of the Valley.

Nori noticed that Bilbo fell asleep but Fili stayed awake no doubt to make sure that Bilbo stayed safe.

Kili, though immature did the same, letting Ori ride with him so his brother stayed safe despite how tired he was…

Dori and Balin, ever vigilant rode together.

His One, Dwalin glowered more darkly then usual but rode on in silence…

‘It would be a very long day…’ Nori thought with irritation.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

I used a bit of the Goblintown bit from Over hill and under hill but I did try to be as original as possible.

Chapter nine

They rode on, spurned to faster paces as the fingers of dawn spread across the sky.

Elladan slowly rode back through the company handing them leaf-wrapped packages. “Elven travel bread.”

The Khazad looked at the packages warily but they were hungry and cooking was not an option.

Nori had of course heard of lembas but it was never taken or in truth sold, it must be granted. The later would spoil it for some reason…

The longer they rode the darker the sky became, there was a powerful storm brewing.

Elladan rode through the company a second time and gave them more lembas which they ate less warily.

By noon, they reached the Misty Mountains.

“Your ponies can’t carry you.” Elrohir yelled over the wind. “You’ll have to walk and guide them. The path is too steep. It’s meant to be walked not ridden. It will prevent us from being followed and the weather should cover us, hiding our scent.”

Grumbling, the Khazad all dismounted.

“Send Elrohir and Nori ahead uncle to lead us.” Fili advised.

“Bofir and Elladan can bring up the rear.” Elrohir smirked.

“Fair enough.” Thorin grumbled.

Nori was like a mountain goat, but given his habit of jumping rooftop to rooftop it wasn’t a surprise.

Having an elven ranger at either end of their party made perfect sense to Nori. The icy growing in his heart hadn’t blinded him from seeing a connection growing between Elladan and Bofir, likely being Elladan’s twin it was logical that Elrohir had seen it too.

The ponies were skittish and frightened, only elven and khazad strength kept them from falling off
the narrow path or running off in terror.

The deeper they went into the grey mountains the stronger the storm seemed to be, as if they were walking into it’s heart rather then away from it.

Then a large lighting charged boulder crashed into the mountain above them, letting rocks rain down.

Then Elladan shouted something Nori didn’t quite understand.

Ori and Balin blinked.

Ahead of him Nori heard Fili ask,

“What’s wrong?”


“They’re a myth,” Fili stammered.

Then something hit the mountain…

Fili screamed, “Bilbo!”

“FILI!” Bilbo cried out.

The company watched in horror as one third of them disappeared.

Elladan yelled, “Cut the packs! Loosen the ponies! They’ll go mad if we keep them. The horses will look after them. They know the paths.”

As terrible an idea as it was, the loss of a third of their company including Bilbo spurred them into action.

Nori yelled, “Kili’s down! Dori! Ori’s gone!” he had watched in fascinated horror as rocks fell striking Kili and Ori as well as knocking Ori, Bombur, Bofur and Bilbo off the path. Dwalin had leapt off the path lunging for Ori before disappearing into the dark.

Nori’s heart twisted, Mahal…

Ori lost was painful but not Dwalin too…

Dori who had been at near the back of their party striped his pony and ran past a shell-shocked Nori, nimbly making his way over the steep but narrow path with his back against the mountain. His face was drenched covered in a mixture of rain and tears. “I’ll carry the prince. Mahal protect Ori!”

The ponies and horses had to leap the missing portion of the path, but what little remained was wide enough for a two-legged being to shuffle across. A Khazad could do so tolerably well while an elf who possess long but narrow feet rather then short stubby ones crossed the span in three strides.
When they counted their companions once all had crossed the narrowed place, they discovered, they had lost Bombur, Bofur, Kili, Bilbo and Dwalin.

Nori was clearly distraught; as childish and cruel that Ori could be, his youngest brother was still important to him. As for Dwalin, not only was he Thorin’s shield brother, he was also Nori’s one.

Balin grasped Dori’s hand, helping him across.

Numb with cold and fear for his one, Fili joined Nori and together the old friends struggled on into the storm.

Elladan and Bifur helped one another as well.

The decimated company trudged along, hoping for the best but fearing the worst.

XooooooX

Alright so diving off a cliff after a falling Khazad while wearing a huge axe and armour wasn’t Dwalin’s brightest idea but the weight of it made him fall faster. He managed to grab Ori with one arm and then they ended up landing hard on one of the things Bilbo had called a ‘storm giant’.

It might have been raining hard but the flashes of lightning showed him that he wasn’t alone on this precarious perch…

The lighting helped Dwalin see that Bilbo had also ended up on the storm giant and he snorted as he lashed Ori to his back…

“Bilbo?” the familiar voice of Bofur rang out in the storm.

“Here!” Bilbo yelled back.

“Great we’ve got the halfling.” Dwalin’s grumble even reached him.

Bilbo took charge, “Who fell?”

“I’m with Bombur.” Bofur called back.

“Ori hit his head or something hit him.” Dwalin’s scowl was audible. “Where are we?”

“On a storm giant.” Bilbo gasped once he’d looked about.

“What do we do Bilbo?” Bofur asked.

“Climb towards one another and make a plan but be careful if the storm giant hits the mountain again we might be thrown.”

“Where to climb halfling?” Dwalin drawled.

“The arm! It’s going to get the closest to the mountains.” Bilbo called back.

Whether it was Bilbo’s claimed natural ability to lead when things got tough or because Dwalin
was subconsciously believed him to to be Fili’s One and thus a royal consort, the Khazad obeyed at once. With the exception of Ori but Dwalin had tied Ori to his back and had climbed towards the arm, same arm Bilbo had directed them too.

The small portion of the company crouched together, all the conscious Khazad following Bilbo’s direction.

Crash!

Crunch!

Clang!

The storm giant they were clinging to was now wrestling another giant.

Bang!

Their giant was flung against the same mountain they had fallen from.

“Jump!” Bilbo yelled, “For your lives jump!”

Bilbo and his three conscious Khazad companions jumped off the storm giant’s arm and landed on the path.

They were cold, shivering and wet through as well as traumatised from their ride on the storm giant.

The small group huddled together against the side of the mountain.

Dwalin counted his companions; Thank Mahal there were still five counting himself.

To his left, Bilbo let out a sigh of relief, “I don’t know where the others are but we need a dry place I can examine Ori. Then we can see what supplies we have between us. Hopefully, we’re not far ahead of the others.”

“If they survived the rockslide that Ori was struck by.” Dwalin scowled.

“Bofur, scout ahead to find us a cave or even a dry spot under an overhang.” Bilbo said ignoring Dwalin’s words.

Bofur came back quickly. “I found a cave. It’s small but dry.”

“Did you thoroughly explore it?” Dwalin snarled

Bofur frowned, “It’s small, doesn’t go back far, I checked all the nooks but it’s empty. No sign of any animal spore.”

“Any sign of Orcs?”

Bofur shook his head, “Nothing.”

“We need to get out of the rain Dwalin.” Bilbo frowned, “You can explore it yourself when we get
there.”

“Oh Mahal take it!” Dwalin snarled.

They followed Bofur to the cave in question, grateful to get out of the rain

Wet through though it was, Dwalin took off his cloak and laid Ori on it gently...

As the Ones to the Princes officially claimed as such or not, Dwalin would say he was just protecting the Durin line if asked.

No sooner had Dwalin set Ori down, the soldier followed Bofur to explore the cave to ensure their safety.

Reluctantly, leaving Bilbo alone with an unconscious, injured Ori and a shivering Bombur who was rubbing his ankle in a worrisome way.

Bombur wasn’t much good for anything other then cooking to be honest.

Dwalin regarded Bilbo with suspicion, considering the incident with the Trolls, his kinship with Nori and his friendship with the elves to be signs of his untrustworthiness.

So when he returned to the rest of their group to find Bilbo forcefeeding Ori something he grabbed Bilbo by his hair and held a knife to his throat.

“What did you give the prince’s betrothed halfling?” Dwalin snarled.

“I’m a healer,” Bilbo gasped. “I treated his wounds and gave him a small amount of willow bark to dull the pain so he heals. If he feels too much pain then he will heal too slowly.”

“I wish cousin Oin were here. I don’t trust you halfling. You have the elder prince too much under your thumb.”

“I’ve done nothing to be ashamed of with Fili.” Bilbo said hoarsely.

“Let him go Dwalin!” Bofur begged. “He’s the only healer we’ve got and Ori’s hurt. If he died and Bilbo could have saved him what will you do?”

“If he dies halfling, I’ll kill you.” Dwalin snarled as he dropped him.

Bilbo rubbed his throat and coughed, “I just gave him enough to help him sleep comfortably. Oin can take care of the rest when we meet up.”

“I’ll keep watch!” Dwalin snapped. “Get some sleep the rest of you.”

Bilbo pulled another powder from his satchel and mixed it with water from his flask. He tested it and then took a swig. He went first to Bombur and held it out, “One sip. It will warm you prevent you from getting a chill despite being wet through.”

Bombur eyed him warily.

“For Mahal’s sake!” Bofur snapped, snatching the bone cup and taking a swig, “He drank first
cousin.”

Subdued Bombur accepted the cup and took a single sip before handing the cup back.

Shaking with nervousness, Bilbo carried the cup to Dwalin, “It will warm you.”

Dwalin slapped it from his hand, spilling it, “I want nothing from you halfling much less elvish potions.”

Bilbo reached for the cup and tripped, sprawling before he nervously returned to Ori’s side.

Dwalin sat near the entrance of the cave looking out at the storm while Bilbo, Bombur and Bofur tried to sleep.

He hadn’t dozed off but he was lost in thought to Dwalin’s own shame when Bilbo’s voice sounded in his ear. “Orcs.”

Dwalin reached for his axe.

Bilbo hissed as he grabbed his wrist, “Don’t or you’ll doom us all. Ori’s dead! Tell them that. I’ll hide and look after him. You’re travelling smiths; remember it! I’ll take Ori and find the others, I’ll bring help.”

Dwalin nodded sharply, out of the corner of his eye he watched as Bilbo silently returned to Ori and pulled the young Khazad’s cloak over his face like a shroud and tugged him towards the corner where Bilbo tripped earlier. Then the hobbit slipped into shadows and hide.

Dwalin, who had never been very good at pretend, attempted to act surprised and to struggle. “Filthy beasts! Unhand us!”

“Dwalin!” Bofur yelled and struggled as well.

“Shut up! Ori’s dead, his skull cracked by falling rock and Bilbo fell off the path. Do you want to die tonight too?” Dwalin snarled.

The words seemed to stun Bofur and thank Mahal he fell silent.

Bombur didn’t seem to wake and he too was dragged away.

They were dragged through what Dwalin had foolishly thought was a natural crack at the back of their cave.

There would have been six to each Khazad plus a few left over to take Bilbo but they’d only seen or bothered with Dwalin, Bofur and Bombur.

Then to further disquiet Dwalin, the crack closed with a snap and thankfully due to Bilbo’s quick thinking the Princes’ Ones were safe on the other side.

Unfortunately, that meant that Dwalin and his Khazad companions were prisoners to the hated Orcs.

Thankfully, Dwalin had been born in Erebor so he could somewhat see in the deep, darkness once
his eyes adjusted.

Though Dwalin had little hope that he could plan and execute a jailbreak, he did his best to kept track of their path despite the passages that crossed and tangled.

The air became stuffy reminding Dwalin of the Erebor forges…

To make matters worse, the orcs were rough; pinching unmercifully, laughing in those stony voices Dwalin remembered in his darkest dreams that were consequences of the Orc-Khazad war.

Ahead of them came a glimmer of red light like fire…

As soon as the sight greeted them, their Orc capturers became to sing in time to their marching.

“Clap! Snap the black crack!
Grip, grab! Pinch, nab!
Down, down to Orc-town
You go lads!
Clash, crash! Crush, smash!
Hammer and tongs! Knocker and gongs!
Pound, pound, far underground!
Ho, ho lads!
Swish, smack! Whip crack!
Batter and beat! Yammer and bleat!
Work, work nor dare to shirk,
While Orcs quaff, and orcs laugh,
Round and round far underground,
Below, lads.

If Dwalin hadn’t fought these accursed creatures during the war and learnt something of their vile cruelty, he might have been terrified but he was a soldier and as long as he knew the rest were safe he could face this.

Yes the walls echoed ‘clap, snap’ and ‘crush, smash’…

Their ugly laughter every time they called them ‘lad’ made Bofur tremble.

The orcs repeated the song and they pulled out whips at ‘swish, smack’ which they cracked to drive them along like cattle. Only the orcs were less likely to miss compared to men who herded their flocks or other creatures they raised in great numbers.

Bombur hadn’t woken surprisingly until he was thrashed with a whip…

Yet he ran a bit faster then Dwalin and Bombur’s cousin, to Dwalin’s disgust, the rotund Khazad bleated like a goat’s kid.

Bofur murmured pleas to Mahal…

Then they stumbled into a large cavern that nearly called to mind a Khazad throne room…

As a soldier, Dwalin tried to commit everything to mind…
From the great red fire at the centre of the cavern and torches along the walls that made it all the more stuffy but nowhere near the heat of a Khazad forge…

His eyes narrowed as he recognized the large Orce seated atop a rock and surrounded by armoured orcs.

Azog the Defiler…

How he longed to close the distance and to kill the filthy creature but he had two Khazad who no doubt looked to him to save them.

To Dwalin’s surprise, he wished that Nori was here, for Nori could surely have come up with a trick to free them.

They were slammed to their knees, where immediately they were stripped of their fine clothes and weapons.

Once that was done, they were chained with their hands behind them and Dwalin found that they were linked together as well so he was in front, Bofur the middle and Bombur brought up the rear.

Dwalin knew orcs having been trained to fight them since he was young for he was a soldier by trade…

They made nothing beautiful like elves and Khazad…

Though they could tunnel and mine as well as a common Khazad, they were lazy choosing rather too force their slaves to do such labours.

Hammers, axes, swords, daggers, pickaxes and tongs as well as instruments of torture they make well or have made by slaves.

Even before the great Orc-Khazad war that led to the Battle of Azanulbizar, Dwalin had heard stories of the great and terrible War machines that had ensured the fall not once but twice of their holy mountain and birthplace of the Longbeard clan; Mount Gundabad.

To the Longbeards at least, according to his sire Fundin at any rate, the entirety of the Misty Mountains were sacred to them.

No less then three settlements had been delved there…

Mount Gundabad…

Khazad-dûm…

As well as, which is where Dwalin was suspicious they now found themselves, Mount Gram…

It rankled to have the Misty Mountains overrun by the foul orcs…

Dwalin was flung to land painfully on his front, due to his hands tied behind him, he had no way to protect himself.

Then the hated voice of Azog the Defiler filled his ears, “Who are these miserable creatures?”
“Dwarves!” an orc spat and he gave Dwalin a vicious kick. “We found the sheltering on our back porch.”

Azog snarled, “What did you mean by doing this? Up to no good. Even orcs knows a dwarf can’t be trusted. Spying on us, you lost your precious Mount Gundabad and Mount Gram to the likes of us and your Dwarrowdelf to a Bal-roq! You’re nothing but murderers and elf friends! Speak you miserable creatures.”

Dwalin longed to lash out but he would not, seeing as he was the only leader they had, and taking his brother Balin and cousin Thorin as models, he said sharply, “Dwalin the Khazad at your service.” His politeness was icy and not even skin deep. “We are mere smiths, descendants of the survivors of Nogrod We are poor and travel from place to place making what money we can. Well, my fat companion is new to our ranks. Since our last cook quit, for our vagabond life was too much for him, this fellow who finds himself with too many mouths to feed at home wished to escape and has travelled with us a short while.”

“A likely story!” Azog snarled.

“If you would permit me to finish. We were assured, lied to I suppose, that the ranger paths were safe. The storm caught us, then one of our number was injured by a rock slide caused by the storm giants fighting and since our only healer fell from the path he couldn’t be treated and died not long after we took shelter. A pity since he was our party’s secretary, he was rather young but he wanted to see something of the world.” Dwalin shrugged.

It was partially true at least…

“Half-truths and lies for I was told you were five but only three and a dead one were found. One you seemed a leader among you, I know you all too well Dwalin, son of Fundin. Tell me dwarf, do you travel with Thorin Oakenshield? I remember your face, for you two fought together at Phurunargian.” Azog sneered, “Shield brothers were you not?”

Dwalin shrugged, answering truthfully, “Where Thorin is, I know not. He maybe, we have separated for sometime. Battle of Azanulbizar decimated both our numbers did it not? You were injured and thought dead, while our chieftain killed and for what? We ended with exactly the same territory we started with. The whole thing was madness, Dain maybe an Izbad but he was once a brave true Khazad or so I thought. Perhaps, he joined us hoping that all of the elder line of Durin would fall. I am just a soldier, I am not meant to think or question merely to obey.”

Azog the Defiler scowled, “You seem to speak the truth yet I trust you not. Maybe suffering will loosen your tongue dwarf!”

With that their orc capturers began to whip them in earnest…
Bombur…

Bofur…

The most painful of all…

Dwalin…

While they weren’t close, Dwalin was still his One though unclaimed…

His heart was turning to ice; he could feel it…

Dwalin was gone…

Nori was sure he was dead…

No one could survive falling from the high ranger paths of the Misty Mountains…

What had he to live for now?

Nothing…

Following their success or failure at Erebor, Nori would die either by fate or choice.

Nori carried as much as he could, while he lacked the great strength that Dori and Ori had, he still had more then most.

Dori had Kili while carrying many of their supplies, twice as much as most of them but he was supported by Bali, his One.

Oin and Gloin had Oin and Bilbo’s healing supplies split between them.

Crushed by the lost of their own Ones, Nori and Fili gravitated to one another.

Nori may have begun at the front but with Ori, Dwalin and Bilbo gone, he had drifted closer to the middle.

Or had Fili moved towards the front of what was left of their company…?

The Ones to the princes of the House of Durin were lost…

How could Fili recover from this?

Not only had he grown into his role as Thorin’s heir in truth since Bilbo was found to be his One. There had been something so alive in his old playmate compared to his memories of years previous since they had arrived at Bag End…

Prior to that, Fili had believed that his One had died in the same battle as his sire.

Fili who led with his heart as much as his intellect, who would have reign as a musician king, he was more of a natural diplomat then his predecessor to the position of heir but no general.
Kili was young, but Nori dare not guess what the loss of Ori would do to their jeweller prince.

Spoilt though Ori was and small-minded, Nori would not have wished him gone even it would have saved himself from exposed as a female-bodied male Khazad.

Dwalin had leapt by choice not for Bilbo but for Ori, probably because he was closer to Ori when he fell.

His One had died trying to save his brother, yet Nori dare not believe that Dwalin would have done such a thing for him. No, Dwalin believed that he brought down the honour of his family merely by breathing.

At least Fili who wasn’t even his One, understood why he did what he did…

Heartsick, Nori trudged on.

Then Elrohir selected him to join him in searching out a cave or at least an overhang dry enough to allow Oin to examine Kili.

Nori may not have Dori’s strength but even as encumbered as he was, Nori was still as sure-footed as a mountain goat.

When they came to a small cave, upon finding a living Ori and a note signed by Bilbo stating that they all lived, Nori broke down.

Elrohir frowned after reading the note aloud, “Captured? No rander had brought tale of this or been lost on this path due to Orces. Stay with your brother. I’ll hurry to the others with this news.”

Once he was alone, Nori fell to his knees.

He had refused to truly cry since they had buried their parents.

Yet now, Nori cried, no tears of mourning but tears of relief…

Alive…

Dwalin and Ori were alive…

He thanked Mahal for Fili’s sake that Bilbo lived…

Knowing that Bombur had young ones at home, he was glad that Bombur had survive the fall from the path.

He also prayed that Bilbo’s attempt to gain some intelligence as to Dwalin’s location would succeed.

Nori would have felt more at ease if Bilbo had waited and let him follow.

Nori hated that Bilbo had put himself in such danger…

Such an enterprise should have been put in his own hands…
For Bilbo and Fili had a relationship that was strong for they balanced one another in a way that they had hoped Ori and Kili would grow to have.

They had something worth living for while Nori had nothing…

If Bilbo returned safe, then by the Arkenstone, Nori would not allow Fili’s consort to go into danger alone.

XoooooX

How long or short the time between now and the beginning of the beating, Dwalin knew not…

With Gandalf in Imladris and Bilbo guarding Ori, as well as being separated from his King and his brother, Dwalin was the only leader their trio had. He had to set a good example and show the strength that was in the Line of Durin.

XoooooX

Twenty minutes after Elrohir and Bilbo had left him and Ori both, the others arrived.

Fili snatched up the note from Bilbo and held it to his heart.

Oin gestured for Dori to lay Kili down beside Ori, after a quick exam Oin agreed that Bilbo had treated Kili’s unofficially betrothed consort-to-be appropriately and gave a similar treatment for Kili for they shared the same injuries.

Meanwhile, the Elven twins used Elrohir’s rope and Elladan’s bedroll to create a sort of contraption to carry both Kili and Ori from this place safely.

Their healer and his brother were all that they could spare…

Thankfully, Ori and Kili were slight enough that together they equalled the weight of someone like Dwalin so they were relatively easy to remove from this place.

Elrohir told Gloin the safest, easiest place to set up a camp and when it might be safe enough to light a fire.

Then Ori and Kili were as safe as possible despite their injuries…

The rest of the company waited…

Most nervously staying as close to the path and as far from the interior of the cave so not to join Dwalin, Bombur and Bofur in captivity.

Without Bilbo’s return with news, they could not hope to plan a rescue.

They were not even sure which crack was the door that Bilbo had referred to in his note.

They dare not explore too much for fear of setting off any alarm that would alert the Orcs to their
presents so they congregated where Ori had been found.

The longer they waited, they the more impatient Thorin became…

Bifur who was Bofur’s elder brother and Bombur’s cousin was usually silent since he had lost the power of speech thanks to the Orc axe stuck in his forehead. Yet, his hands were even remarkably silent, well still.

Elladan’s quiet nature seemed perfect and he stayed close to Bofir…

Balin had been silent since Dwalin had leapt after Ori, but the two of them spent much of their time watching Nori and whispering.

Nori hoped they were only wondering how he was taking Dwalin being captured and likely tortured by Orcs.

Given Balin’s position as Thorin’s primary advisor, Nori was terrified that Balin would discover his secret…

Dori had stopped harping on his choices and let it be when Balin realised they were Ones. It was as if Dori stopped being so uptight and just relaxed…

Finally, Fili snapped…

“We should have gone already! It’s been too long!” Fili said sharply. “Bilbo must have gotten captured!”

To a point, Nori understood completely.

“The foolish halfling should have waited for us!” Thorin growled, “No doubt, it was his fault they were captured!”

“Oh?” came Nori’s voice, “Just who was it who saved the ponies your majesty? An accused thief and your hired burglar! I think if Bilbo went to look around he learned something. I bet the lad’s come back to tell us something. I think I can hear his breathing.”

Immediately, Nori heard Bilbo choke.

“Bilbo? Bilbo are you there?” Fili whispered.

“Yes?” Bilbo sheathed his knife and scurried over to them out of the shadows, throwing his arms around Fili. “You’re safe! I was worried you’d be captured too! I tried to find them but I got lost and just made my way back. I encountered the strangest creature and only just escaped. I know how the goblins surprised us though. I think the mud I’m covered in and the fact that I’m not a known creature will help me here. I tried to get in by another way, I can’t open their backdoor by myself.”

No one else had seen Bilbo appear out of thin air…

Something about that made Nori uneasy…

“Thank Mahal you’re safe. We’re all filthy so it matters not. Maybe Dori can help? He can wrestle
a bear and win, perhaps he can open this backdoor of theirs?” Fili said into his hair as he held him tightly.

“We need all of us and Dwalin is a friend of old as well as Thorin’s shield brother, otherwise I’d leave him to rot.” Dori scowled, “It wouldn’t be fair to leave Bombur or Bofur because of him. I’ll do my best.”

Nori flinched, he felt guilty about the loss of Dori’s friendship with Dwalin who was Balin’s younger brother.

“We can hid our scents and we’re very good at tracking Orcs. We'll go with Bilbo if Master Dori can open the door. Though Nori might be of some assistance. The rest should stay and be ready to help us when we come back. Setting up traps and planning an ambush.” Elrohir said sternly.

“Why should we listen to you elf?” Thorin grumbled.

“We’re older then you and we’ve been hunting them since they murdered our mother.” Elladan said sharply. “We’re lighter of foot and silent, you have Master Balin and yourself to plan traps and make battle plans. Four is faster than all.”

Fili swallowed, “They’re right uncle. We’re wasting time arguing. The sooner they go, the sooner we can run.” Before he let go of Bilbo, he reached behind him for Kili’s arrows and then he dropped them in Bilbo’s empty quiver, they would do his One more good then Kili right now…

“Fine!” Thorin snapped. “Dori open the door that the halfling speaks of!”

But Dori had already gone following the drag marks heading for back of the cave, feeling around for the crack of said door. Upon finding it, he used his great strength and shoved hard.

‘It moved, thank Mahal,’ Nori thought, ‘it moved.’

Then again, he had little doubt that there was anything Dori couldn’t do when it came to a test of strength…

Together with Elrohir, Elladan and Bilbo, Nori headed to the back of the cave.

It had opened just enough for slim persons to slip through…

Nori being far skinnier then a Khazad ought to be got in easily, and the elven twins too.

Bilbo having being on a sort of diet due to adventuring got in by sucking in his formerly slight paunch of a belly.

Dori went to tug the door closed and hissed, “How shall I know to open it again?”

“An owl!” Elrohir whispered, “Listen for an owl!”

The passages twisted and tangled but Elladan and Elrohir were keen trackers so they didn’t lose the path that the orcs had taken when they had dragged Bombur, Bofur and Dwalin after capturing the luckless khazad.
The longer they pressed on the stuffier the passage seemed to be...

Eventually, there was a red glow ahead of them.

“Careful now,” Elrohir whispered, “we’ve been lucky so far but I think we’re about to enter their stronghold…”

Then the elder elf fell silent once more.

Silently, their weapons of choice readying the four crept ever so carefully…

Ahead they soon spotted a great fire, all along the walls of this cavern were torches.

Perched on large rock was a huge orc, with a hook for a hand…

All around said rock were armed orcs.

Pinned in a kneeling position were their missing companions they were chained with their hands tied behind them being whipped…

‘It was too easy,’ Nori thought with a scowl as he spun a knife in each hand.

Then to Nori’s surprise, the lights went out…

XoooooX

Dwalin was on the last vestige of his strength…

Bombur had passed out long ago, while Bofur struggle to stay conscious through the pain.

Then when all hope seemed lost…

The torches and the great bonfire were extinguished in a tower of glowing smoke that filled the room to the roof.

White sparks flashed everywhere…

A great cacophony of sounds filled the cracking air

A blue flash carved the air like a flash of lighting, not once but three times in such succession.

Dwalin felt his chains fall from his wrists, knowing this was a rescue he grabbed Bombur hoping that Bofur would help him.

“Fly you fools! Fly! Follow me!” came the familiar voice of Gandalf.

They followed the glow of Gandalf’s sword.

“Quick, quick, the touches will soon be relit!” Gandalf hissed.
“Yes Gandalf! A moment.” Then Elrohir lifted Bombur with one arm as easily as Dwalin could have lifted a pig if he’d not been whipped while sheathing a sword.

Then they were running back the way they had come, tired they maybe, but with a host of angry orcs soon to chase them, they had little choice.

Then Gandalf stepped to the side and surprisingly counted, “Oin and Gloin had gone ahead with Ori and Kili. That’s four. Fli, Thorin, Balin, Dori and Bofir make nine. Here we have: Elrohir, Elladan, Nori, Bilbo, Dwalin, Bombur and Bofur, that makes seventeen without myself. All accounted for. No ponies or horses but I believe we have supplies. Thankfully we have Elven Rangers with us so we might know where we are, but we’ll have hordes of Orcs at our heels! So on we go, don’t dawdle. Elladan, you’re the fastest and the best tracker, run ahead and give the signal. Come lads run!”

The group took to their heels and ran on…

Nori surprised Bilbo when he ran towards him and threw him over his shoulder, because the hobbit had had been straggling. Since it seemed right now that Khazad, wizard and elf seemed to run faster.

Unfortunately, Bilbo was upside and facing the sounds of their pursuers but Nori couldn't take the time to flip him around.

They sounded horribly angry but they had their company accounted for if they could escape completely.

Nori’s companions except perhaps for Galdalf were tired; to make things their rescued friends as well as Ori and Kili were injured.

“I'll hold them off a while, follow Elrohir.” Gandalf ordered.

Elrohir snapped, “You can’t! We can’t leave you!”

Gandalf smirked, “I have Glamdring, the one they call Biter. Tell Thorin to draw and stay at the end of the party for they fear his sword as well and call it Beater. Fly you fools!”

Nori obeyed and fairly flew the way they had come with Elrohir carrying Bombur, Dwalin and Bofur following behind.

No one else had helped Bilbo and he had a connection with the hobbit, it was for Fili’s sake that Nori looked after the smallest of their Company.

Also it was to keep him from trying to help Dwalin and betray himself.

“Hurry!” they heard Elladan calling up ahead.

Nori threw Bilbo through the crack aiming him at Fili and then grabbed the edge of the door and tugged. He didn’t have Dori or Ori’s strength but he pulled it just enough that Elrohir could get through with Bombur. Smugly, the ‘reformed’ thief darted through and kept running.

He ran right out of the cave, he ran not only from the Orcs but from Dwalin as well.
Nori couldn’t trust himself not to hover over him, also he wanted to let Oin know the injuries to expect and he was the fastest now that he was unburdened…

XoooooX

Dori had never considered Nori strong, not like himself and even surprisingly Ori.

Yet when he heard the door move after Bilbo was tossed at Fili, he realised that Nori was a lot stronger then he’d suspected.

Bilbo had landed at Fili’s feet, he let his Heart pull him up and then climbed on his back, “Run! For the love of Illuvatar run! Thorin, Gandalf said as soon as they’re through come behind and watch our flank.” Gasping, Bilbo clung to Fili but not too tight that his mate couldn’t breathe…

“Go Fili!” Thorin barked.

The panicked look on Nori’s face wasn’t that of a coward, it was the face of a runner, a messenger, someone charged with dire news or to call for reinforcements.

Balin frowned, “Why didn’t he go back for Dwalin?”

Dori chuckled, “He’s run ahead to tell Oin how injured they are. I’ll wager my silver coming-of-age beads on it.”

Then Dwalin stumbled through the crack collapsing at Dori’s feet…

Dori and Balin exchanged a look; Balin gave Dori a sharp nod.

They each took an arm and Dori hissed, “Keep your feet off the ground and hold onto us.”

Thorin waved them on, “Go. Get Dwalin to Oin!”

“Can’t leave Thorin.” Dwalin said just before passing out on them.

Behind them were Bofir and Elladan, with the later carrying Bofur who likewise seemed to have fainted.

Elrohir was ahead of them still carrying Bombur so Dori merely had to keep him in his sights.

Between two Elven Rangers, Dori felt that they would reach wherever it was that Elrohir sent Oin with Ori.

XoooooX

Nori ran following the path, following the directions he remembered Elrohir giving Gloin.

He had to let Oin know how injured they were.
Dwalin was alive but injured…

Having delivered Bilbo safe and unharmed to Fili, Nori knew that Fili had to be just behind him.

If Fili were wise then he too would be carrying Bilbo as they ran from the Orcs…

XoooooX

Dwalin was unconscious…

Yet he knew he’d seen Nori…

The look on the thief’s face when he emerged from the smoke trying support the unconscious Bombur…

It was pride and after a brief glance at Bofur, as well as Bombur being snatched up by an elf.

Being saved by a wizard, two elves, a hobbit and Nori was a bit embarrassing.

Yet his heart seemed to jump when Nori looked at him with pride.

Nori who instead of turning and just running Dwalin had seen him turn back running towards the Orcs only to return with Bilbo, Fili’s supposed One hanging upside over his shoulder. Not to mention he managed to run faster then the rest of them, no doubt arriving second to the crack.

Dwalin was disheartened to find Nori gone when he finally reached the cave.

He didn’t understand why Nori’s absence hurt but it did.

Dori, his old friend and Balin hauled him up and he was leaning heavily on them.

He was hurt when Thorin ordered them to take him to safety and his last bit of strength was to complain that they couldn’t leave Thorin.

XooooooX

Nori ran down the steep, stony path that led from stormy mountain pass to the low lands.

Running like a mad thing, he blazed past Gloin heading for the smoke from what he presumed was Oin’s fire.

He felt to his knees gasping, “On the run. Rescued Dwalin and others. Chased by Orcs.”

“How bad is Dwalin hurt?

“Bleeding from being whipped. Had orc-made chains around his wrists. Must treat to avoid being tracked by his blood.”

“Bombur?”
“Was unconscious when rescued, probably fainted from pain, Elrohir was carrying him. Bofur probably helped by Elladan and Bofir. Bilbo tired, too slow. Carried from inside mountain. Fili has him now. Trusted Dwalin to Dori and Balin. Fastest runner with elves helping others.”

“Kili give the boy water. Then help me get this ready to move.”

Thundering came from the mountain.

Soon after Fili ran towards their make shift camp with Bilbo on his back.

Fili yelled in Khazdul, “Kill the fire!”

Nori lept on the low fire and stomped it out.

“They’re coming?” Oin called back.

“Yes! Grab only what you can carry and prepare to run!”

Knowing of course that Ori would refuse his help, Nori helped Kili and then Kili went to assist Ori.

Fili and Bilbo gathered what they could from what Oin had about him, as did Ori and Kili.

It didn’t take long maybe twenty minutes for the rest of their party to arrive gasping for breath with Gandalf, Thorin and Gloin at the flank.

“Enjoyed your rest?” Gandalf snorted and without waiting for a reply barked, “Good! Now run! The sun is coming but they are still behind us and angry!”

They ran on and on, farther then any sane person could run…

It wasn’t until the sun was blazing and it was light all around that Gandalf called a halt.

“Lembas Elladan if you and Elrohir haven’t lost your supply.”

They had thankfully stopped beside a stream…

The elven twins handed them the same elven food they had yesterday as they crossed the mountains.

Had it really been yesterday that they left Imladris?

They were all sore and half dead with hunger and exhaustion.

They drank from the stream after eating and everyone refilled their flasks with fresh water.

“Sleep, the orcs can’t stand the sun. I’ll wake you at dusk.” Gandalf said kindly. “They’ll come after us all the angrier, it is terrible luck that we stumbled across the orcs of Moria and angered their chieftain…”

“Mahal help us all, our quest must be doomed.” Dwalin grumbled, “For Azog the Defiler still
lives.”

Thorin growled, grabbing Dwalin by his shredded shirt’s laces, “Tell me your lying Dwalin! Azog must be dead!”

“I saw him myself Thorin. Azog will chase us, he hates your kind as much as you hate his. He hates your and your line the most and were he to know that he was chasing you he would follow you to the ends of the earth I’m afraid. Rest now while you can.” Gandalf advised.

Nori was tired but he couldn’t leave Dwalin the way he was.

He filched Dwalin’s pack, that he’d left in the cave when they’d gone to rescue the Captives and Dori had thought best to save.

Nori limped up to Oin, “He’ll need to change and you’ll need a second pair of hands to clean his wounds.”

“The elves have the others to treat.” Oin grumbled. “I’ll look after my cousin. Where’re Bilbo?”

Nori gestured tiredly, “Fell asleep eating. I know not what adventure he had but he’s exhausted.”

“You can help. You good with a knife for more then killing boy?” Oin asked.

Nori nodded.

“Good.” Oin said gruffly.

Nori was surprised that Dwalin didn’t argue against his help.

XooooooX

Dwalin was too sore and confused to complain.

Nori had avoided him since he completed elementary weapons training…

The young Khazad who was barely older then Fili, had avoided him much of the journey.

Yet Dwalin had been thinking of Nori the entire time he was a captive…

Having wished Nori was with them because Nori would have found an escape even if Orcs surrounded them.

The look of pride Nori had when he appeared with Bombur and Bofur had affected him strangely as well.

Now he was too tired and in pain to argue foolishly about help.

“Take his clothes off, I’ll return with soaproot.” Oin said sharply. “After he’s clean, we’ll bandage his wounds and you can help dress him.”
Balin watched as Nori flushed, “Yes Healer.”

Nori then pulled a knife from his hip, and Dwalin felt no fear even when the flat of blade touched his skin.

He was surprisingly aroused but that was short-lived because of the pain of his wounds.

Nori was sacrificing his sleep to help him and Dwalin wasn’t sure quite why…

Soon Dwalin was as naked as the day he was birthed…

Nori crouched and slipped under his arm and slowly stood, “Come one, let’s get you in the water.”

Dwalin was helped to a small pool, downstream from where the Company had drunk.

He was lowered into the water, yet Nori seemed not to get wet…

Then Dwalin watched as Nori sat on the bank to remove his boots and roll his boots up to the knee. He was surprised to find that Nori removed knife after knife lying them beside his boots, covering them with his cloak and his shirt.

Yet beneath his shirt was a strange undershirt that he’d never seen before… it was greyed the same colour as all of Nori’s shirts.

“You aren’t going to join me?” Dwalin asked only to be embarrassed by the weakness of his voice.

Nori snorted, “I’m a private person. I don’t strip out in the open. The only person other then my brother to ever to see me naked since Aman and Adad died would be my One.”

Dwalin frowned, “I thought you didn’t have One or at least didn’t believe in the existence of them.”

XooooooX

Nori gaped at Dwalin, “How could I not believe in Ones when Dori, Ori and Fili have them? No, it was more a matter of not believing I deserved mine. A sentiment that Dori previous believed and Balin seems keen to make him forget.”

“Hm.” Dwalin said gruffly.

Nori was as clean as he could possibly be when Oin returned with fresh soaproot as well as two rocks to crush the roots with.

“Wash him and then help him back to camp.” Oin said stiffly.

Nori nodded, smashing the soaproot to release the cleansing properties of the root. Then he mixed it with some water to make a nice foaming lather…

Nori’s hands shook as he used the lathe to wash Dwalin’s wounds clean…

It was the first time he’d voluntarily touched his One…
Beneath his breast bindings, his breasts ached and Nori could feel that he was getting wet.

Nori tried not to react anymore to touching Dwalin then he already was...

XoooooX

Dwalin shivered and moaned under his breath with discomfort as Nori’s hands gently washed the filth and dried blood from his wounds.

His distrust and hatred of Nori seemed to have vanished somehow…

He was confused…

And Dwalin hated being confused…

Then all too soon, Nori cleared his throat.

XoooooX

“So they’re clean…” Nori said reluctantly.

He tied up his stuff in his cloak and then slung it on himself before washing his hands to help a very naked Dwalin over to Oin.

He got an eyeful of Dwalin’s hard cock as a reward for cleaning him up.

Nori turned nearly as red as his hair, and it was quite difficult for him not to stare or drool.

Yet, he schooled himself to put his body’s response aside.

He’d survived this long without Dwalin, much less looking at him like a lover, he could keep this up.

Nori was quiet as he helped Dwalin over to Oin who was looking distressingly smug.

“Lay him down on his stomach Nori.”

Nori said nothing but did as Oin directed, helping Dwalin lay down.

Oin shoved a pot of salve in his hands, “Put this on everything boy. Then wrap Dwalin up tight enough to not drip blood but loose enough to move. Got it?”

Nori flinched, “Sure Oin.”

Helping was one thing, but fixing Dwalin up was another…

But Nori didn’t complain…
Silently, he did as he was told, putting the salve on every whiplash, Nori was sure that it would speed up healing and hoped it would keep the wounds clear.

Once he’d covered everything that ought to be covered with the salve, Nori helped Dwalin up and then wrapped him up.

Having Dori wrap his breasts, Nori had some idea how he ought to be wrapping Dwalin. Once that was done, he helped Dwalin put on clean trousers and a shirt as well as the elder Khazad’s boots.

“Oh, I suppose I owe you thanks.” Dwalin muttered sleepily.

“Just helping.” Nori mumbled, “I can be helpful.”

“So you can.” Dwalin muttered again.

Nori helped Dwalin lay back on his stomach once more. “I’ll sleep over there. If you call, I’ll wake up.”

“Allright.”

They were both so exhausted that sleep came to them easily…
Chapter ten

Dwalin woke up hard and sore.

He wasn’t used to sleeping on his stomach…

All night he’d dreamt of wild vigorous mating where he gave into his desires and was both hammer and anvil.

He was usually too busy to rut, when he did it was at Thorin’s request and he did as his king requested.

Thorin preferred to give up control in bed and liked to be dominated.

No matter how many times Dwalin tried to get Thorin to hammer him, his old friend and shield brother refused.

There were those who sold their bodies for food or coin but Dwalin for all his bluster wanted love.

Painfully he reached over, quite unaware of his action and touched Nori’s messy hair.

Nori let out a contented sigh, “Yes Dwalin, it’s me. As if I’d let anyone else in your bed.”
Dwalin gasped, “What?!!” his hand recoiling.

Nori sprang away, performing a somersault like an acrobat, knives instantly dropping into his hands.

Dwalin gaped at the young Khazad, “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to disturb you.”

Nori growled, “What did you hear?”

Dwalin swallowed, “You were dreaming and you told me you wouldn’t let anyone else in my bed.”

XoooooX

Nori gestured in the obscure dialect of Iglishmêk from the Orocarni.

Dwalin frowned, “What’s the problem? You’re attracted to me?”

Nori snorted, “Attracted? Don’t be a fool.”

“Isn’t that why you’re pissed at me for treating you as if you were a petty Khazad?” Dwalin asked with a wince.

“Pissed doesn’t begin to cover it. You don’t have to worry about it, because I have no intention of soiling your reputation as an honourable Khazad by pursuing any sort of relationship with you.” Nori sneered but was unaware of the longing of his heart was reflected in his eyes.

Snickering came from beside them.

Nori spun to find Balin and Dori giggling, he scowled at him, “Be quiet both of you.”

Balin snorted, “Dwalin’s all but throwing himself at you and you’re going to pretend you don’t
want that? You two are the worst example of stubborn Khazad I’ve ever seen.”

“Nori helped save you from Goblins Dwalin and he helped treat your wounds. Even after how you’ve treated him since he came of age, he still was willing to be kind and gentle with you. As for you Nori, Dwalin falls off a cliff and you reveal to the entire Company just what he is to you. If Dwalin figured it out, I wish you every happiness. So are you going to remove your objections to Kili tying himself to Ori Dwalin?”

“Of course I do not have the same objections as before.” Dwalin scowled. “He came to save me and made sure that Fili’s One wasn’t left behind. What do you mean that he exposed who I am to him after I jumped after Ori?” Dwalin blanched, “Do you mean we’re Ones?”

Nori stormed to his feet, “*Dori word in ear I want!*” he spoke in Erebor Iglishmêk.

Dori sighed, “I have no secrets from my One, you have secrets from him.”

Balin frowned, “I see no reason why you should be wary of me. To me our family comes before Thorin, Erebor or the law.”

“Times are not so good,” Nori snapped, “I have no reason to believe that someone like me deserves any rights. I have no desire to amend my previous plan. I will see you all to Erebor, where Ori is to be officially betrothed to Kili. Once they are so, then I shall leave you all for good.”

“So you would abandon your One after you have begun to bond? Fool!” Oin sneered making Nori jump.

“I have done nothing of the sort.” Nori said sharply.

“What with washing him and tending his wounds? I’m surprised Balin hasn’t guessed your secret. I did, yesterday clarified it for me. You’re just like Salun.” Oin said with a sad, but fond look in his eye.

Balin stared at Nori and then started to chuckle, “I suppose that does make sense then, especially as to why Dori was so uneasy about revealing a secret about someone he was close to. I don’t see any trouble as the Head of Dwalin’s family that would prevent me from giving consent. Besides as large as he is and his build, Dwalin defies norms and is a bearer.”
Nori openly gaped, “Dwalin? A bearer? You must be joking…”

Oin sighed, “Have you not wondered, why for all my healing skills, neither Salun or I conceived? Or why we were so quick to take Arisa to our hearts?”

Nori gasped, “Salun was like me?”

“In both body and tastes, I suspect, yet he was allowed to bond to me legally. Why should you be refused the same?” Oin shrugged.

“But the loss of Erebor changed this…” Nori muttered.

“To change that law would violate the very heart of Erebor by grieving Mahal and shaming Durin. It would be as cruel and as foolish as forbidding the bonding of all male couples. Thorin could not violate that law without insulting Salun’s memory as well as offending myself, Arisa, Gloin, Balin and the House of Ri. You are no scandal Nori, son of Ari and Stor.

Dwalin scowled, “Would someone please explain this? I hate being the only one with no clue to what you are referring to.”

Oin smirked, “Do you believe Nori to be male?”

Dwalin glared, “What sort of a question is that? Of course he is!”

“Finally sunk your claws into them Nori?” Ori snapped.

Nori flinched, “I have done no such thing. If these respected Elders will not condemn me, why should you?”

Ori glared, “If isn’t your thievery that dishonours us but your dress.”
Nori snapped, “I began dressing this way to feed you!”

“I never asked you to!”

“I couldn’t have bought you all of those gifts, nor could Dori have afforded your apprenticeship.”

“I liked you so much more before I knew what you were!”

“Ori, stop.” Kili begged.

“Dori had a One all the time and Nori is a female, they are nothing but liars. You forgave them, how could you do that?” Ori hissed.

Dwalin blinked, “Nori’s a what?”

“He’s a female pretended to be a male.” Ori grumbled.

Nori sagged, “I hope you’re happy now Ori, because I think you have exposed your current state of being too immature to be consort.”

Kili flinched, “Will you be retracting your consent Dori?”

Balin scowled, “Your ages and maturity were considered when this was discussed. It was hoped that Ori’s maturity would temper your excesses. However, it seems that you need to be the dominant half and you must learn when Erebor comes before your own heart. Your One cannot be allowed to act in such a manner publicly, when we reclaim our mountain our people will look to your family to give us a glimpse of what stability is. Ori cannot be allowed to voice such opinions publicly, no matter if he does not agree with the law. You can’t pressure Kili to want such a law retracted or broken.”

Dori looked away, “My own previous dislike of this was more of my embarrassment and worry about what would happen if it became known. I was wrong; persons older and wiser then me have assured me that Nori is acceptable; something as his guardian I should have believed. I should have been willing to fight for him, instead of teaching you to be ashamed of him.”
“We should be!” Ori stomped.

“No, we shouldn’t,” Dori shook his head; “Nori is Nori and that is all that matters. My fears were unfounded and I hoped that you wouldn’t hurt be by my choices. I see that I have hurt you and I’m sorry that I have, I was far too young when I took you in. I don’t regret it but I would have preferred to be older and to have a partner to share the struggles of parenting but I didn’t.”

“You’ll never had to struggle with that alone again,” Balin said pulling him closer.

“How can you forgive him for lying?” Ori glared.

“He did it to protect me, I may not have risen as far Thorin’s esteem as I have but I understand why. We’ve talked it out and we’ve put it behind us. I really do not appreciate your insistence on throwing that choice up in Dori’s face, he already has suffered for it and he shouldn’t have to anymore. I forgave him, and I’m the only person who has the right to be angry with him for it.” Balin snapped.

“Ori stop, Ori that’s enough.” Kili said tugging on his hand.

Dwalin noticed that Thorin was scowling at them and drawled, “I would obey Kili, for you’ve earned Thorin’s displeasure.”

“Are you sure it isn’t your Nori who has?” Ori sneered as Kili drew him away.

Not long at Kili took Ori away, they could see that Fili roused and seemed to have slept through the conversation.

Leaving Dwalin still confused much to everyone other then Nori’s amusement.

They ate the offered Elven way bread and drank from the river to replenish their energy from yesterday’s exhausting ‘adventures’.
They were about to start off again when they heard a neigh…

Elrohir let out a strange sort of whistle…

To their collective surprise they saw the Elven rangers’ horses herd their ponies out of the trees.

A subdued cheer went up from the company.

“Alright since we had the horrendous news that Azog the Defiler lives and is chasing us because Dwalin escaped I suggest we pack the returned ponies as best we can and get ready to run.” Thorin scowled.

Immediately the Company and their Ranger guides reloaded their steeds and the pack ponies.

Then they, with the exception of Bilbo and Bombur who had to be lifted onto a pony, mounted and broke their makeshift camp.

Their Elven rangers did their best to erase any sign they had been there.

Nori had no doubt that his resignation, Kili’s pained expression, Ori’s fury, Dori’s sorrow, Oin’s amusement, Balin’s irritation and Dwalin’s confusion were apparent to the rest of the Company even if the reasons weren’t.

Bilbo stayed snuggled into his arms as they rode following the river they had camped beside.

“What are we looking for?” Fili asked curious.

“Likely the Ford of Carrock,” Balin replied stiffly.

“Is it the only crossing?” Bilbo asked as he looked at the river with a shiver.
“The safest for miles. The river can be treacherous what with whirlpools and cataracts.”

Bilbo flinched, “No decent hobbit can swim.”

“You’re not a usual hobbit,” Gandalf said drawing near, “for you’re far more Took than Baggins when it comes to the point. Come now Bilbo you’ve faced Trolls, Storm giants and Orcs bravely; why should a river unsettle you more then those dangers?”

“I am small and silent all the better to sneak around them or attack. A river is more unpredictable.” Bilbo muttered lamely.

“I promise to teach you if you wish.” Fili said with a smile in his voice.

“You’re letting me ride with you until I get comfortable with a pony and you’ve taught me how to use a sword…” Bilbo mumbled.

“I just want you to be confident in your skin Bilbo. I want you to see how very worthy you are, Mahal made you for me and we fit.” Fili said in Bilbo’s ear.

Out of the corner of his eye, Nori saw Bilbo shiver.

As the sun fell lower on the horizon, a sense of uneasy fell over the company.

An hour after sunset there came a great thundering from the mountains and soon after the howl of wolves.

“Orcs!” Elrohir snarled in Sindarian.

“Wargs!” his twin mumbled.

Gandalf pointed with his staff, "There is the Ford!"
They raced ahead with Gandalf shouting, “BEORN! ORCS!”

A loud earthshaking roar that resembled that of a bear answered them; storming out of the tree dotted Carrock was a huge angry black bear.

Nori knew that this was Beorn; they had met a time or two before…

Given the difference in their size, Nori preferred to avoid someone who could flatten him with a single blow or eat him for a snack.

The bear stormed past the party who rode along the ford following Gandalf through the lowest part of the river.

To the horses, the water was up to their knees but the shorter ponies had it to their backs really.

Bilbo and Ori were exceedingly nervous…

It wasn’t until they reached the other side of ford, landing on a large island in the middle of the Anduin River that Gandalf and their ranger companions slowed.

Behind them they could hear the howls of the wargs, the shouts of the Orcs and the roar of ‘Beorn’.

They didn’t cross the island to the other side of the Great River; rather they stopped just inside the trees in a clearing. The ponies were restless but the horses belonging to Gandalf and the Rangers were calm.

“Shouldn’t we be helping?” Dwalin grumbled.

“You’re no more in shape to fight then Ori and Kili are.” Nori retorted.

This time it was Dwalin who flinched at the coldness of the other’s tone.
“When Beorn is a bear it’s wise to keep out of his way especially if you’re a stranger. His companions are less likely to be in possible danger because he knows them by name and by scent.” Gandalf said sternly. “I would prefer to arrive at the Lonely Mountain with all of you more or less in one piece.”

The company stayed put until a very large man appeared, if it weren’t for the full black beard and the silver streaked black hair, this Beorn looked liked a giant Dwalin.

“Gandalf,” Beorn growled, “why have you brought strangers into my home and Orcs to my door?”

“I’m striking against the Shadow in my own way. You can appreciate that I know.” Gandalf said smoothly. “The Ford is also the best way to cross the Anduin. When one travels with a Durin or two, the Orcs of Moria will give chase.”

Beorn snorted, “Very well, since you’re here the least I can do is offer you some hospitality. My home is large yet it is more like an Edain’s barn and I have many friends but I will not countenance their being treated as animals that you are used to. They are friends of mine and they also are different from others like them. I eat no meat and I will allow none in my house. I can however offer you all plenty of fresh cream and honey but that is all I can offer.”

Thorin shrugged, “If we can eat nothing but vegetables and fish with the elves it would be rude to refuse a meal or insult a host.”

Bilbo beamed at Beorn, “Honey and cream would be an interesting meal…”

“What you little one?” the bear-man frowned. “Elves, dwarves and wizards I know but I don’t know you.”

Bilbo flushed, leaning more against Fili but looking at their host curiously. “I’m a hobbit but Gandalf and my Khazad friends call me a halfling.”

“Nori son of Stor.” Beorn smirked, “odd to see you with company.”

Nori coughed, “I wasn’t sure you’d recognise me.”
The giant snickered, “Different hair but you still smell the same as that time I had to patch you up after a run in with Moria Orcs.”

Nori rolled his eyes, “I managed to not have to pick a fight with them this time. Dwalin on the other hand got himself captured and they tore the shit out of his back. Oin over there conned me into fixing him up.”

“Now he won’t talk to me.” Dwalin grumbled.

“Nothing to talk about.” Nori retorted coldly.

“Well come on then Nori son of Stor. You can lead the rest if they trail behind.” Beorn said with a deep rumbling chuckle.

Nori noticed that familiar great patches of flowers had begun to spring up, all the same kinds growing together as if they had been planted. Especially there was clover, waving patches of cockscomb clover, and purple clover, and wide stretches of short white sweet honey-smelling clover. There was a buzzing and a whirring and a droning in the air. Bees were busy everywhere.

They were bigger than hornets. The drones were bigger than your thumb, a good deal, and the bands of yellow on their deep black bodies shone like fiery gold.

“We are getting near,” Nori observed dryly. “We are on the edge of his bee-pastures.” After a while they came to a belt of tall and very ancient oaks, and beyond these to a high thorn-hedge through which you could neither see nor scramble over.

They soon came to a wooden gate, high and broad, beyond which they could see gardens and a cluster of low wooden buildings, some thatched and made of unshaped logs: barns, stables, sheds, and a long low wooden house. Inside on the southward side of the great hedge were rows and rows of hives with bell-shaped tops made of straw. The noise of the giant bees flying to and fro and crawling in and out filled all the air.

Beorn flung open the gates, “Well come in if you wish. Orcs know not to linger too near. I thrash them soundly when they do…”

The company followed their host down a wide track towards the house. Some horses, very sleek and well groomed, trotted up across the grass and looked at them intently with very intelligent faces; then off they galloped to the buildings.
The company’s ponies and horses were impatient.

“Why don’t you unpack and let them roam a bit. My horses will look after them, they will not stray.” Beorn said gruffly.

Gandalf and their Elven companions were the first to alit.

Nori was used to travelling on foot or by wagon so he was more then happy to get off and unpack his pony before smacking it’s rear lightly.

Dwalin looked strange with his usually attire missing due to its being whipped to shreds.

XooooooX

Dwalin’s axe was being carried by Ori much to Dori’s dismay, one his former student could wield it and two, his back was too raw for it.

Nori was icier in demeanour and more restless since Ori revealed the gender of his birth to him.

Nori was a male…

Dwalin had grown up in Erebor where female-bodied males were afforded the same rights as a born male. They recognised male-bodied females as well, there were also those who identified as male sire, male bearer, female and neither. Therefore the pronouns were he, she, ze and s/he. Those like Nori always were male but they could identify as either so-called males; Dwalin had fought hard to be seen as a dominant male even if he was a bearer, Dori and Thorin were the same.

Non-Khazad perceived their race as being heavily male, there had few females but they had other genders that were often mistaken for males. The Edain seemed to only have two genders, while the elves were more fluid. Both apparent ‘genders’ were tall, thin and had long flowing hair…

Not that Dwalin had little of his possessions that had accompanied him this journey; Balin and Nori had taken them away leaving him only two small throwing axes for defence.
He followed Beorn and his companions through a dark door that opened out of the courtyard into the house. Following him they found themselves in a wide hall with a fireplace in the middle. Though it was summer there was a wood-fire burning and the smoke was rising to the blackened rafters in search of the way out through an opening in the roof. They passed through this dim hall, lit only by the fire and the hole above it, and came through another smaller door into a sort of veranda propped on wooden posts made of single tree-trunks. It faced south and was still warm and filled with the light of the westering sun which slanted into it, and fell golden on the garden full of flowers that came right up to the steps.

Inside the hall it was now quite dark. Beorn clapped his hands, and in trotted four beautiful white ponies and several large long-bodied grey dogs. Beorn said something to them in a queer language like animal noises turned into talk. They went out again and soon came back carrying torches in their mouths, which they lit at the fire and stuck in low brackets on the pillars of the hall about the central hearth. The dogs could stand on their hind-legs when they wished, and carry things with their forefeet. Quickly they got out boards and trestles from the sidewalls and set them up near the fire. Then baa, baa, baa was heard, and in came some snow-white sheep led by a large coal-black ram. One bore a white cloth embroidered at the edges with figures of animals; others bore on their broad backs trays with bowls and platters and knives and wooden spoons, which the dogs took and quickly laid on the trestle-tables. These were very low, low enough even for Bilbo to sit at comfortably.

Beside them a pony pushed two low-seated benches with wide rush-bottoms and little short thick legs for Gandalf and Thorin, while at the far end he put Beorn’s big black chair of the same sort (in which he sat with his great legs stuck far out under the table). These were all the chairs he had in his hall, and he probably had them low like the tables for the convenience of the wonderful animals that waited on him. What did the rest sit on? They were not forgotten. The other ponies came in rolling round drum-shaped sections of logs, smoothed and polished, and low enough even for Bilbo; so soon they were all seated at Beorn’s table, and the hall had not seen such a gathering for many a year. There they had a supper, or a dinner, such as they had not had since they left the Last Homely House in the West and said good-bye to Elrond. The light of the torches and the fire flickered about them, and on the table were two tall red beeswax candles.

Here they sat on wooden benches while Tharkun began a tale, telling a very undetailed description of their travels.

Soon dishes of honey and mugs of cream were served.

Beorn had very large bowls that he drank out of; slightly smaller versions of his dishes were served to their two Elven companions and Tharkun.
It was nice to eat something that wasn’t that Elven travel bread that Tharkun called *Lembas*.

There they had a supper, or a dinner, such as they had not had since they left the Last Homely House in the West and said good-bye to Elrond. The light of the torches and the fire flickered about them, and on the table were two tall red beeswax candles.

After Tharkun told their tale, Beorn in his deep rolling voice told tales of the wild lands on this side of the mountains, and especially of the dark and dangerous wood, that lay outstretched far to North and South a day’s ride before them, barring their way to the East, the terrible forest of Mirkwood.

Mirkwood formerly known as Greenwood the Great Forest, Dwalin knew lay between them and Erebor.

Passing through alliance betrayer Thranduil’s territory was unwelcome but it was the shortest way to Erebor…

XooooooX

After the tales ended, they were dismissed from the dining hall and shown accommodations where they could wash their clothes they’d had dirtied because of the storm a few nights and have those damaged by the goblins repaired if possible.

Their shirts were lost causes but the trousers were possible…

As a weaver and a trade tinker, Dori had the things needed to fix the clothing and so Dwalin, Bofur and Bomfur had asked Dori to fix what he could.

Thorin decided that they were travelling at a fast enough pace that they could rest for a day to recover.

Dwalin was irritated but he recognised the logic of that.

Azog would not give up his hunt…
They needed as much time to recover as they could spare if only to be all the stronger for when they came upon the filth that had taken Moria from them…

He would make those filthy brutes pay for flogging himself, Bofur and Bombur…

Chapter End Notes

I figured the way Nori’s travelled that he’s met Beorn and he was recognised by scent by the shapechanger. Beorn is just as gruff as the books but he’s a bit more accepting of company if they are respectful?
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

I've made you wait long enough...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter eleven

They were inside Boern’s house…

The more Dwalin thought about Nori, the more attracted he was. He shivered as he remembered the feeling of Nori’s hands on his skin treating his scars from the Orc whips.

He swallowed, his heart aching at the memory of Nori’s harsh words that he wouldn’t sully him by pursuing a relationship with him even if they were Ones.

Fuck! He didn’t want to be ice hearted like Oin said would happen if Nori died even if they didn’t seal the bond…

He wanted to know what it was like to be held by his One and how it felt to be hammered.

Taking care of his shield brother’s sexual needs never really scratched his itch; it only took the edge off.

It had been weeks since he had any sexual release…

Dwalin was more then slightly jealous of Balin; Dori was so strong just like himself and willingly gave himself to his elder brother when it came to sex. He wanted that for himself…

Had he been shamed by Nori’s thievery because as his One it was embarrassing? While he never
had proved his One was engaged in illicit activities, had he known on a subconscious level?

Nori…

Had he stole something from him?

Maybe not his heart quite yet but his sexual desire was definitely peaked.

Even knowing Nori was born with a female body, Dwalin had always seen the younger Khazad as male and that hadn’t changed. As foolish as it was, Dwalin wanted him to use him sexually.

He spotted Nori up in a tree and he was alone.

Dwalin adjusted himself in his trousers and strode over to the tree. “Nori…can we talk?”

Nori flinched, “I don’t see what we have to talk about. I made my feelings on the matter quite clear.”

“So you’re going to pull a Dori? You’ll making a decision that affects the both of us without letting me have a say?” Dwalin frowned.

“You hate me. You’ve made that very clear over the years.” Nori snapped.

Dwalin sighed, “I was wrong…if I really hated you would I have wanted you with us when we were captured? Would I have thought that if you were there we could escape? I held on as long as I did because I hoped that we had a chance of rescue. So what if you were doing illegal stuff? Its not like you could have had a job when you were young and Dori never could have afforded an apprenticeship for you. He was too proud to ask for help.”

Nori stiffened, “You were being tortured and you wanted me there? You thought I deserved a beating then?”

Dwalin scowled, “That’s not what I meant! I meant I’m good with my fists and my axe but I can’t think around corners like you can. I’m a far better soldier then I am a general, I can plan a regular
attack but infiltration or a surprise attack are beyond me. It used to irritate my tutors during my time at the war academy. I was pissed you saved me before but that time I wanted you to save me! Tharkun said you and me would be the strongest defense that Erebor has even had, you running our spy network and a shadow army while I run the legitimate one.” He flushed, “Tell me treating my wounds and helping me bathe didn’t affect you.”

Nori snarled, “What if it did?”

Dwalin smirked, “If you’re going to curse me to lose all emotion or affection because you’re dead set about dying, won’t you please let me know what it’s like to be hammered?”

Nori launched himself out of the tree, tackling Dwalin to the ground and slugged him, “Knowing what I am, how can you fucking ask me that?”

Dwalin spat out blood, ignoring the pain of being slammed into the ground, “Because no one else would believe that I was a bearer or that I would want that. I’ve never been hammered Nori, I know it sounds stupid but I’ve never been one for prostitutes. I don’t know why I’ve been so cruel to you but fuck; I don’t want to lose you now that I know. I’ll do anything if you’ll let me try. I’ve never felt so comforted or had as heavy a sword as quickly as I did when you washed and treated my wounds. You can’t tell me you don’t want to hammer me…”

“I’ve got a stupid fake cock, how am I supposed to,” Nori grumbled.

“I’ll show you…” Dwalin said quietly, his eyes clouding with pain. “There is a twisted pine with some covering nearby, at least let me know how it feels to be held by my One at least once.”

Nori had a hard time resisting his One’s pleas, he felt guilt for causing Dwalin pain when his landing on him slammed his injured back into the ground. “Once…I won’t promise more. Besides, you might not like what you see…”

“You don’t have to show me anything you don’t want to…” Dwalin muttered quietly.

Nori hauled him up, “With that back of yours, this will be difficult…”

“Do it like we’re beasts then…” Dwalin said before leaning in and trying to kiss Nori.
Nori groaned, forcefully kissing Dwalin. “You want me to hammer you? You’ll be so sore you won’t want to sit on that damn pony of yours.”

“It’ll distract me from my back.” Dwalin shrugged painfully.

“Where did you want to be hammered?” Nori muttered.

Dwalin shyly led his One to the secluded place he’d spied earlier, he undid his pants but his whip-ravaged back and shoulders couldn’t move enough. He flushed, “Would you do the honors? I can’t undress properly…”

Nori laid their cloaks on the ground as cover of the fallen needles, before undoing the large leather buckle that Dwalin had at his waist. He unwrapped Dwalin’s spare leather jerkin and pulled his shirt over the huge Khazad’s shoulders. Nori ran his hands over Dwalin’s scared chest, pinching first and then tugging on his pierced nipples.

Dwalin stood there once more naked before his One, only this time it was knowingly. He swallowed, “Do you know how to…”

“How to fuck? Sure, I’ve watched it loads of times.” Nori muttered.

“How on my belt has salve.” Dwalin grunted.

Nori fished the salve out neat as butter, pushing Dwalin down by his unmarked neck.

Dwalin collapsed on his hands and knees, swallowing a whimper of pain. He was too proud to admit how much his back hurt; mostly because he knew he needed this. Surely Nori wouldn’t abandon him after being shown this level of trust. Dwalin had never been hammered; he’d never been in this position before. He wanted this to be something shared between Ones, Dwalin was certain that Nori hadn’t been either the hammer or the anvil…

Nori coated his fingers with the salve, “How do you want to begin?”
“Fuck me with two fingers Nori…then as many as you think I need to fit yours inside me. I want this…I want you.” Dwalin grunted.

Nori shoved two fingers into the thickly muscled Khazad and was rewarded with a groan.

Dwalin, like any true Khazad warrior liked his pleasure to have some pain in it. He loved the burn the stretching there gave him…

Nori felt pleasure humming through his own body due to Dwalin’s willing submission as well as his groans. He finger fucked the elder Khazad with just two fingers before he forced in a third.

Dwalin shook, his studded cock ached for Nori’s touch. He had a small piercing in his cock head, nothing too big that would injure someone he was hammering but he had orgasmed from the pain when he was pierced.

Nori forcefully prepared Dwalin, waiting until he was loose around four fingers before undoing his trousers and pulling out the codpiece that Dori made for him. He covered it with the salve before thrusting into Dwalin.

Dwalin groaned loud as he felt his ass filled, it was hard not warm like his own or even Thorin’s but then again he’d never had a cock inside his ass…

Nori hammered Dwalin roughly, the fake cock rubbing against his loathed female parts and making him even more turned on. He reached to underneath the elder Khazad and grabbed Dwalin’s cock and was rewarded by another grunt of pleasure.

Dwalin groaned, “Yes…harder Nori…want this bad…”

Nori fucked Dwalin through his orgasm, feeling his One’s cock stiffen and then gush out thick globs of seed all the while bellowing like a bull. It wasn’t until he felt his One cum that Nori experienced his first orgasm outside his dreams but it wasn’t quite the same, after all he still had a female body.

“Thank you…” Dwalin grunted. “I’m glad my first hammering came from you. Even if I couldn’t see you, I felt your touch. I hope having me changes your mind, our relationship won’t be perfect but I enjoyed being yours.”
Nori helped Dwalin dress but he was silent, his One gave himself to him. His One wanted him to stay with him; Dwalin was just as expressive in bed awake as he was in his dreamed. Was it wrong of him to refuse to let Dwalin have a choice if they lived together as Ones?

Dwalin mumbled, “I meant it, I’m not upset I’m your One…” before kissing Nori, “I understand you would only consummate our bond this way. If it were possible, you know I would enjoy hammering you. At least, this way I know what it feels like to be intimate with my One even if I can’t keep you…”

Dwalin then walked away leaving Nori alone with his thoughts.

Chapter End Notes

Was it quite what you were expecting? How should Nori handle this change in their relationship? Did it make Dwalin more determined to have a solid relationship with Nori? Should anyone guess/confront them about having slept together? Let me know!
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Older brothers are especially observant...what happens when Balin talks to Nori about bedding Dwalin?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter twelve

When dinner was over they began to tell tales of their own, but Beorn seemed to be growing drowsy and paid little heed to them. They spoke most of gold and silver and jewels and the making of things by smith-craft, and Beorn did not appear to care for such things: there were no things of gold or silver in his hall, and few save the knives were made of metal at all.

They sat long at the table with their wooden drinking-bowls filled with mead. The dark night came on outside. The fires in the middle of the hall were built with fresh logs and the torches were put out, and still they sat in the light of the dancing flames with the pillars of the house standing tall behind them, and dark at the top like trees of the forest.

Nori sat apart from their company, speaking to no one.

He had been cursing himself for a fool for his allowing Dwalin to talk him into a tryst…

It was harder to avoid the burly warrior now that he’d tasted as it were, the goods.

Nori stared broodingly into his bowl of mead; he wasn’t much for drinking to be honest. If Nori had it, he didn’t want it. If he didn’t, he wanted it…

If only it were so with Dwalin…

Once he’d enjoyed it, once wouldn’t be enough. He should have threatened Dwalin with a knife rather then hammered his willing arse.
Dwalin was only too willing…

Nori flinched when a hand gripped his shoulder.

“Peace Nori, it is only I.” Balin said gently.

Nori’s hand fell from his hip-sheathed knives, “What do you mean by this?”

“I called out and you heard me not. Come walk with me.”

Nori gave in because Balin was an elder and Dori’s One. He owed him some respect…

Once they were far enough away that the conversation between elf and wizard or the Khazad-dim would shield their talk even from the sleepy hobbit, Balin smirked.

Nori groaned inwardly.

“Now I know that Dwalin would be angry with me for this,” Balin began dryly.

“Then why bother?” Nori snapped and then looked sheepish.

“Because he’s my brother and the only close kin aside from Oin and Gloin I have left. While he is definitely of age, he is still considered under my authority because he’s a bearer. Dwalin is a great warrior but he’s always been aware of you, he pushed you harder then Fili in some ways during training when you were younger and not just because of you weren’t a Royal Durin. He knew you were his One but given your age difference he suppressed it and it made him bitter. He lashed out when you started running with pickpockets. We all knew how brilliant you were and it seemed such a shame that Dori couldn’t afford to send you to school or have your aptitude tested for an apprenticeships.”

“I don’t see what the big deal is, it’s not like I could get him to conceive.” Nori said with a pained grunt.
“No more then Oin and Solun, but that is neither here nor there. I know my brother, he fancies you, don’t give up on something that could be great because you’re scared or believe that you aren’t good enough for us. If you weren’t worthy of having a One, Mahal himself would not have given you Dwalin who is strong enough not only to stand at your side but also to watch your back. I might not have been as much of a part of your life as I would have been as Dori’s One when you were a child but I want you to have a similar happiness to what Dori and I share.”

“Not the same?” Nori snarked.

“Can two happinesses truly be compared?” Balin retorted. “I want you two to be a team, the team I know you can be. We’ve all fought together, bled together and run together. We haven’t even made it to Erebor yet but we’ve grown closer. The selflessness and maturity you have Nori is beyond what someone your age usually has. I want that strength for Erebor reborn. I want you as my brother in every way, Nori. I want that more then I want Ori as Kili’s consort. They both need time to mature but you and Fili are Erebor’s future. The young ones we have are few but with young Gimli want to see what we can accomplish. Our company may be small but we’ve accomplished so much and there is still more to do. We have to brave Mirkwood and face Thranduil the Shirker. We’ll have to pass through Dale and Laketown before we reach the mountain…”

“Yeah, yeah none of them have even glimpsed your stupid mountain. I only came on the quest because of Ori…”

“But you’ve stayed for Dwalin, you helped save him twice and you fought with Bilbo to defeat trolls. You tended his wounds. You learned that he has never and can never see you as anything but male. Don’t forget, my brother’s never given himself to anyone, he’s given Thorin what he needs but Thorin never wanted him the way you do. Once you claimed him, he could never go to Thorin’s bed again. Dwalin is yours to keep or break, choose wisely Nori for all our sakes.”

Then Balin left Nori staring bleakly into the fire…

XooooooX

Dwalin scowled when he noticed that Balin had gone to speak with Nori.

Had his brother guessed what he’d done? Oh Mahal…
He was an adult for many decades, why would…

Oh…because he was a bearer…

It wasn’t as if Nori was capable of impregnating him. Not that he would complain if that was possible…

It wouldn’t be good timing any way and besides, Dwalin just wasn’t the sort to trap a Khazad with that old trick…. 

He wished Nori was possessive enough to actually tell him those words…

"Of course it's me, as if I'd let anyone else in your bed..."

Dwalin shivered, he felt more of his heart being invested in the bond with Nori…

Nori came after him in the Misty Mountains after he was captured, Nori had saved him from that Orc Scouting party earlier in the week and after they’d escaped the Misty Mountains Nori had cleaned him up and tended his wounds.

How Nori could put aside his past treatment to save and care for him…

Dwalin had tried so hard to prove he was more then just a bearer…

He didn’t possess the strength that Dori did or Thorin’s education…

Dwalin was merely an axe of Mahal, Nori was a baby when he was of age…

No wonder he wanted to forget what Nori was to him, how could he look at Nori the child and see his One? Nori grew up to be more and less then he’d imagined…
More honorable, more dominant and more loyal…

Nori was also more slippery, more tacturn and more likely to brood…

Still, Dwalin was falling deeper, a whole lot quicker then he thought possible…

Dwalin licked his lips, please Nori…tell me to come over there…

XooooooX

Eyes…

Dwalin’s eyes…

Nori could feel them on his back…

They weren’t angry, they were different…

Nori was sure that Dwalin would have regretted lying with him.

He lifted his hand absently and made the ilishmeck gesture for come.

XooooooX

Dwalin thought his heart would stop when he say Nori’s hand move.

Come…

Dwalin slipped from the circle, moving towards Nori, “You called for me?”
“Do you really want to be with me?” Nori ground out.

Dwalin swallowed, “I would agree if you asked to be bonded with Balin and Dori…”

Nori fumed, “You treated me like scum for years, how can you just change like this?”

“Imagine our ages were flipped. Here was this wandering brat who didn’t put half as much effort into his weapons training as he should. He’s got eyes like an eagle, climbs like,”

“A monkey.” Nori muttered.

“A monkey?” Dwalin frowned.

“It’s a small creature found in Umbar. It is quick and can climb any tree if it can slip away. They are often taught music as a cover for their natural pickpocket skills.” Nori shrugged, “They have tails and like to ride on shoulders.”

“Sounds like the perfect pet for you then.”

Nori was almost distant, “They wouldn’t be happy, too cold…”

“Are you saying that you would suffocate in Erebor?” Dwalin was pained at the thought.

Nori nodded, “Maybe some place like Bilbo’s smial? A nice compromise? I need the sky and a roof.”

Dwalin reached for Nori’s hand, “Would you stay with me if we had one? If Bilbo’s people farmed for us, we could have a comfortable place like that…”

“Why me?”
“Because you’re like no one I’ve ever known? I don’t know; all I know is it would kill me to lose you so don’t disappear on me. I’ve never thought much of bearers who say they’ll die if they lose their One but I can’t lose you Nori. I need you; Erebor needs you.” Dwalin’s voice was quiet but fierce.

“I’ll think about it.” Those were Nori’s words but his tone made it sound like he’d agreed.

Dwalin moved so that he was lying his head on Nori’s shoulder and Nori didn’t push him away…

XooooooX

Balin and Dori were sitting with their heads together.

“You think your talk did that?” Dori asked in an almost worshipful tone.

Balin was internally smug, “Perhaps,” he said dryly, “only Mahal knows. I want them happy, Dwalin is just as important to me as Nori is to you. Nori is your wanderer, of course you’d want him settled. Dwalin is a soldier but he had a nurturer’s heart beneath his armour. If they could have children they would be the more loyal to Erebor and the most deadly to its enemies…”

“It’s such a shame that Erebor’s greatest defence will never be blood parents…”

“At least they have one another…” Balin said sagely.

Dori beamed, “So do we…” his hand drifting absently to his stomach.

Balin observed the movement and instead of feeling guilt, he felt pride. The first child of Erebor would be theirs…

XooooooX
Ori scowled as he watched Balin speak with Nori and then both Balin and Dori look pleased when Nori seemed to accept Dwalin.

Why couldn’t they have continued to hate one another? Dwalin deserved so much better then Nori…

Ori was stiff and angry when they crawled into the same beds that were prepared by Beorn’s weird animals last night…

Dwalin pulled his close to Nori and they fell asleep with Dwalin holding Nori’s hand.

Their older brother Dori was cradled to Balin’s chest and held gently like a precious treasure…

Ori was mad…

Why did no one understand his anger and betrayal?

He curled up in an angry ball and fumed his way to sleep.
Next chapter the journey through Mirkwood begins...
Chapter 13

Chapter thirteen

Kili was bothered intensely by Ori’s irrational anger towards his brothers…

So he had spent their respite from travelling to make Bilbo the bow he’d promised him.

How Bilbo managed to use a bow that a little small for him should be an impossibility…

Although Bilbo managed with his dam’s bow, Kili felt that in a more dangerous situation that a proper sized bow would help him far more in the long run.

He had gained permission to cut down a tree from Beorn before he made the bow and thank Mahal; Kili had always carried spare bow string in the unlikely case that he needed it. The string was far stronger then the string that Fili used to string bows for violins since his brother was a musician by craft.

Sure Kili was a jeweller by trade but he was an archer, perhaps his being a musician would be more fitting but music wasn’t his thing.

Kili had spent much of his life drawing rings, necklaces, beads and other jewellery most of which the styles he’d only seen in books…

Kili wanted to reclaim Erebor so that he might have access to the precious metals and stones there to make his designs a reality.

Kili hadn’t been able to sleep, he had a feeling that all was not well and that some terrible evil was on the horizon…

XooooooX

Dori had repaired or sewed new clothes for Bombur, Dwalin and Bofur…
Of course it had taken some doing to talk Beorn out of some cloth woven from flax or spun from the wool of his sheep and he hadn’t gotten much compared to what he could have made himself if he’d had the resources.

A day of rest was all the time that Thorin would spare them…

Dwalin certainly had needed it and he was the worst of the injured.

Bilbo had burst into tears after Fili led him away; apparently the hobbit had never seen injuries that devastating.

Dori hadn’t been sleeping well for some reason so he lay awake waiting for the others. He knew he needed sleep but he had an uneasy feeling that kept him from restful sleep…

He lay beside Balin, breathing gently without moving because he did not wish to disturb his One…

They would be rising soon to eat and pack so that they might get an early start…

XooooooX

Nori was up before the sun…

While he suspected that Kili and Dori were also awake, only Bofur and Bifur rose, and ate hurriedly to help him saddle and pack the ponies with the communal supplies.

The Elven twins breezed into Beorn’s stables to pack up their horses.

Nori frowned, “Where is Tharkûn?”

Elrohir sighed, “Gandalf said that he must run an errand for the White Council…”
Sleepily, the rest of their company joined them outside Beorn’s Hall smelling of cream and honey. They were carrying their own possessions with the exception of Dwalin, Nori seemed as if he was still refusing to let him carry much due to his flayed back.

Dwalin would have been furious if it were anyone else but it was Nori and he seemed bemused…

The Elven twins were not the healers that their father was, but Oin and Bilbo had done their best.

Although they had proved helpful on more than one occasion, Nori knew that Dwalin was still reserving judgement because he did not trust Elves due to Thranduil the Shirker.

They all thanked Beorn before mounting and riding away with the skinshifter following them out of his fenced property and through the small stand of trees upon the carrack.

They splashed through the ford and then followed the sons of Elrond.

They rode for hours…

Elladan rode back through the company offering them *lembas* so they could continue without stopping for a meal.

It was late afternoon when they entered Mirkwood…

Elrohir scowled, “The forest feels foul…stick to the path.”

Since Bilbo was of course still riding with Fili, though Nori thought they’d gotten in some riding practice on their day of rest, there was little chance of him getting lost.

It was a few hours after sunset when Elrohir began talking to Thorin about stopping for the night.

Thorin begrudgingly agreed.
“A fire is both a hazard and a safeguard here…” Elladan muttered.

“A shame that is true but still we need one. Stay close, Elladan and I will fetch firewood.”

“The filthy Orcs usually avoid Mirkwood so that isn’t a usual danger…” Elladan sighed.

Dwalin scowled, “Then what is?”

Elrohir frowned, “You don’t know?”

“Why should we?” Thorin grumbled. “We’ve not been in contact with Thranduil the Shirker since he refused to aid us and we’ve spent our years of exile from Erebor living in the ruins of Belegost.”

“Spiders, monstrous spiders. Father calls them the spawn of Ungoliant…”

Then the Elven twins disappeared into the trees…

Bilbo and Bombur began to pull out the cooking pot and hardtack.

Bofur fetched dried meat and vegetables to

Their flasks were still mostly full.

They had gotten a habit of taking a sip or two and passing it on, two types of flasks made no noise: full and empty ones. It was only a precaution.

The Elven twins returned with wood…

On the back of two of the ponies was a casket of water that Nori knew Elladan had negotiated from
Beorn during their day of rest.

Bilbo and Bombur used some of the water from a casket for when Elrohir and his twin returned, the elf praised them.

“The water nearest the Great Forest Road is enchanted, those who drink of it fall into strange dreams. We brought water with us to safeguard us from it.”

Thorin knew this naught and the pondering look on Balin proved he did not either.

Balin thanked their companions for their foresight.

Oin and Nori examined Dwalin and Bofur’s wounds, treating them while Bombur and Bilbo cooked.

Bombur had been tortured the least and his recovery had been the quickest…

Nori worried about Dwalin but the proud warrior had difficulty accepting much aid.

Bombur and Bilbo made a quick meal for them and the weary travellers ate it gladly.

When Thorin approached Elrohir he spoke, “I would like discuss night watch.”

Immediately, Dwalin turned to Nori, “I want a shift.”

Nori glowered, “You need rest.”

“My brother and I need less rest then your Company and we are willing to share night watch. Yet we would be glad of the great night vision your people have.” Elrohir replied.

Elladan murmured the tongue of the Khazad, Khazudul with his friend, “Bifur and I will take first
“I will take a second watch,” Elrohir added, “when we travel with our foster brother Estel, his Rangers take four watches to our two. Is it the same with you? We spent much time since our silent leave taking from Imladris ever moving or watched over by Mithrandir whom you call Tharkûn. Night watches are needed here in Mirkwood…”

“I will relieve Bifur!” his younger brother Bofur offered.

Nori spoke having decided that agreement was the easier choice, “Dwalin and I will join Elrohir for the first of his two watches.”

Dwalin nodded in what others clearly took as silent agreement, but Nori knew it was smugness for having gotten his way.

Near them, Fili talked with Bilbo softly before raising his voice enough to be heard, “We will relieve Nori and Dwalin. Bilbo has offered to prepare breakfast toward the end of our watch so that we can move at first light.”

Thorin then decided that this was good counsel and agreed silently retrieving his bedroll and staking claim to a bit of earth near the fire.

Nori then bullied Dwalin to bed, determined to ensure that his One got as much sleep as possible. Pausing only to remind Bofur to wake him up in time to wake before his watch that he would share with Elrohir and Dwalin would begin…

XooooooX

Nori was immediately on edge when Bofur woke him.

Dwalin seemed bored but awaken when Bofur laid down to sleep.

Halfway through their watch, Elrohir stiffened.
“They have come…”

Nori blinked, “Who?”

“Spiders.” Elrohir said as he lit a torch and drew his sword, “Wake the others.”

“Wake sons of Durin awake!” Dwalin shouted. “To arms! To arms!”

Fili woke with a start at the sound of a mighty roar from Dwalin, reaching for his swords and drawing them forth.

Bilbo pulled forth his elvish blade but it remained unchanged, for it did not glow blue. Whatever was out there was no Orcs…

Thorin too bolted to his feet with Orcist in his hand.

The rest of the Company awoke drawing their blades.

In the dim light of the fire, they soon perceived they were surrounded.

Elrohir spat, “Begone unclean spawn of Ungoliant!”

Elladan wielded a sword in one hand and a torch in the other like his brother did. “Show no mercy for you will be shone none! These fell spiders will put you in a death-like sleep and use you for food to feed their foul offspring.”

Dwalin raised two of his axes, “Ori use the axe you carry for me!”

His One’s youngest brother held his axe with nervous exhaustion.
The spiders had been spotted before they could attack due to the great vigilance of Elrohir, Nori and Dwalin.

The alarm was given and despite their exhaustion the thirteen Khazad-dim, one hobbit and two elves fought mightily with steel, iron and fire…

The battle raged fiercely and was not yet won when the sun wanly shone through a misty forest.

The spiders seemed endless…

Then there came the sound of horses…

Elrohir and Elladan called out in Sindarin and the cry was answered.

The spiders tried to retreat but the appearance of Mirkwood elves turned the tide.

A golden haired elf and a red-haired one dipped their arrows into the flames of their weakening fire and sent them flying into the spiders.

The monsters were set aflame and they were slain by their companions.

Once the spiders were routed; Elrohir and Elladan greeted the Mirkwood elves.

“Legolas and Tauriel, you are very well met.”

The blonde male elf embraced them warmly, “What brings you into Mirkwood? And with such company?”

“Father asked us to guide them into Mirkwood Legolas, he has put what aid he can into their quest.” Elrohir replied.
The elf called Legolas frowned, “Father will be unhappy…he has refused to keep the treaty between himself and those who once lived in Erebor. He will be against disturbing the rest of Smaug for fear that the treatment of Dale would be brought his gates. Although dragon fire might clear the forest of the spiders we have been fighting since the Fall of Erebor and the exile of its refugees. They have grown more numerous of late and we lose more of the forest every day. The Men-I-Naugrim has been overrun many times in recent weeks…”

Dwalin who knew Thorin almost as well as he knew himself, decided that Thorin thought that this Legolas was familiar.

“You are Legolas, youngest son of Thranduil are you not?” Thorin asked as he rode beside the elf.

“You are Thorin, son of Thrain, son of Thor. Grandson of the last King under the Mountain.” Legolas nodded, “You are coming hoping to return…”

“You would if it were you would you not? If you were chased from this place you call home and you thought there was a chance to reclaim it would you not try?” Thorin retorted passionately.

Legolas was thoughtful when he replied, “I would, I will give you what help I can. Father will be displeased.”

“Is it wise to speak so frankly?” Elladan asked warily.

“Tauriel and I lead only those who are loyal to us.” Legolas replied with a shrug.

“Are you and the lady,” Balin asked curiously.

Tauriel laughed even as she spoke for the first time, “We are cousins, our mothers were sisters. We were raised as siblings and such an affection lies between us.”

“My cousin’s heart is spoken for, my heart is still mine to call my own.” Legolas said with a shrug.

Bilbo seemed excited to meet more elves; while Fili seemed as if he had learned to appreciate the sons of Elrond. Nori wondered if his friend could do the same for the son and niece of Thranduil
the Shirker…

Somehow, Elrohir and Elladan’s horses had kept most of their ponies calm but two were lost.

They had to rearrange their possessions and supplies but Fili oversaw that while Bilbo saw to breakfast as promised.

Using some of the casketed water, Dori made coffee and tea to give them energy despite the disturbed night.

They packed and mounted up following the elves of Mirkwood deeper into the forest along the worn road built by the Khazad-dim of Erebor after it’s founding by Thrain I.

The exiles from Erebor; Thorin, Balin, Dori, Gloin and Dwalin looked upon Thranduill’s kin with suspicion while Kili, Fili and Nori were willing to treat them with wary friendship.

Bilbo, Nori surmised was just excited to meet more elves…

Amused, Elladan called him and Fili forward, “Legolas and Tauriel, this is Bilbo Baggins of the Shire. He is a Hobbit, perhaps the name Perian is more familiar?”

Dwalin scowled at the scene, Nori glared at him until he relaxed at least visibly.

Legolas frowned, “I thought there were mere legend…”

“Legends have some element of truth.” Elladan chuckled.

Tauriel nodded, “Elladan is wise.”

“Your company has been missed Lady Tauriel.” Elrohir commented.
“My training was over and my place is here in the service of my Lord Thranduil.” Tauriel shrugged.

Silence descended upon the riders.

They ate lembas as their midday meal as was custom since leaving Imladris.

They camped in a place that was reckoned safe, far safer then their camp the previous night.

The elves under the joint leadership of Tauriel and Legolas together with Bombur and Bilbo prepared a meal.

Elladan and Elrohir ate with the elves of Mirkwood.

Later they in conjunction with Legolas, Tauriel and Thorin arranged for night watches before bedding down for the night.

When Dwalin attempted to bring up sitting a watch, given the battle of the previous night and into this morning, Nori put his metaphorical foot down.

Dwalin pouted but Nori paid him no mind, he was of the suspicion that the battle with the spiders would hinder his One’s recovery. Sleep and food was in Dwalin’s best interest and Nori would insist…

XooooooX

It was yet another day’s riding before they would come to the Hall of Thranduil.

Nori and Dwalin like Fili were nearby when Legolas counselled Thorin…

“Do not let my father suspect that you are travelling to Erebor. He will not take it well. Best to do it and be done with it before he can thwart you in your Quest. Say that your people have become too large for your halls in Ered Lúin and you are investigating mountains untroubled by the Orcs. The
Misty Mountains are too dangerous, I doubt he would want you near enough to offer you the
Mountains within the Greenwood but above all do not mention Erebor while you are within his
Hall.”

While Dwalin despised subterfuge, Nori embraced it and approved of the idea. Dwalin disliked
Thranduil the Shirker more then he despised subterfuge so he decided that Thranduil deserved to
hear less then the truth.

They had left the road laid by their forefathers and followed the elves of Mirkwood deeper into the
forest having passed through the mountains mentioned by Legolas just before setting camp. From
there they followed the tributary of the Forest River that emptied into a pool in the embrace of the
Mountains within the Forest.

Thorin who had no love for Thranduil the Shirker silently seemed as if he acknowledged and
accepted this subterfuge.
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

More BalinxDori and NorixDwalin bonding, tension builds between Kili and Ori. Balin gets a lecture and the inevitable barrel ride. Surprise pairing for those who haven't read the Cornerstone update.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter fourteen

They arrived at the Hall of Thranduil, father of Legolas and uncle of Tauriel three days after entering Mirkwood Forest.

But before they could reach it they had to cross a great stone bridge…

This bridge that led across the river to the king’s doors. The water flowed dark and swift and strong beneath; and at the far end were gates before the mouth of a huge cave that ran into the side of a steep slope covered with trees. There the great beeches came right down to the bank, till their feet were in the stream.

Across this bridge did Legolas and Tauriel led both their rangers and their guests.

“Greetings Prince Legolas and Lady Tauriel. You are early…”

“We routed another nest and Elrond’s sons have come for a visit. Well-timed for it is the Feast of Starlight tomorrow. We do not often have guests but our kin in Rivendell will be welcome of course. For your grandfather Celeborn was of Doriath and so was your ancestress Lúthien, we too are of Sindarian descent at least the kingship is.” Legolas said pleasantly.

Inside the passages were lit with red torchlight, and the elf rangers under Tauriel and Legolas sang as they marched along the twisting, crossing, and echoing paths.
These were not like those of in Moria for they were smaller, less deep underground, and filled with a cleaner air. They were escorted deep inside the Hall of Thranduil to the heart of it where his throne room lay. The hall may have been wrought by Khazad-dim for it was of stone carved like trees…

For in the great hall that seemed to function as a throne room, was filled with pillars hewn out of the living stone sat the Elvenking on a chair of carven wood. On his head was a crown of berries and red leaves, for the autumn was come again and in his hand he held a carven staff of oak.

"Why have Naugrim been brought unbound Legolas?" Thranduil demanded from his throne.

Legolas bowed, "They have come with the sons of Elrond who escorted them through our lands. We came upon them attacked by the spawn of Ungoliant and together we routed them. The corpses we burnt but we pressed on for Elrond’s sons wished to join us for the Feast of Starlight."

"Why would Elrond aid Naugrim?" Thranduil sneered.

Elrohir, eldest child of Elrond Halfelven answered, "Our Father has long been known for his hospitality to the weary and willingness to offer wise counsel. Thorin Oakenshield came to us for both. Our father bid us to assist him as best we may for our dealings with Durin’s Folk has always been fair."

"You do not mean to assail Smaug and awaken his wrath do you?" Thranduil demanded.

"Our people have grown too numerous for our holdings in Ered Lúin, our kin Dain helps us not. We are in search of a mountain to call home, one that is free of orc filth. Many of our warriors are gone and we are not as strong as we would wish." Thorin said truthfully and yet begrudgingly.

"I sense that you aren’t being completely truthful." Thranduil’s voice was cold like ice.

"Does a ruler tell his allies, neighbours or even subjects everything? Surely a leader is allowed some personal secrets." Balin piped up.

"Of course," Thranduil’s voice held both false warmth and false agreement. "You are of course
welcome to join us sons of Elrond.”

“What about our other guests?” Legolas pressed.

“If they must be welcomed, then welcome.” Thranduil said ungraciously.

“I will escort them to rooms uncle if you wish.” Tauriel offered.

Bilbo’s sharp ears twitched as if they had caught a mutter from the Elven king…

“What I would like if for there to be no Naugrim in my kingdom.”

Nori watched pensive as Bilbo flinched and he was not surprised to that Fili frowned in response, giving his One a strange look.

Bilbo just shook his head.

Thranduil gave him a penetrative look that appeared to make Bilbo uncomfortable. “I suppose since they are here then the niceties of hospitality must be observed. We wouldn’t want Lord Elrond to think that we are lacking in manners. You may find them rooms…”

Tauriel was just as hospitable as Arwen, Elrond’s daughter but she wasn’t as bubbly? Was that the proper description? Tauriel was polite but not demonstrative, perhaps keeping close company with Khazad-dim who were very emotional except maybe for Thorin who tended to show few emotions.

Tauriel led them to a wing of Thranduil’s Hall where they were offered bedrooms; the rooms were less lavish then those in Rivendell. They were a bit like rooms at an inn Nori once stayed in.

Clearly these were those for unwanted guests…

Elrohir and Elladan were led elsewhere…
Fili and Bilbo chose the first room they were offered.

Nori was just as possessive as Balin was of Dori and he determined to share a room with Dwalin this time. So it wasn’t any wonder when he dragged Dwalin into a room or that Dwalin didn’t protect.

Yet he was surprised to see Ori pout as Kili took a room alone just before he closed the door.

Kili had always seemed playful and immature while Ori seemed the more mature despite being a day younger.

Their adventures on this quest seemed to have tested Kili and Ori, Kili had strived to overcome the hardships and grow from them while Ori reacted like a spoilt brat to anything he didn’t like.

Once they were alone Nori stripped down to his nightclothes storing his knives elsewhere.

They unpacked a bit pulling out cleaner clothes in hopes of a bath.

There came a knock at the door.

Frowning Nori called out, “Who is it?”

“Legolas and Elrond’s sons with Fili and Bilbo.”

Dwalin opened the door, “Yes?”

Legolas stood outside the door with Fili, Bilbo, Elrohir and Elladan behind him, “We’re about to take a bath and I thought you could use a bath. We don’t have the hot springs that they have in Imladris but I can offer you hot water to bathe in and a dip in a pool. Long ago father paid for indoor plumbing to be put in by Naug…I’m sorry I meant Khazad-dim. About the same time he let you put in the road I think.”
Nori grabbed those clean clothes, not bothering to redress before following Legolas and Fili even though Dwalin gave him a look of dismay.

Dwalin too fetched clean clothes and followed Legolas as he went to invite the others.

The company were pleased to be allowed bathe since they were all rather filthy thanks to travelling in Mirkwood and their battle with the fell spiders.

Legolas led them into a common bath area where all but Nori stripped, Dwalin bathed quickly before the others finished washing.

It seemed common for the elves to wash before soaking.

Fili and Bilbo were oblivious to Nori’s standoffish behaviour…

Dwalin knew why and when the others moved on to go soak in the pool, Dwalin stayed behind.

Nori looked at the water longingly.

Dwalin moved to touch his shoulder, “You need to bathe, let me sit between them and you. You don’t need to take everything off only enough to be comfortable.

Nori squeezed his hand in silent gratitude for his understanding before Dwalin moved to sit awkwardly on with his back facing Nori. Nori stripped but leaving his wrappings and fake cock straps on, bathing quickly. Once he felt ‘cleaner, Nori pulled on small clothes and an undershirt. Then he threw his long underwear that most wore as nightclothes onto the pile of dirty clothes.

Nori rose to follow them when there was a knock on the door.

Legolas rose, giving Nori a curious look but he said nothing as he went to open the door.
Tauriel was carrying a sort of screen before her.

Legolas let her in and turned, “We need to speak and Tauriel will remain behind the screen for proprieties sake.”

The Imladris elves and Fili seemed to realise that while this was unusual, that if Legolas deemed her presence imperative that they should accept with good will but Thorin seemed irritated.

Tauriel set the screen beside the pool where the others were soaking.

Dwalin being a bearer was uncomfortable being naked near a female and so his hands were covering his sword and jewels.

Nori merely ignored the she-elf, just as he tried to ignore the fact that he wasn’t naked as the others were.

They were just about to pass Tauriel when she gasped.

“Nogoth what happened to your back?”

Dwalin flinched, “Ran afoul of Orcs. They decided that whipping me would get me to talk.”

Tauriel glanced at Nori, “Might I have your permission to heal your mate?”

Nori blinked, “What?”

Elrohir spoke up, “Like Bilbo’s mother, Tauriel was one of father’s healing students.”

Nori shrugged, “We’ve kept it clean as best we could, wrapping it with clean bandages and salves.”

“It has been well cared for but I can speed up the healing.” Tauriel offered.
Dwalin was fuming.

Nori nodded, “My One is very proud and would prefer not to accept the aid of an elf but on the other hand he would like to carry his own possessions like his axes. I will consent but he will likely not be a polite or gracious patient.”

Tauriel nodded, “I know a few like that…”

The others were silent as Tauriel examined Dwalin’s back and began to sing a healing chant.

Fili frowned slightly when he saw that Nori slid into the pool partially dressed but no one else said anything.

Bofur was lost in thought, Bombur looked half asleep; Bifur was in conversation in ignishmeck with Elladan and when Ori went to speak Kili dealt him such a look of distain that Ori flinched and pouted.

Thorin just scowled likely due to close proximity to a relation of Thranduil the Shirker…

Once Dwalin’s back was healed, Tauriel retreated behind the screen and sat.

“Father will not willingly permit you to leave because he doesn’t believe your tale. I have been thinking on this since we met. There is a feast tonight and you will be expected to make an appearance.” Legolas smirked, “But only an appearance…then while my people are drinking and celebrating you will slip away. One can only leave father’s hall by the gate with consent but you will not go that way. It will be slightly perilous and uncomfortable to leave the way I propose but given the dangers you have passed through and have yet to encounter such a journey will be nothing. Now Elladan and Elrohir won’t leave that way…we’re going to send you fourteen out a secret way with all possessions but your ponies.”

“I see so they slip out during the feast and everyone thinks they are sleeping late due to the festivities…” Tauriel mused. “One usually sleeps in after such a feast…”

Legolas nodded, “We’ll take the ponies out sans any tack other then lead ropes for a leisurely walk
through the forest and we’ll show Elrohir and Elladan around. We’ll take a light lunch with us but instead of touring we’ll meet them and Bard at the dock. They will load up their ponies; help Bard load the empty barrels onto the barge. Then instead of returning here we’ll follow the river to Esgaroth. It’s about time we made a visit anyway…”

Tauriel nodded, “I’ve missed them…”

Legolas chuckled, “So have I, we’ll send our gifts out in barrels with our small guests. The sooner they are gone the better. I’ll have a light meal of fruit and fish sent to your rooms. I recommend a nap; Tauriel and I will fetch you for the feast. We will have what travelling food stored in the barrels we can find, this will be tricky business but we’ll get you out of this place. I know obeying or trusting an elf will be difficult but we’ll need to get you out by a trick.”

The company reluctantly agreed to Legolas’ idea because they hadn’t one better and if they hoped to leave without trouble from Thranduil, Legolas wasn’t only hope

Once they were agreed, Tauriel left promising to send up food and prepare their escape.

They dressed in clean clothes before returning to their rooms escorted by Legolas since they were unfamiliar with Thranduil’s hall…

XooooooX

Dwalin was pleased and nervous when Nori dragged him into the room offered to them by Tauriel once more, he had only been beneath Nori once. Yet the younger Khazad’s possessiveness since Nori had come to believe that he was serous in his desire to belong to Nori…

Dwalin had hope that Nori would want him again, Nori’s possessive embrace during the night since the day he’d given himself to Nori, and he’d ached for it. He’d struggled so hard to be seen as more than just a bearer of Khazad children, he wanted to be respected for his other abilities and talents. Nori’s dominant streak had been so unexpected and yet endearing. Nori’s multi-faceted personality was so perfect, Dwalin had saved himself for his One and when he knew that was Nori, he gave himself willingly.

He wanted to be claimed again to be pinned and hammered into exhaustion and completion.
His eagerness was likely more honed because Tauriel had some skill as a healer and had healed his back. He felt physically well enough and he wanted Nori to want him back…

Once they were alone, Dwalin called out, his voice husky with desire, “Nori…”

When Nori turned, Dwalin undid his clothes, tossing them aside, “Nori…”

Nori swallowed, “Dwalin…”

“My back is well, for an elf that Tauriel is a miracle-worker. Nori I need you…” he walked backwards to the bed, sprawling out in a manner he hoped was encouraging. “I know you want me…”

Nori licked his lips, “Always have you buffoon…”

Dwalin’s voice shook, “I wanted you before it was appropriate…I hated myself for it. You were a child…nearly young enough to be mine. I forced myself to forget, I don’t want to now…I was cruel. You would be right to be angry and mistrust me but I am yours…”

Balin’s words repeated by Dwalin let forth the desire Nori had struggled to restrain since his first hammering of his One. Nori pounced, his naked One. He perched atop his One, “You know what I am and you still want me…”

“I am a bearer, I was fashioned to love you Nori. I always wanted you as a male, how could I not want you the way I was forged to?” Dwalin asked gruffly.

Nori undressed he’d worn underclothing into the bath despite knowing most of their company save the Broadbeam cousins, Fili and Bilbo knew what he was.

Dwalin swallowed, “May I?”

Nori was unnerved by Dwalin’s request, “You’ve never seen me naked…”
Dwalin shrugged, “Don’t you trust me?”

Nori was unsure and it showed.

Dwalin flinched, “I won’t touch you in anyway you tell me not to. You’ve been bound too long, at least let me free you. You don’t have to let me see…”

Nori move to sit beside Dwalin’s prone form and turned away, “If you wish…”

Dwalin moved to kneel behind him he raised Nori’s overshirt and tossed it aside, reaching with shaking hands he removed Nori’s undershirt and dropped it over Nori’s knees. He undid the wrappings, careful not to touch or caress the breasts beneath. “How I wish I could give myself to you in every way…” he whispered, once Nori was freed from the wrappings, Dwalin’s hands fell to rest on Nori’s hips and he rest his forehead on his One’s bare back. “Do you trust me now?”

Nori had been terrified that Dwalin would try to touch or claim him as a bearer but was pleased to learn that Dwalin would not. He slipped the undershirt back on, shucked his trousers and small clothes but kept his cording that held his wooden cock to his body. He turned nervously, “This is me Dwalin, can you accept that?”

Dwalin’s eyes barely skimmed his body, before looking into his eyes, “My back is healed but scared for life. I have injuries from weapons, and tattoos as well as my piercings, can you accept them? I was forged to bear children that I cannot give you, does this shame you?”

Nori snorted, “You cannot bear children because I cannot give them to you.”

Dwalin lay back down on the bed, “Then let us share what we can, all I can give you is my body.”

Nori straddled his One and kissed him roughly, “Mine.” He growled in Khazudul.

Dwalin groaned but lay still, groaning softly as Nori’s quick hands caressed his body. How he wished he could give Nori a child, a son…

He would never step outside their bond and let another take him to bed to give that too him. Any
child he bore must be Nori’s or he would not have it. Few would dare force someone like him…
Dwalin gasped as Nori’s hand grasped his cock and squeezed, “Nori!”

“You do like pleasure with pain…” Nori muttered.

“If it’s from you then yes…I will submit to no other…” Dwalin rasped.

Nori reached to fetch the salve that Dwalin had dropped on the bed while unpacking, he coated his fingers before thrusting two into his One.

Dwalin bellowed with pleasure.

Nori smirked even as he added a third, “You look hot like that…”

“Please Nori…” Dwalin all but begged.

Nori coated the fake cock with salve before he thrust it up and into Dwalin’s body.

Dwalin gaped, thrusting his ass back into Nori’s thrust, “Yes!”

Nori was humbled that Dwalin, their greatest warrior, bearer or not was willing to submit to him. His thrusts were punishing but Dwalin seemed to be pleased by them. Nori wished he could feel how it felt to be inside Dwalin. If only he could feel the heat of Dwalin’s cleft and cavern with more than just his fingers…

Dwalin clutched Nori’s arms with his rough hands, “Harder…harder Nori…I want to remember…”

Nori gave Dwalin everything he could, he only wished he could feel pleasure from it properly…

Nori hammered Dwalin through two orgasms that left him feeling worn out…
Dwalin reached up to cup Nori’s face, “Nori…enough…please…you’ve hammered me so well that I’m spent…”

Nori reluctantly pulled out.

Dwalin pulled him down beside him, “That was the best I’ve ever had…and I’m glad it was from you…”

Nori was anxious about hearing of Dwalin’s disgust if he felt Nori’s breasts beneath his clothing but Dwalin said nothing as he held his hand and lay beside him.

Dwalin seemed content to lie beside him…

Slowly Nori relaxed, but it was not until Dwalin’s familiar snore reached his ears that he trusted in truth.


XooooooX

Once they had bathed and conversed with Legolas and Tauriel, they returned to their rooms to rest. The feast of Starlight would begin late that night…

Oin much to Balin’s irritation and Dori’s embarrassment followed them into their room. “Your boy be needing an exam. You were unwise Balin, conceiving a child within your One when we be on a perilous quest. You put him in danger!”

Balin muttered darkly, “I could not restrain myself, here was a beautiful bearer who saved himself for me and let me soar without saddling me with young dwarflings to raise. He was so beautiful and innocent I could not resist.”

Dori turned red, “Balin…” he mumbled in embarrassment.

Oin didn’t seem bothered by Balin’s defensiveness or Dori’s embarrassment as he bullied Dori into an exam.
Dori hadn’t had such a thorough exam since he was about fifty and they were ascertaining whether he was a sire or a bearer. He was never fond of having Oin’s cold hands on his skin…

Oin removed his hands, “I remember, this one was quite fertile. Not as much as Dwalin but fertile none the less. I wouldn’t be surprised cousin if he conceived the first time you bedded him which says much despite your age.”

Balin scowled, “I’m younger then you…”

“And I’m old enough to be Gloin’s bearer but I’m his brother just as Dori’s relationship to Ori is.” Oin scoffed. “A year since Imladris, I would say this be a spring bairn. April or even May, quite a boon if we succeed and a time of celebration. However, you both knew that Dis and I insisted that Kili and Ori restrain themselves and take herbs to prevent such an occurrence and yet you two ignored my advice. It is foolish to conceive now…”

Balin shrugged, “What’s done is done, we’ll have to succeed because I want our child born in Erebor…the first of a new generation blessed of Mahal…”

“You conceived between May and June likely,” Oin mused, “the closer we come to winter the more you’ll show and your body will change to serve the bairn. Now try to keep your rides gentle, you are still early enough that any trauma to your stomach will harm if not kill the bairn. Now that would be a tragedy because I have not the time nor place to remove a child. For your sake and the bairn’s take care of yourself, no recklessness.”

Balin was worried due to their prospective escape tonight…

But he put it out of his mind as he forcibly escorted his cousin from their room.

Balin had difficulty restraining himself from Dori; it had been nerve-wracking to see his body bared for all to see.

Having never been around a pregnant bearer, part of a coming of age education was learning how to tell if your One was pregnant with your child. The memories had been hazy until he’d overseen the lecture from Oin to Kili…
The Princess Dís had given the same to Ori but it was how to tell if you were as a bearer, male bearers were quicker to show signs then female bodied.

Balin wanted to keep the sight of his beautiful pregnant One for his eyes only but he had been slightly relieved that only Oin noticed. While they were in the bath, Balin had clutched Dori close and protected the gentle swell that held their developing child with his own hands. The longer Dori was pregnant, the more he craved to retake Erebor. Balin wanted nothing more then for them to be the first couple bound in reclaimed Erebor and for their child to be the first born there since Lady Arisa.

Dori blushed, “You can’t touch me like that in public!”

Balin frowned, “Why not? As your One it is my duty and joy to protect you.”

Dori groaned, “Did you not notice? The moment you touched me I was ready…you could have taken me amidst the company and our Elvish companions and I would have succumbed willingly. It took all my will not to beg for it…”

Balin smirked, “My touch did that? I didn’t touch you with seduction in mind, merely protection.”

“It seems that my flesh can no longer tell the difference,” Dori admitted shamefaced.

Balin chuckled, “Is that so?” he undressed Dori quickly, his fingers fluttering over that delectable flesh.

By the time Dori was fully naked he was panting, dripping and his legs had spread so that he was unsteady on his feet.

Balin carried him to bed, feeling younger had been a blessing that he’d received from Mahal since his eyes had been opened and he saw Dori, his One.

Dori begged clutching him, “Balin please…”

Balin smirked, “No, I want to see for myself how carrying my child has changed you. You glow
Dori…”

Dori shivered, moaning as Balin cupped his developing breasts by the tenth month they were almost at full size and at eleven, they were known to drip in anticipation of birth.

Balin nuzzled them with his beard, “Oh Mahal, never again will I doubt your benevolence. Dori you are a gift, I can feel my forgotten youth return to me. I feel as if I were Fili’s age when I look at you.”

Dori felt safe when Balin’s hands caressed his soft swelling belly, their baby…within him was a child of their love. He’d always loved Balin; in the beginning it had been a sort of adolescent worship. Balin was his friend Dwalin’s elder brother, already rising the ranks of the scholars before the lost of Erebor and the beginning of their exile. Balin was more than merely a scholar; he was wise as well…

Dori was newly come to adulthood when he felt the oft described sensation of seeing and knowing your One. To have it be the crush from his youth made him feel all the more unworthy, Balin’s duties had him traveling in elevated circles that a young Khazad in the first flush of adulthood could not hope to be noticed. He barely dared hope that someday Balin would see him and know he was his, then his parents died leaving behind Nori who was barely weaned and Ori, who was an infant just born. They were his only family and he could not given them up despite the clamoring.

His years of selfless sacrificing to give Nori and Ori had resulted in this unsought reward, Balin’s love and their child…

Balin’s hands traced his body, caressing the swell that cradled their child and Dori whispered needing his sword buried inside him, “Balin…”

“A bit longer Dori, just a little longer. I want to bask in this, this is you…my One…our child…the first child to be born in Erebor…I want us to be the first bound there…”

Dori let Balin spread his legs; he wanted nothing more then to be anvil to Balin’s hammering. Balin treated him as if he were more precious then gold or books, as if he cherished him above all. It seemed that the elder Khazad’s love had grown since Bag End, Dori’s love had years to simmer but it seemed to come to fruition once Balin took him to bed as a lover in Imladris.

Balin used the last of the oil he’d gotten in Imladris, his fingers delving in one at first and then
more preparing Dori to take him.

Dori’s gasps were begs, pleading with Balin to hammer him, it was hard to deny him but Balin would not hurt Dori who carried his child and owned his heart. “I love you Dori.”

Dori’s eyes opened and gazed at him with such adoration, “I have always been yours, waiting for you…”

Balin kissed him as he thrust into him, “I know and I am sorry it took so long for my eyes to see you. Dori, my Dori…”

Dori cried out, “Balin!” his body adjusted easily because he wanted this and pregnancy had made him more eager for his One.

They were moving together, it was a fiery as the sparks cast off when a hammer hit an anvil in truth. That made their child a precious beyond measure creation, something made between them and Dori was humbled to have Balin’s child within him.

Dori’s new sensitivity made him come harder and sooner then before…

Balin had dreamt of celebratory sex with his One, but never in his dreams had imagined it like this.

Dori clutched at him, hard enough to bruise but not really injure him. Dori was so physically strong that Balin knew that no harm would come to their child…

Dori fell back on the bed, eyes closed and drawing in gasping breathes. “I love you…”

“And I desire you more than an endless vein of mithril…” Balin said moving to cradle Dori in his arms, a hand resting on his stomach. “Both of you…”

Dori snuggled in close, “I am so lucky to be yours…”

Balin lay there content as Dori fell asleep in his arms.
They were blessed to find one another…

It proved did it not that Mahal himself smiled on them?

XooooooX

Kili was about to shut his door when it stopped mid-closing.

Kili frowned, as he turned back to the door worried that Thorin or Fili wished to speak with him.

Instead he was faced with a pouting Ori…

Kili sighed, “Yes?”

“What no at your service beloved?” Ori whinged.

Kili looked away, “I needed time to think.”

Ori snorted, “You’ve let your uncle change your mind! You think we’re too young…”

Kili coughed, “We are.”

Ori reeled back as if he’d been struck, “You don’t mean that…”

Kili sighed, “I do, our relationship is far older then the one that Fili and Dori have with their Ones but theirs is stronger. I love you Ori, you know I do but I’m not ready. Something is coming Ori, I’m not going to be ready for it but I need to be. We still need to grow up some before we can have a strong relationship.”

“You’re leaving me?” Ori scowled.
Kili shook his head, “No, I’m just asking you to wait until we’re older. Reclaiming Erebor and giving our people a home is more important then bonding together before Mahal. He would be displeased if we did so now, I am sure of it. I should never have agreed to bully Ama and Dori.”

“We decided…” Ori whinged.

“This is a poor place to have this talk Ori,” Kili chided. “I need time to think. Please let me alone.”

“Is it proper for a betrothed to act like this?” Ori fumed.

Kili sighed, “Don’t make this a fight, when you agreed that you wanted us to be Ones Ori you promised that you would accept it gracefully when duty took precedent over pleasure.”

Ori pouted, “What does duty have to do with this?”

“This journey has taught me that I am yet a child in the body of an adult, I should not have come. I belong with this company just as much as Gimli does. Ori the ponies would have been safer if they had been watched by anyone other then us. We would not have been caught unawares by the trolls.”

Ori groaned, “Kili that was months ago…”

Kili shrugged, “It was not the time to do what we were doing, an adult would have known better. Have Fili or Balin done more then sleep beside their Ones when we are on the road? Of course not because they know it is not the place for such things. I would like to rest alone Ori, because tonight will no doubt be a long and uncomfortable one.”

At the comment of ‘long and uncomfortable’ Ori pouted, “All the more reason we should enjoy ourselves.”

Kili shook his head, “No Ori…I want to be alone…”
Ori stumbled back and Kili shut the door, he hated hurting Ori but Ori’s childish, selfish behaviour was making him uncomfortable and he hated watching Ori hurt his brothers with his words and upset Balin and Dwalin…

He couldn’t tell Ori he was right when he wasn’t and he was too exhausted physically and emotionally to consider sex…

XooooooX

They were woken way too soon in Nori’s opinion; he kicked Dwalin, “Go answer the door.”

His sleepy One stumbled out of bed, grabbing trousers he made his way to the door and barked as soon as it was open. “What do you want?”

Legolas held a lit candle in a holder and a basket of more candles on the same arm; he reached into the basket and held the new candle to the lit one. “You have little time before the feast begins. I thought you might be needing light. Hurry and repack. I must fetch Elladan and Elrohir before the festival begins. Tauriel will escort you when the feast starts.”

Dwalin snatched the candle, “Thanks…elf…” he noticed cleaned clothing waiting in a basket out their door, he fetched those too and then he shut the door in Legolas’ face.

Nori snorted, “That wasn’t nice.”

Dwalin sneered, “I don’t like him.”

They used the pitcher of water on a table in their room with clothes and soap to wash away the traces of their lovemaking before dressing in their ‘visiting’ clothes.

Dwalin knew that they would be leaving this place soon; while he hated Thranduil and disliked Legolas he would miss that bed. He wished that like Dori he’d been taken to bed in Imladris too but he wouldn’t have consented then more the fool he…

XooooooX
Balin heard the knock at their door; he rose pulling on trousers and made his way to the door despite the dark. He opened it a crack, “Yes?”

Legolas was there with candles, “I thought you might need light to dress by.” He offered a freshly lit candle to him and gestured at the basket of freshly laundered clothes, “For your pack. I must be at the opening of the Festival with the sons of Elrond but Tauriel will escort you to the feast.”

Balin inclined his head, “Thank you for the candle and clothes. We will be ready…” then he asked quietly, “What transport did you have in mind?”

Legolas flinched, mouthing, ‘Barrels,’ in the common tongue.

Balin hissed in dismay, “Dori…he is with child…”

Legolas swallowed, “I will inform Tauriel. She will take precautions.”

Balin nodded, “You have my gratitude.”

“I know that Khazad do not live as long but is it your first or one of many?” Legolas asked in a subdued tone.

Balin’s chest puffed with pride, “Our first.”

“Maybe Eru Illuvatar and Aüle bless you both.” Then Legolas went to deliver candles to the others…

Balin shut the door after retrieving the clean clothes. He set the candle in a stand and went to wake Dori; his One had one hand protectively resting on his stomach and the other reaching for Balin. There was a frown on that beautiful face, Balin took the hand that reached for him on his vacated part of the bed and brought it to his lips before leaning down to kiss Dori’s temple, “Wake amrâlimê…”
Dori shivered beneath him, “Mmm Balin? Where did you go?”

“Legolas brought us candles and made sure we got our clothes so we can be ready.” Balin said soothingly as he laid their linked hands over the swell of Dori’s stomach.

The look in Dori’s face about took his breath away; it was as if nothing could make him unhappy…

Balin wanted him to keep that glow; he wanted to see to Dori’s happiness…

He led Dori from the bed and using water from a pitcher in their room, a cloth and soap he washed all traces of their lovemaking from Dori’s body.

Dori was hard and aching by the time Balin finished washing him.

Balin pushed Dori against the wall gently and knelt to take Dori’s sword in his mouth.

Dori whimpered, “Balin!”

It had been sometime since Balin did this for him and his overly sensitive body made it feel all the more intense. Dori came quickly and hard, clutching Balin’s shoulders…

Tears filled Dori’s eyes when he saw bruises on Balin. He knelt before him and kissed them, “Balin…I’m so sorry…”

Balin took his hands and kissed them, “Dori you are very strong, strong enough to wrestle and kill a bear. I know this but you are not a violent person, you would never hurt me purposefully. You are defensive not offensive…I trust you amrâlimê.”

Dori threw his arms around him, “Mahal you are too good to me…”

Balin chuckled, “No, you are far too precious to be mine but I will cherish you regardless…”
Dori’s heart was beating so fast that it was almost worrisome.

They held one another for a while until Dori was calmer; an Elvish festival complete with a feast was an unheard of opportunity for scholarship…

Balin was nearly as excited for it as he was about Dori’s pregnancy; he was a scholar after all and thirsted for knowledge. A life with Dori was filled with uncertainty and endless potential for learning…

XooooooX

Tauriel fetched them after the stars began to rise; it was late when they were escorted outside to a large terrace that carved pillars that were decorated with birds, vines and flowers framed hall side of the terrace.

There were elves playing harps and flutes as well as dancing on an even larger lawn, there were long trestle tables filled with fruit, fish and grain dishes along with tall pitchers of wine, hard ciders made from apples and pears as well as some ales set up across the lawn from the musicians and dancers.

Thorin coughed and then spoke in Iglishmêk, “No gorging. We must move. Move quickly. Eat to be polite not to be full.”

The others aside from Bilbo nodded in agreement.

Fili chuckled, “Don’t eat too much amrâlimê. We wouldn’t want you to look like Bombur…”

It seemed to Nori that Bilbo took the teasing as nonchalantly as possible, likely he realised it was a reminder that they needed to be quick and not sluggish when it came to their escape tonight…

The company with the exception of the Elven twins grabbed plates and began to fill them; only Bombur and Bilbo were concerned with the taste and flavours of the exotic to their palates food.
Tauriel encouraged them to eat the audacious spread with the aura of a hostess; Balin’s opinion what she lacked in natural authority the she-elf made up for in quiet enthusiasm.

The company with the exception of the Elven twins grabbed plates and began to fill them; only Bombur and Bilbo were concerned with the taste and flavours of the exotic to their palates food.

They ate slowly though they were quite hungry…

Fili noticed that neither Tauriel, Legolas, Elrohir nor Elladan drank much of the wine though they did help make a dent in the feast.

They were lead in pairs back to the corridor where their rooms were. Immediately, Bilbo and Fili went to properly pack and dress in their now clean travelling clothes.

It was very late when a rap came to their door.

The Company were led silently deeper into Thranduil’s Hall, away from the party and into surprisingly the cellars.

They were met by snores.

A guard captain and a cook were passed out.

“My uncle’s cook likes his wine more then my uncle does…” Tauriel murmured.

To their surprise they were driven towards a stack of empty wine casks.

Balin scowled, “This is the only way?”
Tauriel sighed, “I know it will not be comfortable.”

They were packed into the barrels with their belongings and ‘gifts’ that had been mentioned between Legolas and Tauriel but more care was taken to pad Bilbo and Dori from injury.

The empty barrels were stacked on top of one another with Bilbo, Nori and Kili climbing into the top row. While Fili, Ori, Bofur, Bifur and Gloin were in the middle row putting Thorin, Dori, Oin, Dwalin, Bombur and Balin in the bottom. Once they were all inside a barrel and packed in a best they could to prevent injury Tauriel spoke.

“I’m putting the lid on, you must not take them off. There is a water gate down river that must not see you or an alarm will be raised.”

Fili frowned, “Will you get in trouble?”

Tauriel shrugged, “Legolas is young enough that it will likely be called a childish prank and I’m not much younger. My uncle might be upset for a while but this is the best way.”

Reluctantly the Company allowed her to put the lid on their barrels.

Once they were all sealed in, Tauriel whispered, “Take a deep breath.”

Then it felt as if the floor were dropped out from under them; Fili and Bilbo had noticed that the wine barrels had been stacked on top of a trapdoor so that was nearly what must have happened.

They were banged around a bit before landing with a splash.

As suffocating as it was to be sealed into those barrels neither Nori, Dwalin, Dori, Balin nor Kili dared remove the lid.

There was something a bit exciting about this daring and unusual escape, nothing like their starlit ride out of Imladris but there was similar excitement in the sneaking.
They knew they must have reached the gate when they heard singing drawing near them soon it was essentially overhead and then it was drifting away.

Yet Nori was the one was the most wary of the rumoured Elven eyesight to remove the lid on his wine barrel.

Dori had gotten banged around a bit but he still didn’t dare push the lid off, he wouldn’t jeopardize the quest for any reason…

It was nearly dawn when the watercourse slowed and it felt better then the uncomfortable landing.

Then the sounds of the night drifted away and the sounds of morning returned; songbirds especially…

Then they heard a male voice singing and slowly coming closer.

_The leaves were long, the grass was green,_
_The hemlock-umbels tall and fair,_
_And in the glade a light was seen_
_Of stars in shadow shimmering._
_Tinúviel was dancing there_
_To music of a pipe unseen,_
_And light of stars was in her hair,_
_And in her raiment glimmering._

_There Beren came from mountains cold,_
_And lost he wandered under leaves,_
_And where the Elven-river rolled_
_He walked alone and sorrowing._
_He peered between the hemlock-leaves_
_And saw in wonder flowers of gold_  
_Upon her mantle and her sleeves,_
_And her hair like shadow following._

_Enchantment healed his weary feet_
_That over hills were doomed to roam;_  
_And forth he hastened, strong and fleet,_
_And grasped at moonbeams glistening._
_Through woven woods in Elvenhome_  
_She lightly fled on dancing feet,_
_And left him lonely still to roam_  
_In the silent forest listening._
He heard there oft the flying sound
Of feet as light as linden-leaves,
Or music welling underground,
In hidden hollows quavering.
Now withered lay the hemlock-sheaves,
And one by one with sighing sound
Whispering fell the beachen leaves
In the wintry woodland wavering.

He sought her ever, wandering far
Where leaves of years were thickly strewn,
By light of moon and ray of star
In frosty heavens shivering.
Her mantle glinted in the moon,
As on a hill-top high and far
She danced, and at her feet was strewn
A mist of silver quivering.

When winter passed, she came again,
And her song released the sudden spring,
Like rising lark, and falling rain,
And melting water bubbling.
He saw the elven-flowers spring
About her feet, and healed again
He longed by her to dance and sing
Upon the grass untroubling.

Again she fled, but swift he came.
Tinúviel! Tinúviel!
He called her by her elvish name;
And there she halted listening.
One moment stood she, and a spell
His voice laid on her: Beren came,
And doom fell on Tinúviel
That in his arms lay glistening.

As Beren looked into her eyes
Within the shadows of her hair,
The trembling starlight of the skies
He saw there mirrored shimmering.
Tinúviel the elven-fair,
Immortal maiden elven-wise,
About him cast her shadowy hair
And arms like silver glimmering.

Long was the way that fate them bore,
O'er stony mountains cold and grey,
Through halls of ireon and darkling door,
And woods of nightshade morrowless.
The Sundering Seas between them lay,
And yet at last they met once more,
And long ago they passed away
In the forest singing sorrowless.

By the time the song ended it seemed that their barrels had come to a stop.

“Oh Elven maiden mine were it so that I had seen you this night. Though your hair be red as fire rather then black as the heavens, Beren and I are much alike…”

Bilbo squeaked, at least Nori was nearly certain it was Bilbo.

“Tauriel what is this? Has that drunken cook of Thranduil’s tossed out full barrels again?”

Bilbo’s voice came through their barrels, “A little help sir? We’ve been trapped in those things for a while.”

The man helped him out of the barrel asking gruffly, “What are you small one? You are too old to be a child and beardless so not a dwarf.”

“I’m a hobbit.” Bilbo admitted shyly, “My elf friends call me perian which means halfling but I’m not fond of that name.”

“I am Bard the bargeman, what should I call you?”

Bilbo’s reply was surprisingly back to the stuttering of their first meeting. “Bil…bil…bo…Bag…gins…”

Immediately by sound of it, Fili burst out of his barrel and leapt onto the barge, kneeling in front of his mate, “Bilbo?”

“I don’t like water…” Bilbo mumbled.

Fili soothed him, “I know, but you handled that barrel ride fine. Just breathe alright?”
In the water the rest of the Company were popping out of their barrels.

The stunned bargeman began hauling both Khazad and barrel into the boat separately.

Not long after all fourteen of their original Company were safely on the boat, then they heard the sound of horses.

Tauriel leapt off her horse and landed lightly on the barge, “I see they made it as I hoped. Did you come through the trip without much discomfort Dori?”

Balin looked worried.

Dori stretched, “No more so then riding a pony for hours but that drop was uncomfortable.”

“Can someone please explain why thirteen dwarves and a ‘hobbit’ floated down the Forest Road in wine barrels?” Bard asked giving Tauriel a hard look.

Tauriel shrugged, “You know Uncle Thranduil. He is very unhelpful and distrusting of other races if they aren’t currently providing him a service. It was the easiest way to get out of the Hall. Legolas and I took the ponies for a ride when we went out with Elrohir and Elladan to show them the forest. Of course they only saw the path that led here. We sent our guests out with the gifts that Legolas and I planned to bring on our trip.”

“We’re going to have guests aren’t we?” Bard sighed. “Our house is not very big Tauriel.”

Tauriel squeezed his shoulder, “They will only be staying one night before they continue on their journey.”

Bard nodded, “One night is workable. We’ll need to trail that net behind us in hopes of fish. Sigrid made soup hoping that you two would be coming with the barrels.”

“We are.” Legolas said lightly as he slid down his horse.
The blonde elf tied the reins to Tauriel’s horse to his own before he joined Elrond’s sons in loading up the ponies.

Once they were repacked the ponies the Company and their Elven guides minus Tauriel mounted up.

Chapter End Notes

I hope the BardxTauriel pairing wasn't too awful but with Legolas meant for someone else and Kili too loyal to give any part of his heart to another I thought what the heck. It would solidify future treaties between the Lakemen and the Elves of Mirkwood right?

I recommend reading Thorin's Company Descends on Laketown [Esgaroth] next.
Chapter fifteen

The Company currently composed of thirteen Khazad-dim and one hobbit had arrived at Erebor on their third day out of Laketown. It was the fourth day by the time they climbed it in search of the hidden door and Gandalf appeared. Yet it was the fifth night out of Laketown, which was Durin’s Day when the moon shone on the door and they found it with the aid of a thrush. Before dawn on the sixth day Bilbo was expected to enter Erebor to search for the dreaded dragon…

Using a branch that had burnt enough to be charcoaled they traced the outline of both the door and the key hole for future reference…

Nori and Bilbo had sort become friends, having both fought valiantly against the Orcs that attacked them before their arrival at Imladris as well as their sneak attack on the Trolls to rescue their ponies. They were both close to Fili who thought of Nori as a friend and they had taken pains to include the older Khazad when they noticed he was feeling down.

So it wasn’t any wonder really that they both snuck into the secret door that led under the mountain into Erebor. Despite Gandalf’s warning that Smaug would recognize the scent of a Khazad Nori had told Bilbo when he snuck off that it was foolish to face a dragon on one’s own.

They were not very pleased with how long the tunnel went on and quite frankly it was very dark.

Since neither grew up in a mountain their night vision wasn’t as pronounced as the Erebor-born.

“So how do you think we should do this?” Bilbo whispered.

“We see if the dragon lives first. If he does well they are supposed to be sentient, we could try
talking to him.” Nori shrugged. “I’ve never met a dragon…”

Bilbo swallowed, “Me either…”

“Well we’ll play it by ear then.” Nori shrugged as he reached over to playfully tug on one of Bilbo’s pointed ears.

Bilbo blushed.

They tiptoed through the dark passage, holding hands and trailing their fingers along the wall.

Then their joined hands bumped a door.

They reached forward blindly running their hands over the door.

Nori’s deft fingers found the handle and he felt for the lock slipping Thorin’s key into it having picked Bilbo’s pocket in the dark.

The door hadn’t been oiled or even opened in a handful of scores of years so it shrieked out a whiny protest that sent chills down their spine.

The two would-be thieves winced.

Dwalin had always been rather impatient…

He knew Bilbo had been be their burglar but he was rather fond of the little fellow even if he and Nori would get into scraps together and Dwalin wasn’t fond of having him sneaking into a mountain looking for Smaug.
Dwalin knew when Bilbo and Nori slipped away in the middle of the night. He’d been aware of Nori leaving their bedroll before he knew that Bilbo was trying to head up the mountain to investigate.

For a thief, Nori had a strong responsibility streak that Dwalin was starting to appreciate. So he wasn’t that surprised when he saw Nori heading towards the secret door with Bilbo but he was unnerved when Nori didn’t come back in a reasonable amount of time. Given that Tharkûn claimed that it was too dangerous for them to enter the mountain in search of Smaug, Dwalin considered the possibility that Nori was waiting for Bilbo to return.

It didn’t take long for him to be aware that Fili was equally unnerved by Bilbo’s absence.

They would get no sleep this night so they rose and relieved Bifur and Bofur from night watch.

Waiting was a long game…

XooooooX

As they made their way in the dark, stumbling along through the pitch-black corridors trying to follow Balin’s directions to the treasury, which is where they expected to find Smaug alive or dead.

“I smell a child of Aüle.” Came a deep voice as they entered a cavern they thought might be the treasury after getting lost twice.

Bilbo squeezed Nori’s hand before putting on the ring.

Nori stepped forward. “I am Nori son of Stor, brother to a prince-consort of the Line of Durin. I have come on behalf of the Line of Durin to speak with the Great Smaug.”

“There is another…he disappeared but I can smell him. He smells of Aüle and Yavanna.”

“Pay him no heed.” Nori said dismissively. “He will do nothing I do not say.”
“What would the Line of Durin want of me?” Smaug said his eyes glowing like coals.

Nori did not look at those eyes, there were tales told about the danger of looking into a Dragon’s eyes. “There are rumours abroad that the Great Smaug has breathed his last and that the treasure of Erebor is unguarded. Dain, Lord of the Iron Hills covets his treasure. Unfortunately, there is one who according to Khazad law has a greater claim to the treasure.”

“Who would that be?” Smaug said with a dangerous voice that was close to a roar.

Nori perched on what seemed to be a chest of gold. “Thorin; he was only a young prince, third in line to the Throne of Erebor when you arrived Great Smaug. Curiously, my own brother is betrothed to his youngest nephew. We were interested in an alliance with the Great Smaug. Our people have great skill with stone, jewel and metal. We thought perhaps in exchange for letting us move back to Erebor we might return it to glory so that Great Smaug can be enshrined in it and bask in reflected glory.”

“What about my treasure?” Smaug’s voice held a frown.

“Half of it would remain yours oh Great Smaug. The other half would be used to make Erebor great. Your domain would be the treasury and you can continue to sleep among our mountain’s shared treasure. One of our Company would gladly serve as a custodian, his name is Gloin Great Smaug. He can with your assistance, for I have heard that dragons possess great memories and know every treasure by sight and smell. Then you can decide how to share the wealth, what you will pay us for rebuilding Erebor. Together we will defend ourselves from the likes of Dain who wishes to take your treasure for himself.” Nori said shaking his head, “Dain is a small Khazad who believes he has the right to claim Erebor when it is already in the hands of someone far stronger.”

“I heard a prophecy that I would find my heart in Erebor. I have searched and searched through this place and I have found nothing.” Smaug grumbled.

“Perhaps, I could arrange a meeting with our Thorin and Tharkûn.” Nori offered.

“Tharkûn?” Smaug asked.

Nori shrugged, “He is called many names, he is a wizard and I’ve heard that he appeared when Sauron rose to power.”
“Sauron, in the tongue of the Nolder it meant the Abhorred or the Abominable which is a far cry from his original name; Mairon the Admirable.” Smaug snorted and there was a flash of fire in the dark. “He was always biding his time. If he could have rose up against Melkor he would have. He was always planning to make himself Lord of Arda but was merely waiting for Melkor to be cast down by the Valar. I like Sauron allowed myself to be convinced to join Melkor and seduced by promises of greatness from the side of Aüle. In return for my treachery I was tortured by Melkor and twisted into a dragon. For Melkor could not truly create unlike Aüle; he could only twist what was already made for evil.”

“Would the Great Smaug allow a humble Nori to invite Tharkun and Thorin to a conference? Perhaps, we can negotiate something that would benefit us both? For I doubt that one could truly overcome the Great Smaug.” Nori said appealing to the Dragon’s pride.

“I will meet with them. I do not trust one of Durin’s line in my Sanctuary.” Smaug said in a stern voice. “We will talk at the Gate of Erebor. One insult and I will not take it well.”

Nori bowed, “I will relay the will of the Great Smaug. Come my friend, we must go tell Thorin and Tharkūn of our findings. The Great Smaug lives and will have counsel with Durin’s Heir and the Grey Wizard.”

Bilbo followed Nori out of the Treasury and they stumblingly made their way out of the mountain the way they came.

Once they returned outside the sky was so bright that they closed their eyes and had to pause.

Once their eyes readjusted to the brightness of the late morning sun the two scrambled down the mountain to their camp.

Dwalin and Fili were pacing and glancing towards the path.

XooooooX

Dwalin and Nori hadn’t come to terms with being Ones until after their arrival on Beorn’s Carrack and the skinchanger had rescued them from Orcs.

Their Ones ran towards them with a glad shout and they were hugged fiercely once they were
Both allowed their Ones to make sure they were unhurt.

Bilbo winced when Fili’s fingers brushed bruises from stumbling in the dark. “Careful.”

“What happened?” Dwalin frowned.

“One always is injured when stumbling in the dark.” Nori said vaguely. “Now I must talk to Tharkûn and Thorin at once.”

Dwalin glared, “You should see Oin first.”

Nori sniffed, “I’m fine; been hurt worse before, besides I promised to deliver a message.”

Dwalin scowled but fell silent for Nori was clearly the dominant in that relationship.

Fili led Nori to Thorin while taking Bilbo’s hand.

They found Thorin pacing, Gandalf puffing on his pipe and Balin frowning.

Thorin glared, “What took you so long?”

“Well first we had to find the treasury.” Nori drawled, “Got lost a few times. Then we had to negotiate with Smaug himself.”

“He lives?” Thorin swallowed.

Nori scoffed, “Of course he lives. What did you think? That he was dead and his rotting corpse was stinking up your treasury?”
Thorin scowled, “I was hopeful.”

“Something is pulling you to Erebor.” Gandalf observed, “It’s making you anxious and temperamental.”

“Smaug agreed to meet with you both to discuss terms. He was interested in possibly allowing us to return.” Nori said blandly. “That is if you can avoid insulting him or worse threatening him Thorin.”

Thorin glared. “He’s responsible for thousands of deaths.”

“Hundreds.” Gandalf corrected.

“If he hadn’t come then we wouldn’t have lost so many…Frerin would still be alive as well as others.”

“Your grandfather allowed gold to consume him.” Gandalf snapped. “Your father was barely managing to run Erebor as it was. Gold is a weakness in the design, a weakness that Yavanna herself foresaw and Sauron exploited.” He turned to Nori, “What does Smaug want?”

“He heard a prophecy that he would find his heart in Erebor but he’s searched and found nothing. He maybe willing to allow us to rebuild, we might only be allowed at most half of its treasure in exchange for rebuilding it.”

“Half? Only half?” Thorin sputtered.

“If you’re lucky, but were you to insult Smaug it might be less.” Nori scowled.

“How did you get him to agree to anything?” Gandalf asked.

“I stroked his ego; a dragon’s weakness is their pride.” Nori shrugged. “He particularly wishes to see you Tharkun.”
“The origins of Dragons are a source of debate among the White Council.” Gandalf mused.

“He claims he was one of Maiar, in the service of Aüle. He called us the children of Aüle, well he called me that but claimed Bilbo whom he could not see was the child of Aüle and Yavanna.”

“Many Maiar fell in those dark days…some by choice, others by force.” Gandalf said shaking his head.

“Well anyway, Smaug wishes to meet you both at the Gates of Erebor. He says he doesn’t trust a Durin in the Treasury.” Nori shrugged.

Thorin’s scowl deepened.

“With the history of gold lust it makes sense Uncle.” Fili said gently.

“I’m not my grandfather.” Thorin grumbled.

“You were named for him.” Balin pointed out.

Thorin glared at him.

Balin shrugged, “If I can’t join you then I’ll go have tea with Dori.”

Nori smirked, “Tell him I’m quite fine.”

“Aside from bruises.” Dwalin glared.

“From tripping over fallen stone or walking into walls in the dark. Unlike you Dwalin I don’t have excellent night vision from living in a mountain.” Nori retorted, he pulled Dwalin close by his shirt and kissed the burly warrior. “I appreciate that you worry about me.”
Dwalin turned red, coughing nervously.

“Perhaps, there maybe something about the sons of Stor…” Balin mused, “They seem to be quite intriguing.”

“Perhaps it is the line of Durin.” Nori teased, “Your cousin Gloin is with Fili’s elder sister, Kili is with Ori and we’ve captured you two.”

“My cousin Ferumbras is quite enamoured with Bofur.” Bilbo grinned.

“Bit awkward with you all pairing off.” Thorin grumbled.

“Come on Thorin. We have a dragon to talk with.” Gandalf said sharply, “They don’t like to be kept waiting. We must be diplomatic if you ever wish to hold the title of King under the Mountain.”

Thorin scowled.

“I’ll stay with Fili.” Bilbo said quietly. “I don’t want to be a distraction for you three.”

Thorin shrugged.

Fili’s uncle seemed almost alright with them being Ones, but Bilbo still worried that he would change his mind.

XooooooX

Thorin was stiff backed but had an aura of wary interest as he led them to the Gates of Erebor.

Nori was overwhelmed by the sheer glory of Smaug in daylight. “Oh Great Smaug,”
“You are Olórin, are you the one this son of my master Aüle calls Tharkûn?” Smaug seemed not to hear him and was stunned at the sight of Gandalf.

Gandalf seemed to glow with blinding light, “I am, I was once the guest of Lady Neinna, the faithful servant of Manwe and Varda. We were five who were sent to be the hands of the Valars and to combat Mairon when he rose to power.”

“I am…I was…”

“You were Salmar were you not?” Gandalf barked.

“I do not remember how I fell. I was told that I betrayed my master; I believed it until I stood before you both. Now I am not so sure…I…you are whom I have searched for. I find that I am too tormented to look upon you. You must be Thorin, the Rightful King under the Mountain.” Smaug said tiredly.

“You are one of the lost spirits of fire?” Gandalf frowned.

“Is there a way to see whether I betrayed my master or if I were tricked? My heart is here, like Meilan I would choose to stay yet I am unworthy. I am trapped in this form…” Smaug asked; his clawed feet moving closer to Thorin yet his yellow eyes remained fixed on Gandalf though they tried to look away.

“You can submit yourself to Manwe and Varda; perhaps Illuvatar would grant you redemption.” Gandalf nodded.

“I will do so. I shall not hide and skulk as Mairon did.” Smaug said quietly. He bowed, “Send for one who can inscribe a contract between us, Thorin.”

Nori bowed, “My brother, the prince-consort is the royal scribe, would that be of service Great Smaug?”

“Though I do not resemble my former self, my name was Salmar. I would prefer to make that the name that I inscribe this bond between Thorin and myself.” The dragon said sternly. “I am less great then Olórin here, for he is a Maia who serves Manwe and Varda and he has never deviated from his loyalty.”
Nori bowed once more and scurried away.

“I am the weakest of those sent. Saruman the White as he is called here in Eriador, considers me the weakest even if Radagast the Brown is the weakest in mind. We all had different charges given by our Vala beyond that given to us all…”

“Radagast?” the dragon asked.

“You knew him in the First Age as Aiwendil.” Gandalf offered.

“An odd fellow but likeable.”

That was the last Nori heard of the conference.

XooooooX

He stopped in front of his family who were seated with Bilbo and Fili gasping as he tried to recover his breath.

“Is something wrong?” Balin frowned.

Nori laughed out loud, “I think Smaug wants Thorin! He’s willing to submit himself for judgement before his Lord and Lady. Claims he isn’t good enough for Thorin. He asked for a scribe. Though perhaps Master Balin wouldn’t be amiss…”

Dori reluctantly pulled back from Balin, “Our king is being proposed to by Smaug the Abominable?”

There was a roar from the mountain.

Nori shouted, “Forgive my elder brother Salmar! I’ll talk with him later.” He hissed, “Dori shut up.
I wouldn’t lead Ori or Balin, much less Thorin into danger willingly. Nor would I take Bilbo. Come on Ori, get your satchel.”

Kili was clearly worried.

Ori glared at Nori, “I don’t know how you hoodwink people, but however did you convince our elders to accept you or how you choose to live, you embarrassment?”

Nori flinched, “If Maiar don’t complain, why should you? They are greater then we are. Come on we can continue this discussion later or do you not want to be named officially as Kili’s consort? Obtaining Erebor was the requirement; we have that if you come. Balin perhaps you really should come as a witness.”

Thorin’s advisor, who also happened to be Dori’s One and his One’s elder brother nodded, “It would be an honour…”

The three Khazad-dim left their worried Ones and made their way back up the mountain to the ruined Gates of Erebor.

If Nori thought his first glimpse of Smaug was awe-inspiring, in this second look the dragon glowed even more.

He, Salmar was standing closer to Thorin and their leader seemed to bask in his presence. All of his hatred for Smaug the Abominable was seemingly vanished…

“How is Arien?” Salmar asked.

“Still piloting the Sun; with Tilion still following ever after.” Gandalf shrugged.

“Ah…we were close once, Arien and I. I remember now, we were what the Children of Illuvatar would call siblings. She must be very angry with me...” Salmar frowned.

“The contract Salmar?” Gandalf asked gesturing at Ori who had taken out parchment, quill and ink.
Ori was perched on a large piece of stone that had been torn off the gate. He was studiously ignoring Nori as he prepared himself to record.

“I Salmar, also known as Smaug the Magnificent or Smaug the Terrible do grant to Thorin and his thirteen companions one-half of the treasure of Erebor. The treasure is to be divided by the Khazad Gloin and myself upon my return from the throne of Manwë. At no point is Thorin Oakenshield, son of Thrain to enter the Treasury until my return.”

Ori glared, “Why would you deny our Leader the right to visit the Treasury?”

“To protect him from the madness that gold has wrought on the royal lines cause by the Rings of Power.” Gandalf said sharply.

Thorin scowled, “I never wore it.”

“Never the less it was worn by your sire and grandsire, thus it would have an effect on you.” Gandalf frowned, “It’s the nature of the rings of power touched by Sauron.”

Thorin growled, “But Sauron didn’t forge Durin III’s ring!”

“He tainted their purpose and his Master ring changed what was meant as a gift into a curse.” Gandalf snapped. “This is Salmar’s attempt to protect you from fallen under the sway of gold as Thror did! Would you doom your people before they returned?”

Thorin glared, “Of course not! We’ve suffered enough as it is!”

“Then agree to not enter the treasury!” Nori glared, “The Ring of Durin III damned us all! It brought us Durin’s Bane because of his greed we delved too deep and brought a Bal-roq into Khazad-dûm’s hallowed halls. The fame of the Durin folk’s wealth brought Orcs of Angmar to Mount Gundabad our holy site and Smaug to Erebor. Countless have died for greed. Is your pride worth the lives of more? Dain will come, who else? Erebor must stand strong and it is not worth your pride. There are orphans enough among the Khazad-dim!”

Thorin sighed, “Agreed. If you will hurry back…”
Salmar raised a clawed foot and placed it on Thorin’s shoulder, “I will come back. No matter what I will come back to you. You are my heart, the Heart of the Mountain and the one Illuvatar meant for me. Together we will build a kingdom stronger then Melian and Thingol, our children will be as powerful as Lúthien.”

Gandalf stood outside the Gates of Erebor and shouted aloud, “Gwaihir!”

At once a great eagle appeared.

The great dragon formerly called Smaug fell before the eagle, “Servant of Manwë Súlimo!”

Gandalf stroked the eagle’s feathered head, “Cousin, this is a lost fire Maia of Aüle. He wishes to be given over to our Master for judgment. He is unsure of whether he fell by choice or was forced to it. I would take him myself but my task is not complete thus I cannot escort him myself.”

“I hear and obey Olórin.” The mighty eagle said inclining his head; “while escorting a dragon is not usually part of my duties I am sure that Manwë will allow me to enter Aman with him. I will leave my brother Landroval and send Meneldor ahead. Doubtless, Tulkas and Eönwë will meet us at the shore of Valinor.”

“Tulkas…he will want me chained.” Salmar said shaking slightly.

“You do not have to submit yourself for judgment.” Gandalf said quietly.

“I will not hide from the Mânawenûz; though no doubt Námo will want to cast judgment on me instead for my deeds which are no doubt recorded by Vairë.” Salmar frowned.

“There are things that she understands not even as she weaves them. Like Námo and Manwë, she to will have to ask Illuvatar how to interpret what she has woven.” Gwaihir said with a shrug. “Watch over this one Olórin, I will send one before and ask the other to oversee my people and continue our watch.”

Salmar nodded, “I will wait. If I am redeemed and return quickly by your definition, you will wait for me Thorin won’t you?”
Thorin flushed, “I waited this long for you, what is more time?”

The eagle returned quickly, “I am a servant of Manwë, a Maia as are you. Do not let the form fool you; for it was my father who with Eärendil brought down Ancalagon the Black.”

Salmar bowed, “I submit myself for judgement.”

“Come, it is a long flight to Valinor and to Mount Taniquetil.” Gwaihir said sharply.

“You must go at once before the Necromancer learns and attempts to stop you.” Gandalf counselled.

The dragon and the eagle went winging through the sky their faces to the West.

Immediately Gandalf forced Thorin to sign the contract with Salmar and Balin to witness along with himself.

Then Thorin looked to the Mountain’s broken gates. “Home. I have come home at last. I am Thorin II, King under the Mountain and this is my Hall.”

Gandalf held out a hand to Thorin, “I am glad that our mission was an unlooked for success. Be careful Thorin, son of Thrain there is said to be a curse upon a dragon’s horde. It calls to its former owners to challenge its Reclaimer for their share, remember the lesson of Fram, son of Frumgar, Lord of the Éotheod. I must go, for I am needed in Mirkwood.” He whistled and his horse appeared, Gandalf leapt into the saddle and was riding with great speed down the mountain.

Nori snatched the contract between Salmar and Thorin, “The Custodian of the treasury is Gloin and he will take possession for he is an honourable sort until Salmar returns. It is the one place no one but Gloin will enter. We can move into the mountain and begin repairs but that is all.”

“Who died and made you king?” Ori glared.
“King?” Nori scoffed, “I’m just looking out for all of us. If we fall under the sway of the dragon’s horde it will damn us all.”

“We should send word to the Thrain that all is in readiness. They will no doubt said their colonists, I believe that Ferumbras said that he would begin the arrangements at once.” Balin offered.

“We can send Bilbo but I need Fili here.” Thorin said in a dark voice. “We’ll send word to Dís that she can begin preparations to move our people from the ruins of Norgrod here.”

Nori frowned, “Wouldn’t it be wiser to send word by Bofur? He was quite fond of Ferumbras and he would go far more quickly. I believe that Bofur would consider it an honour to be sent.”

“The messenger must be Bilbo for he is one of those creatures.” Thorin replied sharply.

Nori nodded, “Very well.” He skulked off with the contract, despite never having seen the treasury, he worried the Curse of the Dragon’s horde was affecting their king.
Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

I can't believe that I forgot to post this...

BTW The Destruction of Esgaroth precedes this chapter while Bard's Request is partially concurrent.

Chapter sixteen

It was quickly becoming clear that the longer they were in Erebor, the more affected Thorin’s mind was.

If their leader wasn’t brooding in the throne room of Thor, Thorin stood in the top most room of the gatehouse and looked out with mad eyes.

The more Thorin pressed to enter the treasury to search for the Arkenstone, the stauncher Gloin appeared. He was entrusted with its protection and the time had not come in which to enter.

At Fili’s request, Nori and Dwalin made an inventory of what remained in Erebor and was uncorrupted.

Balin, Dori and Fili walked through Erebor and made a repair list in order of need, that which must be repaired for safety would come first.

Thorin’s preoccupation meant he noticed not…

The first things that Bombur and Bilbo saw to, was if there was any food that was still good. They, with Bofur’s help cleaned and repaired both the royal kitchens and pantries.

Oin took Bifur and went to investigate his old dominion, the Hall of Healing. A doom lay upon the mountain and Oin wished to know if the hall remained intact and if any of the medicine was yet
Kili went with Ori and helped him make sense of the library, taking note of the titles that must be recopied and in what order.

While Thorin saw and ate naught, in his name much was begun….

XooooooX

Fili and Balin were awoken first by Bofur.

Fili was appalled, “Uncle wants us to what?”

“Secure Erebor.” Bofur reported. “If there are beings in that abandoned city, might they need help rather then a selfish barricading of our doors?”

“Likely, very likely.” Balin frowned, “He is still our king and we must obey.”

Dori must have sensed Balin’s leaving of their bed for he appeared with Bilbo.

“I do not agree with this action, it is not that of a king.” Fili fumed. “I have done what I can to secure his claim and to know what needs doing and what we currently hold without an inventory of the treasury…”

“What do Thorin want?” Dori frowned.

“He wants us to barricade and repair the gate.” Bofur sighed.

Bilbo blinked away sleep, “Why?”

“Because there are people in Dale.” Balin muttered, “Thorin is paranoid that they will come
“Erebor is a ruin just as Dale is,” Fili snorted, “it will take much work to make it habitable again. Whatever people have come there, doubtless they come in great need. Erebor is vast and what we lack in axes, we have in room. We do not yet have access to the treasury but its contents are no doubt vast. It can be used to buy food and supplies to survive the winter.”

A growl of impatience came from the Gates…

Wary, Fili and Balin approached trusting their Ones and Bofur to wake the rest of the company.

They found Thorin impatient.

“What only two? Have you come to argue with me? I am your king! Have you turned against me once I brought us to the home we had lost.” Thorin raged.

Fili sighed, “No uncle you are our king, we only wish to offer counsel. Those who come to Dale maybe in need of help, should we not try to help them? To show to the world the greatness of Thorin the Reclaimer?”

“I will show them my strength!” Thorin thundered, “I will have Erebor’s gates repaired and barred before dawn!”

Balin sighed, “Thorin we lack the skill and the strength to do so.”

“Then build me a wall from the rubble!” the maddened king railed.

Seeing that their king lost in madness, the company did as they were bidden with sore hearts.

Fili and Bilbo as well as Balin and Dori felt the shadow that had grown in Thorin was getting stronger.

XooooooX
As the Elven prince and the Lakeman rode towards the barricaded gate of Erebor, Thorin thundered, “Shoot a warning shot Kili.”

“Uncle they ride empty-handed!” Fili protested

“Fire Kili.” Thorin spoke as if he heard him not.

It seemed to his companions that he did not…

Kili would not aim to kill and shot so it landed in front of Bard’s horse.

Bard’s face was full of betrayal, “Thorin why do you do this? I took you into my home! We shared what we could. We come in need; for Orcs destroyed our town they burnt it to the ground. We have nothing! Once more we are cast out into the world homeless. You promised to repay us for our aid. We ask only for a fair repayment.”

“Repayment? When the cost of stabling our ponies bankrupted us?” Thorin sneered.

“My people did not have the benefit of a strong leader, we had a corrupt one that we were bound to. He prospered while we starved; while our homes burned he fled with our gold. We don’t even have that to help us rebuild. Winter is coming let us winter with you. We will help rebuilt Erebor, in spring we will move back to Dale. We will pay you the money you give us to help rebuild Dale. We are fishermen, basket weavers and barrel makers; we know nothing of stone. It has been generations since we lived in a city of stone rather then a town made from wood. We are willing to learn, teach us! Let us bring back the golden days of Dale and Erebor together!” Bard begged.

“Why does the elf ride with you?” Thorin snorted.

“He wished to see for his own eyes that your quest was fulfilled.” Elladan replied.

“Thorin please, I wish to have peace between us!” Bard called back.
“Begone! We want no beggars here.” Thorin barked.

Fili shouted, “Wait! Uncle the Orcs were likely following us. Let me pay them. You promise and I would not have it said that Thorin was not honourable and broke his word.”

“What of the Elven soldiers? What does Thranduil come for that he rides as one to war?” Thorin hissed.

“He said that there is a piece that he paid for and was not delivered ere the dragon came.” Elladan shrugged as if it mattered not.

“If Fili will pay Bard what we owe the people of Laketown, let me pay Thranduil. I am owed one-fourteenth your share of the treasure; I have little need for the riches that would be one-twenty-eighth of the treasury of Erebor. That way there is no need for war.” Bilbo offered immediately.

Thorin’s face darkened with rage, “You filthy Shire rat! You have seduced my heir’s allegiance away from me! You have bewitched him with some Elvish magic!”

Bilbo stumbled back; “I have done nothing to take Fili from you! I only wish to help…”

“We need no help from alien races! Dwalin fling the Shire rat from the ramparts! He shall have no share of my treasure!”

Kili shouted, “You can’t kill Bilbo! You’ll damn Fili to death.”

“They are not Ones! Mahal would not fashion Ones for his people with alien races.” Thorin yelled in a rage.

“If Bilbo is not welcome in Erebor,” Fili thundered, “then neither am I! I will not darken the gates of Erebor, Thorin son of Thrain until you apologize for the rash and cruel words you have spoke this day.”

“Traitor!” Thorin’s hand flew out at Fili; it did not hit him or pull a weapon. Instead it tore a cloak broach that bore the crest of Durin. “You are no kin of mine, begone with your hobbit whore!”
Throw them out of my kingdom! They have no claim on my treasure! They will never see a single coin of it!”

“Uncle no!” Kili cried out.

“You heard me! I want them gone!” Thorin yelled, “Before I do it myself!”

Dwalin’s voice was thick, “Nori…we better do as he says.”

Nori pulled out rope from somewhere and tied it round Bilbo and then lowered him over the barricade.

Bilbo slipped out of the rope and tumbled to the stone bridge and stared up at the gate in shock.

Dwalin whispered as he tied Fili with the rope, “Forgive me my prince.”

Fili’s face was dark with anger, “You are following your king. May it be the right choice.”

Dwalin and Nori lowered him down to the bridge.

The company looked at one another.

Fili had been with them forever it seemed and the idea of his banishment didn’t sit well with any of them…
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

The Battle is over now they must pick up the pieces...

Chapter Notes

The Battle of Five Armies is posted in Under a fading Quarter Moon, it worked better to post it that way.

Chapter seventeen

The battle was over essentially when Nori escorted Dwalin back to Erebor, Fili had gone to meet with the other commanders after being sure that Kili’s protectors were safely in Erebor.

Bilbo had fussed over Dwalin’s bloody head, calling one of the meandering Khazad to bring him two mugs of ale.

One was shoved in Dwalin’s hand and the other was ‘wasted’ on his head…

Once the injury was cleaned with ale and the blood wiped away, Bilbo carefully bandaged Dwalin showing no sign of blaming him for their banishment.

That humbled Dwalin.

When Bilbo was done, he patted Dwalin on the shoulder, “If you can stand it, you should wash up but don’t get your bandages wet so no roughhousing in the water.”

Nori nodded, “I’ll see that he gets clean.”
Bilbo giggled, “I know you will. It won’t be the first time you helped him like that.”

Both Nori and Dwalin flushed at the reminder that it was Nori who really cleaned and treated Dwalin after Azog had him flogged.

Dwalin let Nori lead him to bathe; Kili shoved fresh clothes at them with a wink.

They couldn’t be gone long…

But between Bofur, Bifur, Ferumbras, Dori and Balin; Nori and Dwalin weren’t concerned at the moment for Kili’s safety…

They headed to wash up…

Lighting a small fire and then Nori helped Dwalin undress, stripping himself only down to his undershirt and smalls.

Dwalin knew better then to try to convince Nori to undress farther…

They washed one another but Dwalin was careful to only touch the bare flesh that Nori’s clothing showed.

Dwalin painfully exited the lake to dry off, he placed Nori’s clean clothes by the bank, “I won’t look and I’ll kill anyone who tries. You need to take those off…”

Nori flinched. “It’s outside…”

“Those rocks over there are quite high…” Dwalin pointed, “take a drying cloth with you…”

“You better be serious about keeping a look out Dwalin.” Nori snapped.
Dwalin leaned over to snog him fiercely, “I love you too much to want you to be mistreated or bullied.”

Nori gave in reluctantly and headed over to the protected cove where he completely stripped, scrubbed himself clean and then dressed quickly.

When he returned, Dwalin was fighting two unfamiliar Khazad-dim.

Nori hurled a knife and caught one of them in the throat, causing them to fall sputtering blood.

Dwalin used his axe to disarm the first and held his axe to their throat, “Dain sent you, didn’t he?”

“I won’t be ruled over by some cowardly child!” the Khazad spat.

“You petty fool!” Nori snarled, he used his second drawn knife to carve into the khazad’s forehead the Khuzdul rune for traitor.

The Khazad shrieked in pain and anger.

Then Nori who wasn’t done yet, sliced the traitor’s clothes to ribbons. Before growling, “Go before we kill you and have you burned with the Orcs like your companion.”

“You’ll be killed for this!” The Khazad snarled.

“Killed for defending ourselves from assassins? For protecting the Royal Line of Durin?” Nori spat, “I don’t think so, my family has always been loyal and we will continue to be loyal. Go before I kill you!”

He raised his knife and Dwalin his axe, the petty dwarf scampered.

Nori hissed in fury, muttering curses in a handful of tongues that he’d learned in his travels.
They put out their fire after washing their filthy clothes before hurrying back to Erebor where they informed Balin and Dori of the Assassination attempt.

Then they headed to their rooms that had not been given over to the remnants of Dain’s army.

Nori lifted a large heavy chest and used it to block the already locked door.

Then he licked his lips, “Just for getting me to strip to my skin and trying to get me hard before the battle, I’m going to take it out on your arse.”

Dwalin stripped and lay on his stomach with his legs spread wide. “I am yours to use and punish.”

Nori spread Dwalin’s arse cheeks bearing that hole and decided to make his One insane with need. He licked around that hole; it was clean because they had both been fastidious about how clean Dwalin’s bits were. After all, Dwalin was a bearer and he had a One who might want to claim him.

Claim him he would, he licked and sucked at Dwalin’s hole. Pausing every once in a while to nibble the sensitive flesh around it.

Dwalin clutched at their bedding, “Oh Mahal…fuck…”

Nori smacked his arse, “Language.”

Dwalin’s legs trembled as Nori began to fuck him with his tongue, “Nori…”

Nori snickered as he redoubled his tongue fucking Dwalin.

Dwalin tried to push his arse back to get more of Nori’s tongue inside him and his cock swelled to an unimaginable size as it dribbled copious amounts of pre-cum on their bedding.

Nori smacked his arse again and pinned Dwalin the bed by kneeling on the elder Khazad’s legs.
Nori’s pinning him trapped Dwalin’s cock between his abs and the bed, causing him unbelievably pleasurable pain.

“Come on Nori…please…fuck me…” Dwalin begged.

“I am…” Nori smirked as he continued to fuck his One with his tongue.

“I need more…” Dwalin groaned, “Something bigger…”

“Bigger…hm…like this?” then Nori shoved a finger into Dwalin

Dwalin cursed again, “Ah! Damn it Nori! You know what I want…”

Nori reached down to loosen his trousers and pulled out his ‘cock’, which he rocked against Dwalin’s bare skin, “You want this?”

Dwalin gasped, “You know I fucking need it…”

“No.” Nori said as he shoved another into Dwalin.

“I need you to hammer me so hard I can’t walk. Come on Nori, I’ll do anything you want…I need to feel you inside me…” Dwalin admitted without shame.

Nori thrust his fake cock into Dwalin, damn everything. It wasn’t fair that Dwalin got more pleasure out of this then he did…

Nori wanted to feel how it felt to have his cock inside Dwalin, to feel that heat, that tightness squeezing his cock.

Dwalin roared as he felt Nori thrust in, it wasn’t necessarily a cry of pain but more of a cry of completion of a sort.
He would prefer to have a warm, blood filled cock to the wooden thing inside him but he would take this over a cold bed.

Nori hammered Dwalin roughly, needing to gain control over something even if it was just his One.

Dwalin’s pierced cock was still half pinned to the bed, yet it continued to gush pre-cum. Dwalin had never been so hard or so needy about being hammered.

Then Dwalin was coming; a deep grunt accompanied every jet from his cock. He came harder then he ever had, soaking their bedding.

He collapsed half-dead from exhaustion…

Dwalin was glad that Nori had escaped injury but he hoped that Thorin would survive for Kili’s sake…

Nori would never admit it but he had managed to orgasm this time…

Nori collapsed on top of Dwalin.

Dwalin’s eyes closed, his best hammering yet and he couldn’t reward Nori with a son from it…

XooooooX

Balin was worried; Dain had tried to assassinate Dwalin to weaken Kili’s support…

Thank Mahal that Nori was there…

Trying to convince Kili that he was in danger was difficult…
Kili did not want to believe that he was in danger from Dain…

He was confident that Thorin would live and that everything would return to normal

Balin wished he were as confident…

Dori slid under his arm; Balin’s hand came to rest over Dori’s stomach as his arm wrapped around his One’s waist.

Dori leaned against him, “You know you don’t have to carry the entire mountain on your shoulders…”

Balin kissed his lavender hair, “I know, thank you for reminding me.”

The Durin spare was Regent under the Mountain…

Kili was far too young, but he was all they had. Fili was too honourable to take charge, it would like feel like a bloodless overthrow given that he was banished.

They were guarding Kili while trying to seem unobtrusive as their young companion went among the survivors and made sure they were alright. That they had a blanket, a bit of food and water…

He had asked Bofur to get the hobbits to help him clean out some of the old barracks for the apprentices to house the survivors of Dain’s army.

They were going to all have proper sleeping places soon if Kili had his way and the lovable brat usually did.

XooooooX

Ori’s heart had dropped when he heard that Kili, his Kili was hurt.
Ori had tried to fuss over Kili’s injured arm, only to be told that it was a minor inconvenience rather than a real injury.

Kili had brushed him off…

Again…

Ori still could hardly fathom that Thorin, who had always been a larger-than-life, indestructible figure to him had been hurt so badly that they would send for Elven Healers.

Kili held himself differently; it was only in his eyes and the set of his jaw that you could see that he was afraid. It wasn’t a cowardly fear, it was a fear of failure… of letting everyone down.

Kili was the playful prince, the one who ditched his studies and weapons training to go tracking instead. He loved to prank everyone and laugh…

There was no laughter in Kili’s face now; Kili had changed since they started this quest.

Ori wished that they had never come…

Ori’s entire world had come crashing down…

Kili had pulled away; Dori had lied about his One being dead only to seduce Balin who was Ori’s teacher. Nori who he’d found out recently was born female had managed to seduce Dwalin and everyone thought his pretending to be a male was alright! Even Kili got mad at him for being mad!

Ori vindictively wished that the assassin who tried to kill Dwalin had been aiming for Nori instead. He still believed that Nori’s behaviour was shameful and wrong! Nori and Dori should be punished for telling just huge lies!

Yet no one cared! Anytime he brought it up, Balin said that he was the only one who had the right to be mad and that he’d already forgiven Dori because he understood his reasoning.
It was sickening how easily Dwalin succumbed to Nori’s wiles, Mahal’s hammer Dwalin acted like he was a bearer with Nori. Really? Why would a Khazad that size be a bearer or all things?

Surely, Mahal wouldn’t have done something like that…

Nori must have drugged Dwalin, that was it…

Ori had hoped that Kili would have been pleased that he was okay but he barely greeted him before moving to talking to an injured Khazad. Kili had barked at him to find something useful to do rather than dogging his steps.

Ori had reacted as if he’d been struck, Kili’s refusal to touch him as a lover or even share a bed with him had continued after Thranduil’s hall.

It had been so long since Kili made love to him, if they weren’t Ones then Ori would worry that Kili no longer wanted him.

Ori was the same person he had always been…

He wasn’t a liar, a fake, a cheat or a thief…

How could Dwalin go from refusing to allow Fili and Kili to travel with them without coming to protect them from Nori to being Nori’s lover?

Ori just wanted Kili to want him again…

Ori locked himself in his room in Erebor and shoved furniture to block the door before stripping down to wash up. Then he crawled into his cold bed and cried himself to sleep…

XooooooooX

Kili did feel bad about brushing Ori off and hurting him but his wounds were relatively minor even if he had a crushed arm.
He had more important things to do than to be fussed over by Ori. He really couldn’t deal with Ori right now when he had the weight of Erebor on his shoulders.

Kili needed Fili now more then ever but he had to do this on his own. He wasn’t a leader…

He had no leadership training, no idea how to handle the authority that now rested on his shoulders..

Balin and Dori thought he wasn’t taking Dain seriously, but that was far from the truth. He was terrified…

How could Dain go after Dwalin? Fili had always been right that Nori was reliable, he knew this wasn’t the first time that Nori had saved Dwalin but he was sure that this time Dwalin was extremely grateful.

Kili begged Mahal to let his uncle live because he didn’t believe that he could handle this…

He would do his best not to shame his mother and uncle but he didn’t want to be King Under the Mountain, Bilbo or no Bilbo that was supposed to be Fili! Fili was Thorin’s true heir but Fili was too honourable to take the reins since Thorin had banished him in a fit of madness.

A warm hand squeezed his shoulder, Kili stiffened as he turned.

Standing there was Salmar…

The former dragon had taken the form of a tall but slim Khazad only he had no beard but his dark hair flickered with red and gold like flame. Salmar was as tall as Dwalin but like Nori he probably had surprisingly strength.

Salmar’s voice was deeper than one expected when he spoke, “You’re doing just fine. Have more confidence young one. You fought well out there and you have good instincts. Thorin will be proud of you.”
“Will he be alright?” Kili asked in a broken whisper.

Salmar’s eyes were troubled but his voice was calm, “I have faith, Illuvatar will protect him and guide his healers. It is our duty to safeguard his Mountain for him. I will allow no harm to come to you or him. All of your company is under my protection, I may not be as good as Melian at safeguards but I will do what I can.”

Kili felt more self-assured, “Thank you.”

Salmar squeezed his shoulder, “I will offer what advice that I can. I have to speak with Gloin, Thranduil, Bard and Fili. Would you be upset if I paid Thranduil, Bard, Fili and Bilbo out of my share?”

Kili shook his head, “We need allies and I was never against paying them…”

“Good, I will see to it that Fili and Bilbo receive their original share. Then I will see to it that Gloin gives the dratted jewels that Thranduil holds so dear to him today. Thranduil will not stay long. His wounded will likely winter with us—as for Bard’s people winter will prevent them from staying in the ruins...” Salmar frowned.

Kili nodded. “My plan is to repair the old barracks for our brothers and the hobbits. The humans will likely need homes, well the families will. I will offer them choices from those abandoned when we fled. The young people I’m sure wouldn’t complain about living together in the barracks. Erebor has remained more intact than Dale but likely that is due to Khazad craftsmanship. We’ll need to do repairs soon; once we are more recovered, I will have Balin take a census to see what skills we have. The cooks will work with Bombur; we’ll need to check on the mushroom and roots farms. I am hopeful that we can convince the hobbits to try to get those to work. I am unsure how much of our abandon stores are still useable but I’m sure that Bombur can examine that...”

“You have good instincts, you’ll do fine. You know who to lean on for advice...”

“I will need Balin to negotiate new treaties with Thranduil, Bard, the hobbits and if possible Elrond as well. We’ll need to have strong alliances if we are attacked again...” Kili sighed.

“I know that Thorin’s kingdom is in good hands...” Salmar said confidently. “A good leader puts his people first and you are doing that. There will be very few of your people who will not trust and respect you and your brother for what you have done today. If you’ll excuse me, I believe that we
need real heat so I’m going to restart the Great Forge.”

As quickly as he approached him, Salmar was gone.

If Kili didn’t know that Salmar was that the great flaming bird that had helped assure their victory and brought his uncle back to them, then he would doubt that Salmar could restart the great forge by himself.
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Nori gets his heart's desire...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter eighteen

Nori was surprised when Salmar approached himself and Dwalin after dinner one evening a month after the Battle of the Five Armies.

“Kili is safe for the evening, might I have a few moments of your time?”

Nori and Dwalin were curious as they led him to their shared living space.

Once they were inside, Salmar appeared to be using his Maia abilities to safeguard them before he spoke.

“I have been watching you both and I have determined that you Nori were born into the wrong body for your spirit.”

Nori flinched and growled, “What of it?”

“Would you like…rather would you allow me to take you to where your ancestor Durin the Deathless was forged? I believe since I was there at the forging of the Seven Fathers of the Khazad and six Ones I could give you what you both want.” Salmar offered.

“Isn’t that a bit presumptuous of you?” Nori said darkly.

“Do you want me to attempt this? Oin can do nothing for Thorin’s legs or Kili’s arm, but I believe I
can. Kili will not agree as long as Thorin’s fate is in Illuvatar’s hands. Your reforging would be the most difficult especially if you want to be capable of siring a son upon your One…”

Nori stiffened but when he saw Dwalin’s eyes shining and his hand touching his stomach, he knew his answer…

“Fine…”

“We should begin soon so not to leave Erebor too long unprotected by your skills.” Salmar mused.

Dwalin’s voice was hoarse, “Go now. We’ll look after things.”

“You better not be hurt when I get back. I won’t tolerate one scar on your body. So don’t you dare almost get assassinated again.” Nori said before pulling his huge One in for a bruising kiss.

Nori was taken in Salmar’s arms and found himself falling into a strange sort of sleep…

XooooooX

When Nori woke up he was in his rooms that he shared with Dwalin.

“Go look in your bathroom to see your reforged body works as well as you hoped. I do apologize for the colour of your skin. I ought to have suspected that there would be some side affect of reforging.” Salmar’s voice came from the room that they allowed their guests like Balin and Dori in.

Nori quickly realised that he was somewhat taller then he was before, likely he would be taller then Ori now…

Nori stripped to examine his body in the mirror…

His skin was a darkened unusual colour from his shoulders to his ankles but Nori didn’t give a troll fart about that…
It was the flat male chest, the heavy prick and jewels that hung between his legs that made him almost in tears…

He couldn’t wait to claim his One as a Khazad male sire should…

XooooooX

When Nori returned with Salmar, there was a change in him…

Dwalin knew it and his heart pounded…

Nori was taller, more clearly muscled and he radiated a sexual magnetism that drew Dwalin to him like a moth to flame.

Nori crooked his finger in the Iglishmêk gesture for come.

Dwalin stumbled forward.

Nori pulled him down for a claiming kiss with one hand and the other groped Dwalin’s cock.

Nori was still Nori but he was changed…more confident…

Dwalin groaned.

Nori let go of his vest but not his cock, “We are excused are we not?”

Kili blinked at him, “Um…”

Salmar let out a sardonic chuckle, “You best dismiss them unless you wish to watch.”
Kili coughed, “Oh then yes…take a few days off to settle. Dwalin has worked hard. I’ll just ask Lady Tauriel to oversee the combined army of Dale, Erebor and Ravenhill.”

Before Dwalin could protest the temporary posting of the Lady of Dale to the head of his army, Nori was leading him off and had yet to let go of his cock.

The few persons in the corridors of Erebor gaped at them as they headed for their rooms.

Most inhabitants of Erebor were busy working, there were shifts for working in the forges, the kitchens, the mushroom farm as well as the root vegetable garden, cleaning as well as repairing many things in Erebor from tapestries, to clothing to shoring up the walls and ceiling…

Dwalin tried to seem as dignified as he could but it was difficult when his One tugged him along by his cock; his sword swelled in Nori’s hand.

Nori unlocked their rooms, dragged Dwalin inside and then bolted the door behind them. He pulled out a knife, smirking, “Do you trust me?”

Dwalin swallowed, “With my life?”

Nori used the knife to slit the seams of Dwalin’s clothes until he was naked and surrounded by cloth that pooled at his feet.

Dwalin was naked and hard, hungry to be claimed and hammered by his one. “Nori…” his voice held an unspoken question.

Nori undressed, dropping his clothes on the scraps that once were Dwalin’s clothing.

Dwalin had never seen Nori so smug or unembarrassed…

Nori’s skin was slowly revealed, his skin beneath his wrist to his ankles seemed burnt, as if darkened by soot. Dwalin gasped, Nori’s chest was now that of a true male and when Dwalin saw
Nori’s trousers fall without a shred of embarrassment, what he saw made him weep.

Dwalin felt to his knees before it, his hands shaking as he reached out to touch it. When his fingers wrapped around it, he knew it was real…

Nori now had a body forged to claim him…

He gasped, “How…”

“How was this possible? Salmar told us that he was with Mahal when he made us and he knew where we were made. He brought me there and gave me this body…”

Dwalin stroked Nori’s sword and was pleased to feel it harden as did his own despite its darkness in coloring. He caressed it worshipfully with his hands and laved it with his tongue. He fearlessly did something he dare not before; he reached behind Nori’s cock and felt for a sack of jewels. They were there as round and as pump as ever he could wished for. Dwalin rose on unsteady feet, “I need to be hammered Nori…”

“I’ll give you a good hammering Dwalin.” Nori smirked, “In exchange you must hammer me.”

The offer was more then Dwalin ever dared hope for, “I was forged to give you pleasure…”

Nori dragged him off, tugging him by his sword again. Nori’s dominance made him weak in the knees and Dwalin was eager to submit. He wanted to be hammered by the warmth of a living cock, not that Nori’s hammering hadn’t been good before. His knowledge of Balin’s impending fatherhood and his suspicions of Fili’s, made Dwalin all the more hungry to feel a child growing inside him; Nori’s child…

Dwalin didn’t care that a male Nori was still smaller then he was everywhere, Dwalin was huge for a Khazad. He had long determined that he was given his size for a reason; he knew that Nori was likely more like his brothers now that he was male even if he was no longer capable of bearing. Nori was strong enough for him…

Then again the size of a male bearer’s cock determined their fertility according to legend and Dwalin was huge…
Dwalin blushed, “Salve first and then just take me…Mahal help me I need your hammering…”

Nori seemed eager to do so, a slick covering of salve and he was thrusting into Dwalin’s willing body with a groan. “So tight…”

“Been sometime since you hammered me…” Dwalin gasped.

Not since just after Dwalin was nearly assassinated on Dain’s order.

Nori’s thrusts were slow and deep at first and then they became wild and hungry as their kissing.

Dwalin groaned, clutching at him and thrusting back into those deep, relentless thrusts. “Yes! Nori pound me harder!”

Nori was willing to do so if only to see his strong, Dwalin come apart like this.

Dwalin felt his eyes fill with grateful tears when Nori came inside him for the first time, ‘Please Mahal, let this give me his child…’ Dwalin wanted that so much, despite how tentative things were between Kili’s regency and Thorin’s tentative hold to life, Dwalin wanted to give Nori a son…

Nori sagged, his body humming with pleasure after he came inside Dwalin. His first orgasm as a male and it was freeing. He rolled off Dwalin, gasping even as he laced their hands together.

It was sometime before they recovered…

Dwalin nuzzled Nori’s neck, “Nori…”

“You took my change well,” Nori murmured.

“Wanted you like this…wanted to feel you inside me…wanted you to come inside me…wanted to feel your jewels on my arse…want to hold your naked body flush with mine…” Dwalin muttered
“Will you take me?” Nori asked curiously.

Dwalin leaned up on one elbow, “You really want me to?”

Nori spread his legs, pulling Dwalin’s hand to press those thick fingers against his virgin entrance, “I want you to show me all of that…I want you to show me how it feels to be hammered.”

“I would be so good to you…I would show you such pleasure…” Dwalin breathed. “To know that I was the first you hammered and the first you allowed to hammer you…it’s an honour beyond measure…”

Dwalin’s touch as the hammer in their intercourse was reverent and he treated Nori with great respect. This submission was not easy for a male sire, for many it was nigh impossible…

Just as impossible as it was for Thorin to hammer another…

Thank Mahal that two Bearers hammering one another didn’t count anymore then sleeping with a prostitute did…

Dwalin prepared Nori properly, but he was still desperate to do well… he was eager to prove his worth to his One in all things.

He had almost decided that Nori was ready for him when his One ordered him to begin hammering him.

Dwalin eagerly coated his cock with salve and thrust into Nori, then to his astonishment Nori rolled them over still clenching his body so that Dwalin’s cock remained inside him.

Dwalin watched as Nori once more took control and rode him, it was arousing and flattering.

It was only the womb inside a bearer that was fertile, which was why one bearer could not
impregnate another.

Dwalin would have felt cheated if his seed were used to cause a pregnancy; he wanted to carry a child so desperately. It was a feeling he had pushed aside for a handful of scores of years…

There was so much more emotion invested in this act, more so then when Thorin lay there while he hammered him. That had meant nothing beyond serving his king…

He had never done it before Thor and Thrain were lost…

And he never would again, not as long as he belonged to Nori and Thorin was Salmar’s…

Dwalin had always come first when they enacted the roles of hammer and anvil in bed…it was still true when Nori rode him…

Nori stiffened when Dwalin came inside him and then his One’s own orgasm hit him.

It wasn’t until Nori slid from Dwalin’s softening sword that Dwalin gasped out, “A bearer can’t impregnate…especially not a sire…it is merely an organ to give us both pleasure…”

Nori relaxed then, “I was never officially granted adult status…I never sat the customary lecture. I always dodged it when I was home which wasn’t often…”

Dwalin blushed, “Then there is much I can teach you…”

“We can learn together…” Nori chuckled as he grabbed Dwalin’s cock playfully.

Dwalin felt his own desire rising again as Nori touched him, “Anything you want Nori, you know I am at your service and will submit to your pleasure…”

It wasn’t the first time they were intimate but it was the first time that Nori felt as much pleasure in the act as Dwalin.
They had a few days to learn one another’s bodies all over again…

Dwalin thanked Mahal, he could give Nori a son and his One was comfortable enough to lay skin to skin with him as well as agree to true hammering…

Chapter End Notes

So was anyone [who hadn't read Second Golden first] guess this would happened??
Chapter 19

Chapter nineteen

It was three days before one of the Elven Healers approached Kili again…

Kili had been forced to move all of the Laketown refugees and the hobbits into Erebor when Balin predicted a nasty storm two days after they dealt with the bodies of the fallen…

They sent Tauriel of course; Kili had temporarily appointed Fili’s recommendations in Bag End and they were meeting to discuss how to incorporate the hobbits and the Lakemen into the government of Erebor at least until spring when repairs to Dale would begin.

Dwalin was in charge of their army; Nori was of course spymaster, while Dori and Balin were his advisors. Oin was still tending the wounded with Bilbo’s assistance but Fili wasn’t here…

The meeting stopped as soon as Tauriel entered.

Kili flinched, “How is Thorin?”

Tauriel inclined her head in greeting, “Still among the living. His injuries are still requiring serious treatment but he lives.”

Kili let out a sigh of relief, “Thank Mahal…”

Tauriel nodded, “It is in the hands Eru Illuvatar.”

“If you are seeing Bard can you ask him to come here and bring Ferumbras?” Kili asked nervously.

Tauriel nodded once more before exiting the room that Kili was having meetings regarding Erebor in.
Bofur barged in. “Fili’s done it again! Elrohir and Fili have returned with supplies! We’re unloading them now.”

Kili rose; “Thank Mahal for Fili’s generosity. Call everyone to the gate. We’re all going to help unload and I’m making an announcement.”

Kili’s council rose and followed Bofur who scurried out to fetch everyone.

Food arrival was almost a holiday for the inhabitants of Erebor even if it meant more work after a fashion…

XooooooX

Both Nori and Kili were saddened that Fili had left without speaking to them…

Given the secret of Bilbo’s pregnancy and how much Bilbo had missed Fili, it was understandable that Fili wanted to see Bilbo first.

They would give Bilbo and Fili time to celebrate the joyous news as well as Fili’s return before they resumed their visits…

Kili wasn’t jealous of Fili’s impending fatherhood; rather he was looking forward to being an uncle as awesome as Thorin had been. Kili hoped that his mother was as excited as he was about the news…which would have to be a surprise because it was too dangerous to trust to a messenger with Dain out for his own head.

XooooooX

It was far too soon to tell but Dwalin was suspicious that Mahal too had blessed him, he was too shy to test his suspicions mostly because it was too soon to tell but Dwalin had high hopes that Nori’s child grew within him…

Dwalin wasn’t going to say anything until Thorin was released by the healers and Dain had given up his fruitless attempts to seize the kingship…
Dwalin was nearly as smug about his plausible pregnancy as Balin was about Dori’s pregnancy.

Given that Bilbo was a Hobbit rather then a full Khazad, Dwalin wondered who would be delivered first come spring…

Would Balin’s child be the first of a new generation or would it be Fili’s?

XooooooX

Nori was perfectly willing to let Fili reunite with Bilbo and he doubled his patrols near Ravenhill both in rounds and numbers now that Fili had returned.

He wouldn’t let anyone attack Fili anymore then he would allow Kili to be assassinated.

Nori was still getting used to having a true male body, Dwalin had taken such pleasure in teaching him about the pleasure to be had now that he could hammer his One properly.

Nori had to also get used to a different centre of balance and more strength, Dwalin was more then happy to spar with him, which usually led to hammering…

Not that Nori would complain, he liked sparing and hammering Dwalin…

Nori definitely had the sexiest Khazad in the entire mountain…

Any child of his and Dwalin’s would be very strong and no doubt loyal to death to the likes of Fili’s kids…

Nori hoped that his reforging hadn’t damaged his fertility because he was just as keen to see Dwalin round with child as Dwalin was to have his bairns…

XooooooX
Dori enjoyed visiting Bilbo if only to compare their bump sizes and talk late first pregnancies…

While Dori hadn’t been pregnant with Nori and Ori, he was there for their mother’s pregnancies and the births.

Dori was too ashamed to admit to Balin or Oin that he was nervous of the delivery because his mother had died in childbirth.

Yet he could discuss his fears with Bilbo who was pregnant himself and a healer…

Bilbo soothed his fears and did his best to convince Dori that everything would be fine…

Dori hoped that his child would be best friends with Fili’s son…

That would please him and Balin…

Since Nori was reforged, Dwalin had taken to musing to himself…

Given the closer intimacy between Bofur and Ferumbras as well as Bifur and Elladan, Dori wondered if Ferumbras and Elladan as well as Dwalin would be having children ass well.

Mahal must indeed have blessed them…

Their people had a true King Under the Mountain…

Ones were being recognised…

Children were being born…
Dori couldn’t wait to see Balin, he had been sent home early with the council meeting broke up because Fili arrived with food.

Balin wouldn’t hear of his doing any heavy lifting after the battle because of his pregnancy…

Dori didn’t like being ‘helpless’ or dependant…

He had to ask Dwalin or Nori to help him out sometimes so he wouldn’t try lifting heavy things…

Dori was looking forward to being an Amad…

Soon, Balin’s son would be in his arms and Dori would have given his One what he deserved so much, a child…

Ori was still distant but Nori and Dwalin were near neighbours so they were often together…

Dori was puttering around with tea and biscuits when the door to their apartment in Erebor opened.

Balin strode across the stone floor to wrap his arms around Dori’s body kissing his neck.

Dori moaned softly, “Welcome home…”

Balin sighed contented, “It’s good to be home…”

Before the Quest, Home was Erebor…

Now home was this place in Erebor, this apartment that had once belonged to Balin’s parents.

Nori had taken over the apartment that had once belonged to Dori’s parents before they went into exile…
Ori lived in the room he’d stayed in since they entered into Erebor…

Kili had put all of his attentions into Erebor and treated Ori with the respect due as the Royal Scribe but didn’t treat him as his One…

That had to be painful but Ori never said a word about it…

Dori hoped that Ori and Kili’s relationship would recover from this setback because he wanted more then anything for his brothers to be happy…

Balin and Dori snuggled on a blanket before the fire nibbling on biscuits and sipping tea.

All of the company had seemed to survive the Battle, hopefully Thorin would be returned to them soon…
Chapter 20

While Balin was Kili’s real advisor, Dori had a lesser position as his liaison to the reforming guilds.

Being a skilled weaver before their exile and having learnt a bit about many trades it wasn’t a problem to negotiate out territory and possessions to belong to the reforming guilds.

The artisans mostly selected their old holdings and were responsible for making them safe if they wished to have them officially returned when a King Under the Mountain was officially crowned.

Those who were warriors were put through the same training that Nori, Fili, Kili, Ori and Gimli had been.

Balin was proud not only of Dori’s pregnancy but also his stepping into the power vacuum and parenting the fracas that was the rebuilding guilds.

Dori refused to allow any guild to officially establish a hierarchy until their kin from the Ered Luin returned to Erebor and they could hold proper elections.

Balin had privately applauded that choice as had Kili because the Longbeards who had remained loyal through the lean years of exile did not deserve to lose out because they were not part of their Quest.

Dori usually was silent during Kili’s meetings if he had nothing to report and was very aware of the discussions as he mended the tapestries.

Dori was among the few currently present in Erebor with the skill to do so and that made Balin all the more proud.

XooooooooX
Nori had hand selected a few previously marked persons who he knew in the Iron Hills as his ‘spies’...

Nori had eyes and ears in every guild and even in the army...

Once Kili returned the Leadership of Erebor to Thorin, Nori was certain that Kili would train up the archers that Tauriel had culled out of the army.

Nori had been surprised that the Militia that Bard had built up with Tauriel had a few warriors with actual skill.

Nori knew that Bard’s son Bain was honourable to be a spy or assassin but he did have ears and he was trusted.

Nori flattered the boy with the same sort of attention he used to give Ori and Kili learning much about the humans in Erebor.

Nori knew everything practically that went on in Erebor, being a self-taught poisoner who could identify all known potions as well as had a resistance to them unknown to Kili. Nori was testing his food before it was brought up even if it was delivered by Bombur personally.

It wasn’t that Nori didn’t trust Bombur’s cooking, it was because he didn’t trust everyone in Bombur’s kitchen.

Once the farms were producing, Nori was certain that communal eating would slowly dwindle with the exception of festivals.

Guild apprentices of course would continue to eat communally but the families might chose to cook.

Given that Nori had refused to learn to cook and as a warrior Dwalin never had, they would have to eat with Dwalin’s soldiers or let Dori feed them.
Not that Nori really cared either way as long as he was fed...

Having his own home to decorate or not according to his or Dwalin’s whims was nice.

Having lived with all his possessions on his person for years, Nori wasn’t that interested in having loads of possessions.

Dwalin was used to a barracks and so Spartan was definitely his taste...

Yet Dwalin seemed more interested in ‘nesting’ these days exhibiting more demure behaviours that Nori had noticed first in Dori and Bilbo.

Which led a quiet pride in Nori, a child...

That was something he’d never really dared hope for because the very idea of being pregnant himself was nightmarish.

Yet every time Nori thought of Dwalin round with his child he was instantly hard...

XooooooX

Dwalin was hard on his ‘army’...

He was hard because he needed to separate the warriors from his guard...

The guard would be responsible for handling internal matters like theft and murder while their army was responsible for protecting Erebor from external threats that were too large for Nori to handle...

Dwalin also had his own opinions on who was suitable to serve as officers among his army and his guard...
Not that his One or even Tauriel’s opinions were unimportant...

The hobbits from the Tookabourgh Rangers and the Brandybuck Militia were very good at training his scouts and even his prospective guardsmen.

Tauriel trained his soldiers buy teaching them how to fight an orc or even though massive spiders in Mirkwood...

Without Esgaroth to force them all to be fishers to eat, the people of Dale were now able to learn other trades as well.

Some had skill as warriors and Tauriel was already separating out her own prospective guards and soldiers...

Dale would be helpless in the first few months until their walls were repaired.

Walls and homes would be their first priority...

Those who were fine fishers could return to that once the ice melted of course...

They could trade fish for food grown by the hobbits or items from Erebor...

With Orcs filling their former strongholds in Khazad-dûm and Gundabad, as well as ill will on Dain’s part they would need to gain strength in a hurry...

Between Tauriel, Dwalin and sometimes a bored Elladan who may serve as a Ranger alongside the Dunedain but was easily as fond of books and acquiring knowledge as his sire so he often was helping Balin and Ori in the hall of records and the library repairing or recopying books.

It was curious how the mute Bifur who was a mere toymaker had been fashioned as One to a scholar/ranger elf...

Dwalin turned his attention back to his troops...
At some point he was going to have to assign someone as captain but he was wary of promoting outside the Company...

XooooooX

Kili was surprised how far Ferumbras’ trading missions had travelled and how well he knew the elves of Rivendell, their holdings in Ered Luin, Esgaroth, Rohan and even Gondor.

Trade with Loth Lorien and Mirkwood was difficult for very different reasons not that Kili quite understood them...

Ferumbras also understood Khazad contracts and was quite helpful in negotiating with both Bard and Legolas.

Elrohir might be rather brash but Elladan was the remaining son and with both his father Elrond and their grandmother Galadriel hashed out a plausible treaty for each.

Lady Arwen was so beloved that her brothers and father wouldn’t hear of leaving her alone in Imladris for a long time hence why Elrohir escorted Fili back to negotiate with Arwen for food.

Kili only asked for assistance from older Khazad like Balin, Dori, Oin and Dwalin as well as Nori and Ferumbras because he knew he didn’t know enough to lead Erebor...

As the Spare Royal Durin, Kili wasn’t educated like Fili was...

To make matters worse one of the Iron Hills captains just forced his way into their council chamber.

“Prince Kili!”

Kili frowned trying to place the unfamiliar Khazad’s name.
Balin snapped, “Captain Algrim! How dare you force your way into our Council without requesting an audience!”

Algrim, so that was the Khazad’s name, Kili realised.

Algrim glowered, “I have but Nori and Dwalin both refused me as has that elf bitch!”

Kili growled, “DO not insult our guests or members of our family! Nori has been like my big brother and Dwalin trained me as a fighter.”

“As our ruler how can you allow an elf in our library! You know the rules we don’t teach Khuzdul to non-Khazad!” Algrim snarled.

Kili snorted, “We are not teaching anyone our sacred language!”

“You let an elf into our library!” Algrim tossed back.

“He means Elladan.” Dori sighed.

Kili glared, “I know that, Ori’s mentioned that he’s been helpful. He’s taller and slimmer than Balin and Ori as well as having less responsibilities. Elladan has merely been removing the tomes and scrolls that are in the most need of repair. He has also copied some manuscripts but he can’t read the language and you know that Balin would never teach it to an outsider.”

“He shouldn’t be allowed there!” Algrim snarled.

Kili barked at him, “I am Kili, son of Dis, of the House of Durin and Regent Under the Mountain! Elladan is our Ally who helped us reclaim our home and killed Orcs to protect it from becoming the next Moria. If he wants to help us fix the library he may, I will not spit in his face. Nor will I tell his One Bifur not to rebuild or repair the shelves and caskets. Elladan’s father is trying to save Thorin’s life and I will not insult his son. If you have no legitimate complaint you will leave. I will be informing Dwalin and Nori as well as Tauriel of your visit.”

Algrim stormed out with as much fury as he had stormed in.
Kili muttered to himself, “I’m half-tempted to ask Nori to deal with him...but I’ll leave his punishment to Dwalin. He hates being disobeyed...”

Dori was alarmed but Balin seemed nonchalant about Kili’s decision.

Kili was their leader young though he was and he did try to get advice by those he respected who were older and wiser but he wasn’t taking insulting their allies well.

If Algrim didn’t like how he ran Erebor let the foul-mouthed jerk return to Dain with his tail between his legs and hope he wasn’t killed for deserting.
Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

Algrim’s insubordination boils over and Ori is found in a compromising position.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 21

Kili and Balin had both informed Dwalin and Nori over a private meal about ‘Captain’ Algrim’s interruption of a council meeting and treating Kili will less respect then the Regent Under the Mountain deserved.

He was surprised when Oin and Elrond jointly arrived to announce that the battle for Thorin’s life had been won and that he would be ready for visitors in a few days.

Elrond looked dead on his feet for an elf but luckily the meal was in Kili’s apartment in the Royal Wing.

Bifur, Elladan and Bofur had cleared out the wing for them after the battle because securing it was easier. There was plenty of room in that wing, so it wasn’t any wonder Dwalin and Balin chose apartments near Kili, Elrond and Thorin’s apartments.

To be fair, Thorin had yet to choose an apartment.

His grandfather and his own former apartments remained officially empty, to allow Thorin to make his own choice in accommodations. Although, Salmar was quick to claim Thorin’s old room but other than cleaning had made no changes.

This meal was a celebration of sorts to Thorin’s health.

It was strange having Kili present in Dori and Balin’s rooms but no Ori.
There was distance and hurt between them but as Regent Under the Mountain, Kili had to put Erebor first. It wasn’t the same as for Nori or Balin who had more years of responsibility and maturity so they could balance family with duty.

It was far more difficult for Nori to learn to work as a team with Dwalin because he was far more used to flying solo. He was still negotiating having a relationship but he was far more open since his reforging.

Ori had become more of a recluse, barely straying out of the library and only talking to Balin or Elladan if necessary. Despite his being referred as the Royal Scribe, the title was treated as honorary and his presence was never expected in council.

Nori was painfully aware that Kili and Ori hadn’t shared a bed in months, he wondered awkwardly if he had anything to do with it.

When the dinner party broke, it was due to a Blessed Dori showing exhaustion.

The two pair of brothers and Kili bid one another good night.

There was something quiet and sad about Kili…

Dwalin escorted him to his Apartment before following Nori to their own.

Saying the passion had gone out of their relationship would be untrue but sometimes they were too exhausted for more than a cuddle. Dwalin was more affectionate within their apartments, saving his gentler side for Nori only. After all, as General of Erebor, he still needed the respect he spent much of his life struggling for.

XooooooX

“Will Kili be alright?” Dori asked softly after they were alone.
Thorin will be resuming his duties as our leader soon, Kili will be relinquishing the reins of power likely as quickly as Thorin can handle it. What this means for Fili and Kili in regards to their relationship with Thorin and Erebor is ultimately up to Thorin.” Balin said nuzzling Dori’s neck and toying with his braids.

Dori didn’t protest when Balin led him to bathe, unplaits his hair to wash it and then comb it out for him. Only to comb sweet oil in it and plait it for him.

“You did such a job on dinner, I’ll clean up and join you. You are a fabulous host; Mahal has truly blessed me.” Balin said kissing him as he tucked him into bed, “Caring for you amrâlimê is a joy…”

Dori quickly fell asleep; guild politics was clearly exhausting.

Balin knew that Dori was selfless enough to give most of his time and energy to others. It was his privilege as the lavender-haired Khazad’s One to care for him…

He was protective of Dori, his One could take care of himself, he’d wrestled a bear and won for Mahal’s sake. That didn’t mean that he didn’t prefer not to take chances…

Keeping Dori’s stress down as much as possible, making sure he ate well and didn’t lift anything moderately heavy. Mahal had kept their child from harm but that didn’t mean they ought to take advantage of his protection.

Balin hummed an old khazad courting song as he headed to clean up after dinner.

He longed to join Dori in bed, nothing compared to the feel of his Own in his arms.

XoooooooX

Kili hated his empty apartment, when they left Ered Luin he had expected to share this place with his One.

It hurt to have learned another side of his One, before Ori’s selfishness had been endearing. Kili
had encouraged it by spoiling him with attention and affection but Kili valued family.

To see his battle-brothers, Ori’s own kin maligned by his One was horrible.

The pain he saw in Dori when he looked at Ori was almost as bad as seeing the sorrow in Balin’s at the Ri brothers’ estrangement.

Nori tried to appear strong but he was hurt by Ori’s silence.

Given that everyone presumed Ori was the youngest, his behaviour was blamed on the Battle and his age.

Many surviving Khazad from the Battle of Azanulbizar had suffered from what the healers called Axe Marriage…

As Oin explained it, some Khazad’s mind never left Azanulbizar. They slept uneasily, had a tendency for violent reactions to strange things, even sleeping with their weapons. Some had gone mad from it, killed because of it and others drank themselves to death…

Ori turning into a hermit who lived in the library, was a milder reaction if Ori really had Axe Marriage. Once Thorin was King Under the Mountain perhaps, Kili would have more time for Ori…

Kili wondered how much of that was actually his fault? His absence from Ori’s bed, his dedication to Erebor over his One…

It was true that his distance was meant to keep Ori safe but he also didn’t know how to deal with Ori’s behaviour since leaving the Shire…

Kili had never been strong enough, he had to work on that…

XoooooooX
Nori and Dwalin had taken Algrim’s insubordination poorly.

When singling him out among his recruits to make an example for upsetting and disrespecting The Ereborian Fourteen didn’t work, it set Nori’s teeth on edge.

No sooner had the rumour that the battle for Thorin’s life had been won, Nori found Algrim leading a conspiracy to assassinate their guests and the Durins.

Using his above average strength Nori silently piled rubble to seal the cavern where the conspirators were.

Then he went to fetch Dwalin, Balin and Tauriel as well as a handful of soldiers.

Xo00000X

Kili was overseeing a joint council when Nori burst in.

“Is Dwalin here?”

Kili frowned, “Nori?”

“Dwalin you need to fetch Tauriel and a handful of trusted soldiers. Dori please take Kili to his apartment. Balin for the good of Erebor come with me.”

Bard and Ferumbras frowned.

“What can I do?” the reluctant leader of Dale offered.

“Guard Kili. Keep only those who are not those who stayed in your house away.”

Kili trusted Nori, not only because Fili did but because he had proven himself on their quest.
“Only one of the Fourteen has the right to interrupt a Council Meeting.”

Nori hurried them out of the Chamber, fetching soldiers on their way.

Kili was bustled off to the relative safety of his apartments, what was going on? Another assassination attempt?

He didn’t know but he did trust Nori, Dwalin, Balin and Tauriel to handle it….

XooooooX

They arrived in the isolated corridor leading to where Nori essentially built a cave-in in silence to hear cursing and struggles.

Nori snarled, “Now listen you Clanless anvil-dropping orc-spawn back up. I’m going to take care of this ‘cave-in’ problem.”

Dwalin swallowed, he had the beginnings of an ache in his loins since Nori interrupted Council but now…

Nori pulled on unfamiliar gloves and punched the wall of rubble.

It shattered on impact, the shards and pieces of stone flying in the direction of his punches.

There was something erotic about this, it was nothing like Dori, Ori and his Nori taking down the gate-blocking rubble before they entered the battle outside their gates.

Three well-aimed punches and the wall barricading whomever Nori brought them here to arrest crumbled.

Algrim among them wasn’t a surprise…
They were all from the Iron Mountains of course…

A group of thirteen…

And all of them seemed to be injured by rock chips.

“What is this about?” Algrim asked defiantly.

“Algrim I charge you with conspiracy against the House of Durin. Balin, Dwalin arrest them.”

“On whose authority?” Algrim sputtered.

Nori smiled viciously, “The Authority of the Spymaster of Erebor.”

“Mahal’s favour has fallen from the main line!” an unnamed khazad shouted.

“Really?” Nori purred. “Ones are being recognised, children are being conceived. In fact, the Line of Durin is the only one to continue to be Blessed during our exile. Also, the Hand of Mahal’s return is further sign of his favour.”

“LIES!” a Khazad yelled before launching himself at Nori brandishing a knife.

Before Dwalin could make a noise or a move, a knife flew…

To Balin’s relief, it came from Nori’s hand.

It landed in the assailent’s eye and pierced up to the hilt causing them to fall to the ground.

Nori smirked, “Anyone else want to threaten the Line of Durin to me? There are twelve of you… 
Dwalin barukè,”
Dwalin swallowed thickly, “Yes?”

“Tell these clanless orc-spawn just how many knives I have…”

“I don’t know exactly… I lost count. Over a hundred…”

“Hm… I can think of very pleasant for me, ways of teaching you your place. Like taking your beard, maybe your hair…carving out your piercings if you have them. Don’t worry, I won’t make it quick and painless.”

Balin was a bit disturbed by the implication of torture…

Dwalin on the other hand seemed quite enthused about Nori’s behavior…

“We want Erebor for Khazad!”

“Erebor will never be strong that way. Without treaties and trade no one will buy our wares. There is only so much we can do in these walls on our own. You would have our people starve because of Xenophobia?” Balin gasped.

“We’ll starve if we keep these dirt loving whores, faithless short-lives and beardless tree-worshippers in Erebor! Not only of food but of culture!” Algrim snarled.

Nori licked one of his blades, “Mmm… poison… another word out of you and I’ll be using it to cut out your tongue…”

“I can help with that…” Tauriel said with a sharp edge to her voice.

“Don’t touch me tree witch!”

“Do it before I start using them for knife practice.” Nori spat.
Tauriel sang ropes around the twelve remaining conspirators and even managed to silence their voices.

Dwalin’s soldiers then grabbed the prisoners and frog-marched them towards the cells.

While Dwalin had them cleaned out when he was in the mood to punish misbehaving soldiers but hadn’t locked anyone up yet.

Although Nori had some interesting fantasies about cells and Dwalin…

Best to leave those for another time…

No sooner had a highly aroused Dwalin and insulted Tauriel escorted the prisoners off, Nori heard a strangely familiar moan.

Nori’s eyes widened and he ran into the chamber that the conspirators were using as a meeting place.

Lying there covered in seed and holding his head was Ori…

Nori swallowed, “Ori?”

“Go away…”

Nori ignored his languid brother, wrapping him in the dirtied blanket and carried him out to the corridor when Balin was standing there confused.

“Ori’s on house arrest. Bring Oin.”

“Ori? Balin gasped.
“Yes. We’ll have to wait for Thorin to reclaim the reins of power. Kili can’t deal with this…”

“Dori won’t take it well either…”

“Until Thorin is King Under the Mountain, this stays between us three; Dwalin, you and myself. For the Good of Erebor…”

“One of the Fourteen, especially the betrothed of the Regent Under the Mountain could not be known to be to have involved in a conspiracy against the Royal House of Durin.

Kili would be heartbroken, Nori cared for the kid not just for Ori or Fili’s sake but for his own. Kili had stepped up to fill a power vacuum in Erebor, he didn’t have to. He could have begged Fili to do it but he silently understood that his brother would refuse…

Nori ignored his lethargic brother as he carried him to quarters in the royal wing. They were dusty and stale but some herbs in the fire would set the place to rights.

Ori would be chained here if needed, not that Nori wanted that but he was unsure if his brother would understand the seriousness of his offence.

He was found debauched at the scene of a conspiracy…

Whatever Ori’s involvement, his actions had shamed their family and Kili…

He was unsure if Ori was injured, but he desperately wanted to shake him…

Balin returned quickly with Oin who was surprised at the summons, with Thorin the only current resident of the Healing Halls, Oin had more time to rest…

Ori was diagnosed as drunk and drugged on an aphrodisiac but Oin couldn’t tell them if it was self-induced or if Ori had been made to drink it.
His idiot brother was under orders to rest and sober up so he could be questioned.

Nori was not looking forward to that…

XooooooX

They reluctantly left Bifur to look after Ori with orders to not speak to him even in Iglishmêk.

Balin swallowed, “I hate keeping secrets from Dori. I leave this business to you to get to the bottom of. I don’t want to hear about it until you have answers.”

Nori nodded, “Very well.”

“Should we keep Kili with us or should he be taken to your apartments?”

“If Bard will take him, he is safest there. No one will expect him there. Tell Dori we thwarted another assassination attempt, he has no respect for Algrim you may mention his involvement.” Nori shrugged.

Balin squeezed his shoulder, “For what it’s worth, thank you…”

Nori smirked, “I am Erebor’s spymaster…”

“A title well-deserved…” Balin murmured.

Balin went to Thorin’s apartment to retrieve Dori and send Kili with Bard.

How could he keep Ori’s involvement in this business from Dori?

XooooooX
Nori headed down to the cells.

Informing Dwalin of this new development would be painful, his One was an honourable sort and even he would be appalled at Ori’s involvement…

Dwalin grabbed him and dragged him into his office and kissed him hungrily as soon as they were alone.

Nori was stone, he pushed him back. “No…”

Dwalin blinked. “What?”

“There were developments after you left and I’m not in the mood.”

Dwalin pouted, “What developments…”

Nori dragged Dwalin down by his ears to hissed, “Ori! Ori was there… half-conscious and covered in seed. Oin said he was drunk among other things…”

Dwalin stiffened. “What do we do?”

“Not tell Kili or Dori until we know just what his involvement is. This case must wait until Thorin is King. Kili cannot handle this…”

Dwalin nodded, “Very well. How do you propose we handle this?”

Nori sat on his desk and the two of them discussed interrogation, possible tactics and how to enforce Ori’s house arrest.

This situation was like a gold vein choked with stone rather than metal…
Nori really hoped that Ori’s involvement was miniscule, Kili would be crushed it as it was. His One covered in another’s seed would break his heart…

XooooooX

Investigation had revealed enough for Oin to determine Ori suffered from Axe Marriage…

His reaction had him lashing out verbally at his kin, caused distance between Ori and his One Kili.

His self-imposed isolation had resulted in Ori becoming a sex addict…

Ori had taken to drinking and sleeping with anyone who wanted it…

Nori had no idea how this escaped him…

Ori refused to talk about and had taken to trying and failing to proposition Bifur, Bofur and even Oin for sex.

His attempts only insulted them, Ori didn’t recognise any of their Ones…

Bifur and Bofur because of they had mated outside their race and in Oin’s case, because his One was dead.

He even attempted to seduce Bombur who left in a huff, it was cruel to do that to a bonded elf.

Nori couldn’t bear to tell Dori or Kili how fare Ori had fallen…

Ori had no idea that Algrim who had been one of his lovers, which was how Algrim learned about Elladan helping in the library, had been involved in a conspiracy. He actually accused Nori of making it up to cause Ori trouble and end his betrothal.
Nori pleaded with him to see sense, his actions would embarrass and shame Dori and Kili.

Ori yelled that Kili threw him away already and Dori didn’t care, he had taken up with Balin anyway.

There was nothing he could do to get through to Ori right now….

All they could do was wait for Thorin to handle this situation and to keep this from Kili and Dori…

Nori hoped it worked, it pained him to see what Ori had done to himself…

Was this Ori’s way of lashing out at himself and Dori?

Nori prayed to Mahal that Ori would recover before he ruined himself and his honour further…

Chapter End Notes

Please don't hate me! Ori was sheltered before the Quest and is suffering from a variation of PTSD. His reaction is rare, please do not judge all persons with PTSD by Ori's behaviour.
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

Thorin interrupts Kili’s council meeting and declares he’ll publicly apologize to Fili. An Apology ensues and a Feast...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 22

Kili never did get any real answers regarding Nori and Dwalin’s investigation into that conspiracy that had him hiding out in Bard’s apartments for three days.

Balin refused to talk about it and Dwalin was deliberately vague.

Bifur and Bofur had all but disappeared and when he saw them they quickly hurried away.

Something was going one and he couldn’t really stand it…

Kili was just about to demand answers when the door to their council chamber opened.

Thorin entered the Chamber first, Salmar following in his wake but not at his heels.

Kili knew that Dori had repaired Thorin’s fur-trimmed blue cloak as a prayer that his uncle would survive his injuries. Salmar had taken the cloak, Thorin’s sword Orchirst and his key into his custody.

The heavy key to Erebor lay about Thorin’s neck on a mithril chain that must have been his proposal gift from his One.

Thorin’s arrival sparked a chorus of awe and wonder.
The loudest from Balin, Kili, Dori, Dwalin and Nori…

Ferumbras and Bard were silent…

Kili loved his uncle who had been a foster father to him and fell upon him weeping and thanking Mahal.

Thorin laughed, as if he realized that Kili may have matured in some ways since the Battle of Five Armies but he was still at heart the boy he’d spoilt…

Dwalin and Dori, his two eldest friends embraced him tightly, the pregnant Dori shook and lectured him for frightening them before hugging him again. Dwalin had blamed himself for Thorin’s injuries, because during the fight with Azog he’d been knocked unconscious and had been unable to come to his aid.

Balin was clearly right glad to see him, not that Kili had been doing horribly but he was young and he would have been the youngest King under the Mountain in generations…

Thrain I, son of Nain I and grandson of Durin VI who became King of Durin’s Folk after both perished at the wrath of Durin’s Bane was young to when he came to power, as was Thorin himself, the son of Thrain II and grandson of Thor after Thor’s death at the hands of Azog the defiler and the disappearance of Thrain II.

Thank Eru that Kili didn’t need to be King Under the Mountain yet…

Once the sudden appearance of a healed and healthy Thorin Oakenshield the Reclaimer was recovered from, Kili introduced those present at his council meeting.

“Balin, senior advisor; Dwalin, General of Erebor; Nori, Chief Tactician and Home security or as I call him Erebor’s Spymaster; Dori, deputy advisor and the council representative to the guilds; Ori, Chief Scribe; Bard, Leader of the people of New Dale and Ferumbras, leader of our Hobbit guests.”

Naming Ori was tradition, not that he ever really attended council meaning
Thorin scowled, “Why are they here?”

Ferumbras and Bard flinched.

“We had room and needed help rebuilding and repairing Erebor. With Laketown destroyed the night after we left it, they had nowhere to go and Dale is not yet fit to live. The Hobbits along with Rangers from the North and Elves from Imladris attacked the rear of Bolg’s army between the Ri brothers, Bard, Tauriel and their family Dale was defended.” Kili shrugged. “As for the hobbits, those who were interested in forming the proposed hobbit settlement chose to winter with us. Ferumbras being one of them…as the Thain’s son and their leader in the battle, he has been treated as their leader.”

“How are we eating?” Thorin frowned.

“It is my doing,” Salmar spoke, “Gloin and I split the treasury amicably. I paid Fili and Bilbo what we determined what would have their two-fourteenth share. Fili with Kili’s permission perhaps, negotiated payment with Thranduil and Arwen for food to see us through at least the winter. The Lady Galadriel sent us provisions as well…”

“The old mushroom farms have been rebuilt and are being tended to by two of the Brandybuck militia who are keen farmers. That dragon manure apparently has a use. They grow quite quickly…we built a shed and removed it from Erebor which helped with the smell. We plan to use it when we plant our crops; we brought some seeds with us and our kin that will meet up with yours in Bree plan to bring more.” Ferumbras offered.

“Once Dale is repaired, the cost of which thanks to Salmar’s generosity as well as money we need to set us up as traders again has been set aside. We have put what we can into fixing up Erebor, my daughter Sigrid works with Bombur in the repaired kitchens. My wife, Lady Tauriel of Dale helped Oin in the Hall of Healing and now works with Dwalin in training a combined army of the current inhabitants of Erebor. We’ve helped with cleaning, we don’t have your skill with metal or stone but we can clean and after the wet and the fire in Esgaroth we are grateful to be somewhere warm and dry.” Bard muttered gruffly.

“The forges were restarted by Salmar by some secret art he tells us naught.” Kili teased. “Our first priority after healing and food was to see to safety and comfort. Safety is a joint charge between Dori, Dwalin and Nori while comfort was put in the hands of Bofur and Ferumbras. Since food is a precious commodity, Dwalin and Nori has seen to it that our current food stores and what could be salvaged from the old stores are guarded carefully. While we haven’t altered any old rules we made it temporarily a crime against Erebor as a whole to steal food and the punishment is
banishment. Healers determined all shares in agreement, the hobbits grumbled at first but three meals a day are it. Theft is punished harshly but stealing food when it is more precious then gold or mithril is unforgivable.

“What of the shares due to the ill?”

“All save you were healed or perished from their injuries weeks ago. All we’ve had is slight colds. At the first sign of illness, they present themselves in the Hall of Healing. We have instituted a ‘Don’t work, don’t eat’ policy. Those who work are given food, bed and a stipend to save for the spring. The people of Dale and the future inhabitants of Ravenhill can use it to pay for work on their personal residences. The families of New Dale have claimed quite agreeably I’m told, places in Dale for their future homes and businesses. Yet they have done well to earn their keep here, Dale was even more damaged after its assault by Bolg’s army. A snowstorm came in while you were in the Hall of Healing; the Hobbits who aided us and the people of Dale had nowhere to go. It would have been cruel to abandon them so I offered them shelter. It was Fili who helped see that we were all fed.” Kili reported with no small amount of pride.

His Uncle had left a ragtag band of Khazad-dim loyalists and the remnants of Dain’s army to fight over Erebor while he lay between life and death.

Kili, the spare had protected his uncle’s kingship rather than claim it for himself. He had reached out to people Thorin wouldn’t have, offering all he could shelter.

His beloved brother Fili whom his uncle had in his madness cast away had stood as a son of Mahal and a brother Khazad rather than a son of the House of Durin. Fili had rallied Dain’s Army in Mahal and Thorin’s name, instead of riding into Erebor in Triumph and seizing the kingship; Fili had used his share from the quest to buy food for the inhabitants of Erebor. Fili had not returned to Erebor, his birthright since he was cast out on Thorin’s own order. Fili was loyal even in banishment…

Kili would never say it out loud that who he was emulating as the regent of the House of Durin; it was his beloved brother Fili. Fili’s idea for a Hobbit settlement, treaties likely with Dale, Mirkwood and Imladris, all of which were what Fili would have done...

It seemed that while the Hobbits and the people of Dale were here, that Kili had given them a voice on the council.

Food had replaced gold, mithril and the Arkenstone as the greatest treasure in Erebor.
Thorin never outright declared that Balin would be his advisor or Dwalin his general even if they were best suited for it. They were Fili’s forthright observations in Bag End…

Kili had it seemed built a community and buried the enmity with the elves that had lasted since Thranduil turned his back on them and barred them from Mirkwood.

While only Salmar and their company had received a share of the treasury, his debt to Dale had been paid. Those outside their Company who called Erebor home for at least the winter, were earning money and food.

Thorin spoke after much thought. “Your appointments and treaties I will sanction.”

A great sigh of relief filled the room and Salmar’s pride at Thorin’s announcement knew was obvious even to Kili who wasn’t the most observant.

Thorin spoke again, “I will raise Kili officially as my heir, making him the Crown Prince Under the Mountain. Since you are young yet and so too is Ori, unless a child is conceived, your betrothal will be held after Ori’s one-hundredth birthday. I appoint Kili as my envoy to the Hobbit community to be built at Ravenhill and to New Dale. Fili’s relationship with one Bilbo Baggins of the Shire is to be sanctioned and a wedding to take place. We will have a small feast of thanksgiving to celebrate my kingship and the return of Mahal’s favour.”

A cheer filled the chamber.

Ori… Kili’s heart twisted. They hadn’t spoken in weeks…

Thorin continued, “At the feast I shall be crowned King Under the Mountain. At which time Salmar the Maia, the Hand of Mahal will be named my consort. My dear friends Dwalin and Dori will be bonded to their Ones when I am. While preparations are made and invitations sent, the throne room of Erebor is to be fully repaired. But first, Kili if the weather outside is safe you are to take Dwalin and Nori to the first smial of Ravenhill to request the presence of Fili and Bilbo.”

Kili’s eyes sparkled with tears unshed, “Yes uncle it shall be done.”
“When Fili agrees to approach Erebor, Nori is to return with the news. At which time, the whole community of Erebor is to be summoned to the Gate.” Thorin said wearily, “Once Fili arrives in the company of his One as he requested I will apologize for my rashness and restore him to the House of Durin. Then hopefully, we can begin again a relationship as uncle and nephew.”

Balin said dryly, “Do you do this because it is right or because you’re wary of Dís’ wrath?”

Kili was suspicious that Balin was one of the few who could get away with asking the question that way…

“Both,” Thorin said gruffly. “Then Kili, since I am hale and healthy enough to ascend the kingship officially if Salmar agrees you are ask him to see if your arm maybe healed as Nori’s invisible and my visible hurts were.”

Kili flinched, “Yes uncle.”

Thorin coughed, “That said I am hungry. Send to Bombur to send up food for Salmar and myself. After a meal, then I want to be escorted on a tour of my kingdom.”

Ferumbras and Bard excused themselves after wishing Thorin well.

With Kili leaving on a mission to speak to with his brother on Thorin’s behalf, Bard volunteered to request the Royal kitchen to speak with Bombur about a meal for Thorin and Salmar as well as the proposed feast.

Kili was pleased to be escorted by Dwalin and Nori, he had planned to demand answers from them today anyway.

He waited until they were properly bundled up to leave the Mountain and half way to Fili’s smial before he spoke.

“About that interrupted council meeting…”

Nori and Dwalin both flinched.
“Are you going to tell me about it?”

“No.” Nori said stiffly. “We will be reporting to Thorin.”

“But why?” Kili asked petulantly.

“Because you cannot be involved.” Dwalin retorted.

“But it happened while I was in charge! Why are Bifur and Bofur avoiding me? Where is Ori?”

“Please don’t press Kili.” Nori said tiredly.

Kili stopped and swallowed, “It’s Ori…he’s done something awful.”

“Let’s not spoil this day. Let’s focus on mending Fili and Thorin’s relationship.”

Kili grumbled, “Fine but were not done here.”

They finally arrived at the smial and Kili pulled his excitement back, he was glad Thorin was going to do the right thing.

Even if he was slightly afraid of Aman…

Kili rapped on the door.

Fili opened it, looking pleased at first and frowned, “Is this an official embassy?”

Kili nodded, “Uncle Thorin has recovered in all ways and has requested your presence at the Gate of Erebor.”
Bilbo’s hand slipped into Fili’s, “Thorin is well?”

Kili grinned, “Yes and he promised to publicly apologize before the whole of Erebor.”

Fili sighed, “If he plans to do, so then I will stand by my word and return to Erebor at least long enough to listen and accept it.”

Nori bowed and scurried away.

Fili’s brow furrowed as he glanced at Dwalin.

Kili followed his eyes and realized that Fili’s absence meant that he missed a lot. Dwalin’s expression was less stony then it had been in the past and there was a softness in his eyes. No matter…

Kili threw his arms around Fili, “I’m so glad that Thorin is well and I don’t have to be Regent much longer! Even better, Nori is a male and he’s officially engaged to Dwalin just as Dori is to Balin. Uncle Thorin promised that they would be bonded when he is soon and to agree to your mating with Bilbo. He called it sanctioned and a sign of our brotherhood with the lost Ones, the Hobbits. Thorin promised that Ravenhill would be given to the Hobbits and all of my tentative Treaties were going to be accepted as negotiated!”

That had seemed so unThorin, but Kili wasn’t going to question his luck that Thorin was going to continue his treaties and council.

It was sad in its own way that Salmar was a better influence than Fili or even Balin…

But at least Salmar was a good influence…

XooooooX

Nori found Salmar and Thorin eating in the Council Chambers because unlike Thorin’s old
apartment, it was closer to the Gate.

He stopped to catch his breath.

“What did Fili say?” Salmar asked as he handed Nori a goblet of water.

“He said…he would come…how long he stays is based on how sincere you are.”

Salmar fixed Thorin with a penetrating look, “A fair answer. One I look forward to learning myself.”

Nori was asked to fetch gifts and have them ready, a mithril chain shirt that Thorin had noticed was cataloged by Gloin, a cloak with Fili’s Durin Crest and other gifts.

Nori nodded, he was certain that Dori had a new cloak for Fili with his crest attached just as he’d remade Thorin’s blue coat in hopes that all would be well.

Gloin likely knew where that mithril shirt was, it shouldn’t take long…

Nori knew that both main requested gifts would go a long way towards healing the damage Thorin’s madness had caused between him and Fili.

XooooooX

It was just over an hour when Fili and Kili who were arm in arm saw Erebor’s Gate appear before their party…

Fili was clearly still wary of returning to Erebor as if he wasn’t sure how far to trust their formerly gold mad or dragon mad Uncle…

Kili couldn’t blame him…
Whatever the reason for Thorin’s change, he was grateful…

Kili watched as Fili stood tall and proud before his uncle and waited…

Poor Bilbo was radiating nervousness beside his brother yet refused to let go of Fili’s hand until a defiant Fili unlaced their fingers to wrap an arm around Bilbo’s waist resting his hand protectively over their son…

Kili was only a tiny bit jealous of Fili having a child, his brother may have found his One later than Kili himself but Fili definitely deserved his happiness.

His brother knew it too because Fili’s eyes were sparking with a mixture of pain and defiance that broke Kili’s heart.

The Fellowship the Fourteen had enjoyed since the Trolls were beaten by Nori and Bilbo with only a little help, was Broken…

How much was Thorin’s fault and how much was Fate’s Kili didn’t know but this torn in two feeling hurt but he could only watch to see what Thorin would do…

XooooooX

Nori stood to the side, watching Fili who was holding Bilbo’s hand and had Kili’s arm in his as they approached the Gate.

Dwalin was doing his best to pretend all was well but Kili knowing Ori was in trouble had his One looking more like the perfect solder than his lover.

An hour after Nori’s return, an anxious Thorin stood in the repaired but open Gates of Erebor waiting impatiently for Fili and Bilbo to return with Dwalin and Kili…

The eyes of all of Erebor were upon him, Thorin still had yet to prove himself worthy of the kingship.
Once Fili stood before him, his arm around Bilbo and his eyes sparking with a mixture of pain and defiance, Thorin spoke.

“When last we spoke, you offered to take a burden I wanted not. Not the kingship but a debt of honour, you offer to pay it out of your own share. I was overwhelmed by, we shall call it gold sickness, in my rashness and uncontrollable anger I threw Fili out of my house and from this place that was his by right. I was wrong…instead of scurrying back to the Shire like I expected in my fevered state, Fili fought long and hard rallying our people. He has inspired his brother and paid for the food, which we all have shared. I was rash, I was wrong. Fili, who has never felt or done anything that was not to benefit his brother or myself, met his One on a cool March day in the Shire. A forgotten people that bear our blood have returned to us by a trick of fate. A full Khazad will reign after me, yet out of love for my kin and the worth Bilbo has shown, their relationship is approved. In fact as a show of our treaty with the Shire, my elder nephew will be given in bonding to Bilbo Baggins of Bag End, son of Belladonna.”

There was a resounding cheer from Khazad, hobbit and man alike…

It was Bilbo who spoke first, his voice trembling, “Do you mean it Thorin?”

“If he doesn’t, Aman will terrorise him and the whole of Erebor will never trust him.” Fili’s voice was cold.

Thorin flinched, grateful that his subjects couldn’t see his face. “That is true but I love my nephew, I came here with pure motives: to secure our ancestral home for his and Kili’s future children. I was lost along the way but this was my goal, the Line of Durin reclaimed Erebor with assistance from the Men of Dale, the Hobbits of the Shire as well as the elves of Mirkwood and Imladris. They are our Allies; together we will form a tight partnership and stand up together against the Dark Powers who wish to crush us.”

Fili held out his hand stiffly, “You have apologised, thus Bilbo and I will attend the feast. We will stand with our friends when they join you in bonding before Mahal. We will celebrate your coronation; while I have never sought the kingship myself I am pleased that my beloved Uncle is King under the Mountain. When I met Bilbo I had long given up hope, I believe that my One perished at the Battle of Azanulbizar but Mahal was guiding Thorin and Tharkûn. Due to the Quest to Reclaim Erebor I found my One.”

Thorin shook Fili’s hand firmly before pulling his nephew in for a customary grasping of the forearms and a welcoming head butt.
Fili was stiff and then some of the familial love, Nori remembered between them had seemed to return and he returned the greeting with eagerness.

Nori hoped that forgiveness could be found in regards to Ori and their relationship with them.

Bilbo too was welcomed thus and entered into Erebor for the first time since he left the Gatehouse of Erebor after he had treated all of the less serious cases that were within his abilities as a healer…

Members of the Company, or the Fourteen as the inhabitants of Erebor called them, approached and their welcome was loud and long for great was their love of Fili and Bilbo. Bombur was still in the Royal Kitchens and couldn’t get away, Bifur was guarding Ori and Ori was still under House Arrest as it were. So it wasn’t twelve that greeted them…

Fili seemed happy for Nori and a firmer friendship between them seemed likely.

Nori was certain his childhood sparring partner would stay just for supper before he and Bilbo returned to Ravenhill in the company of Bofur and Ferumbras.

Fili while grateful to be welcomed into Thorin’s apologetic graces was uncomfortable in Erebor, Nori had recognised the same unease at being in a mountain that he himself had. Which meant that Fili and Bilbo preferred their smial to the Mountain proper… not that Nori could blame them…

After which Nori and Dwalin escorted Fili and Bilbo to Balin and Dori’s apartment. Balin, Bombur, Bofur and Kili were busy with preparations so only Dwalin, Nori and Dori entertained them.

Knowing Bofur, he was glad to have any reason to avoid Ori…

Nori’s brother had extended the invitation of wiling away the time before the feast there after Nori retrieved Fili’s gift.

Nori and Dwalin did their best to fill Fili on Erebor matters, actually they spend most of their time talking about how well Kili was doing as Regent and how it was Fili who inspired his choices.
Since Dori was farther along than Bilbo and they quietly compared their health while Fili properly caught up with Dwalin and Nori about the state of Erebor.

Eventually an excited Bofur came to fetch them and escort them a large Great Hall of sorts that functioned as a communal dining area.

XooooooX

Dori assured Fili and Bilbo that the inhabitants of Erebor didn’t usually eat there.

Normally they ate in shifts, some couples like Dori and Bilbo too preferred to cook their own food but most ate in dining halls associated with their barracks.

After all, the ‘apprentices’ ate with their own as did many of the persons of the same race but thanks to Bard, Bofur and Ferumbras there was quite a bit of intermingling between the three more prominent races in Erebor.

Elladan and Tauriel were the only seemingly permanent elves in Erebor at present, but Dori knew Tauriel would likely be moving to Dale in spring while Elladan would possibly be moving into a smial in Ravenhill near Fili and Bilbo’s. he didn’t prefer living in a Mountain, when he wasn’t helping in the Library or with the Army, Elladan went for long walks…

Near the end of the feast, Salmar gestured and immediately Nori and Kili vanished.

Dori was certain it was to retrieve the gifts of apology from Thorin.

After all, Fili had never been in the wrong, Thorin had been.

Poor Fili, he and Bilbo had suffered so since Thorin has his dreadful lapse in judgement be it gold sickness or the curse of the dragon’s horde.

Either way they were lucky to have survived that…
Dori had asked Balin about the whole Fram and the Dragon business after the Battle only to be horrified. They had a narrow escape…

Just as the feast ended but before the tables were to be cleared, Thorin gestured for Fili and Bilbo to approach the front of the table they shared with Salmar, Dwalin, Nori, Kili, and Balin.

“For our kin.” Thorin said magnanimously, “For Fili we wish for him to take his place as the Prince of Ravenshill and represent us in the council there that will be established. Erebor will be a neighbour and ally; we will open our gates in time of danger. We will train any of our cousins who wish to in any of the skills that we will have among those who have returned to these hallowed halls of our forefathers.”

Inside the casket was a new cloak made by Dor with Fili’s broach that declared him as a member of the House of Durin. Dori was glad the prayers and wishes he had made while working on the cloak were not in vain.

Dori was nearly in tears watching as Kili placed the cloak on his brother’s shoulders fastening it and embracing Fili.

It broke his heart that despite the similarity in Nori and Ori’s ages, that his younger brothers didn’t have a relationship like the Princes.

“This is my sister’s son, Fili the eldest son of Princess Dís. Kili will remain my heir but Fili is to be warranted the same respect as Princess Dís. Bilbo has saved us all, he has treated our wounds, ministered to our spirits, fought for our home and with Fili has procured us food and supplies. We struck an alliance with the hobbits of the Shire to honour that we will give our royal son Fili to his One Bilbo. As a token of our love and kinship we offer this to our future nephew.”

Nori placed his casket in Kili’s arms and opened it to reveal the shimmering of Mithril.

Dori gasped, Nori had been pleased with himself when he visited to inform him that Fili was coming and to retrieve the cloak Dori had made. Only Balin, Dwalin and Nori knew about that cloak…

“This is the most priceless gift that we can give to him besides Fili, a chain shirt of mithril that will protect his life from any blade that should threaten him.” His old friend said regally.
Had Thorin always been regal or was that a new thing?

Nori removed Bilbo’s well-worn travelling jacket and unbuttoned his shirt, but he, Kili and Fili stood to block Bilbo from the sight those gathered there. Nori dressed Bilbo in the mail shirt and then returned his clothes refastening them on his person.

“Behold Prince Fili and his consort Bilbo of the Shire.” Thorin thundered.

“All hail Prince Fili and Prince-Consort Bilbo!” Nori yelled with a mixture of defiance and pride.

“Fili! Fili!”

“Bilbo! Bilbo!”

“All hail Fili and Bilbo!”

Khazad, man and hobbit alike cheered, even their resident elves Elladan and Tauriel who were still present.

They were clearly beloved, Dori knew that it was the right and proper thing to accept Fili back into the royal family and to return to him the title that was long his. Fili had never done anything to Dori’s knowledge that was not meant for the good of the House of Durin…

Except perhaps, falling in love with his hobbit…

Then again, Bilbo’s cousin Ferumbras, Bofur’s One had brought reinforcements who arrived just in time to protect the civilians in Dale. Hobbits who had fixed their farms and were helping to train rangers with the help of Elladan…

However, Dori was no fool, this course of action gave Thorin a stronger position after rewarding his most loyal subject and Bilbo who had helped them secure the mountain in more ways than one.
They were returned to seats of honour on Thorin’s left beyond Salmar while Kili, Balin, Dori, Dwalin and Nori were on his right.

Fili didn’t stay long and neither did Dori…

Both Bilbo and himself were easily exhausted due to their pregnancies.

Dori promised to keep writing, they had become closer after Bilbo’s Blessing was discovered. How could they not? They were the first blessed in many years…

Dori bid Bilbo a tearful goodbye and begged Fili to visit…

A sentiment that thankfully Thorin encouraged.

Dori let Balin take him home, trusting Nori and Dwalin to see that they were returned to their smial safely.

Thorin was taking his rightful place as King Under the Mountain and Fili was the House of Durin’s Prince again.

Maybe not its Crown Prince, but a Prince all the same…

Chapter End Notes

I know it was a slight and belated recap but I have to catch up to the Bonding don't I? Plus Kili, Nori and Dori's POVS were important...
Chapter 23

Kili was surprised when Salmar entered the council chambers to announce they had guests.

Guests in Winter was unexpected…

Following behind his Uncle’s consort was the most Khazad of Khazad…

And companying him was an elf maiden who seemed to glow liked the sun in contrast to Arwen, Lady of Imladris who shone like a night full of stars.

“Erebor’s Fortune has spread already…” Salmar said with barely restrained excitement. “A priest of Mahal has come to bless our impending unions.”

Balin rose on unsteady feet, only to kneel.

The Priest strode forward grasping Balin’s forearms, pulling him to his feet and pressed their foreheads together. “You have always put your people first, Mahal has seen this and gifted you with someone worthy of you. He is your Blessing; you could only be matched with someone who has as large a heart as yourself.”

Balin nodded stepping back.

Kili was unsure whether to rise or not.
“Prince Under the Mountain, or should I say Regent? You are far more wise and honourable than you give yourself credit for. You have never been second best; all Mahal’s children are forged to be unique. Salmar will prove quite the Master for you, his second greatest love has always been craftsmanship. Whether as a Jeweller or a Prince, you strive to create beauty and that is what Erebor needs. You are doing well…”

Kili felt awed, the words felt as if they came from Mahal himself but how could that be?

The Priest had words for all of them but not least of all for Thorin but what they were, Kili did not hear…

There was a reverence in Thorin’s eyes as well, “Salmar…Balin, escort.”

“Vitri and Redhwen.” The priest offered.

“to my grandparents’ former chambers…” Thorin finished.

Thorin had returned to his old apartments from his days as Prince of Erebor, no one slept in Thor’s rooms but Thrain’s rooms had been given over to Elrond as a courtesy by Fili so the Lord of Imladris had an appropriate room to rest in after healing Thorin.

It was being kept for visiting members of Elladan’s family be it Elrohir, Arwen or even Elrond were he to come.

Kili was still overwhelmed by the whole thing…

He wasn’t sure he could breathe again properly until Salmar and Balin escorted their guests out…

He timidly excused himself to meditate on the priest’s blessing.

XooooooX
Dwalin and Nori had each been blessed by the priest and left feeling lighter hearted than before.

Nori recognized the Aura as one who was greater than Salmar…

Mahal was among them, which meant the elven maiden was his One.

Mahal had nothing but praise for him, telling him that he was a fine Khazad who always put his family first and giving him Dwalin who was his perfect match was the greatest gift he could give him.

Dwalin was told that his size, strength and honor were gifts. That Nori had been crafted as his equal, and that it was himself that safeguarded his One’s honor. Hearing Mahal ask him to take care of Nori’s Heart was a blessing in itself…

Instinctively, their hands laced together and Dwalin found himself pressed against Nori’s side. Their heights were different but there was something authoritative in Nori’s bearing that made him attractive. Their age difference was comical. There might be some who remembered his youthful friendship with Dori and thought his mateship was perverted, after all one could argue that Nori was practically the right age to be his child. But Nori was anything but, Nori had never had the sort of reverence for him that Fili or even Kili had. Nori never respected him because he was a guardsman or a soldier, he only treated Thorin and Dis respectfully.

Had Nori always wanted him that even before knowing what that feeling was?

When Nori slammed him against the closed door of their apartment and dragged him down by his beard for a kiss Dwalin groaned.

“It’s time…” Nori growled.

Dwalin blinked. “What?”

“For you to put in the braids.”

Dwalin swallowed, “Braids…”
“Courting and betrothal. You may braid my hair.”

How like this new confident Nori to just announce something like that…

“I…”

Nori snorted, “You have them, you wouldn’t have lost them…”

Dwalin shook his head, “It was a long time before I found someone skilled enough you see. I was the last of our trio to make them. Dori’s were made before we left Erebor, I don’t remember when Thorin had his made.” He flushed, “Kili made them…he saw my design and well he insisted. It was his final apprenticeship project. I had saved the silver and emeralds for a long time…carrying them in a pouch over my heart.”

Nori watched as the worn leather pouch finally was removed from Dwalin’s neck.

Dwalin spilled them into his hand and Nori swallowed.

They were almost leaf-shaped with silver veins, the beads becoming more elaborate as one moved from courting to betrothed and finally bonded.

Some beads were pure emerald; others silver the leaf theme eventually became trees when it came to the bonding beads.

Nori swallowed a lump in his throat. “You may put them in…”

“Where?” Dwalin seemed just as overwhelmed as Nori felt.

“Wherever you think they look best after you brush out my hair.

Nori had never allowed Dwalin to unplait his hair…
Shyly Dwalin went to find a comb…

Nori followed only to find Dwalin wanted him to sit on the bed in his lap to comb out his hair.

It was different having his One comb out his hair, Nori only vaguely remembered his Aman. The hands in his hair that he remembered most were Dori and Princess Dis.

Perhaps, Dwalin might be allowed greater liberties now that he’d decided to wear Dwalin’s beads openly.

Nori never had bothered to design beads and he felt that this was unequal but he didn’t want to make Dwalin stop…

Eventually, Dwalin’s hands left his hair.

“Please look at me…” there was emotion in Dwalin’s voice that was different…

Well when they weren’t naked, sweaty and Nori buried to the hilt in him that is…

Nori moved, turning to face Dwalin.

“They…are beautiful…” Dwalin’s hand shook as he reached out to caress the braids.

“It’s not too soon?” Nori asked inadvertently throwing Dwalin’s words from Imladris to Balin and Dori back at him.

Dwalin flinched, “I would have agreed at Beorn’s if you’d ask…”

Nori felt doubly guilty now. “You’ll have yours soon.”

Dwalin’s face fell. “You didn’t…”
“What I didn’t need to eat, I saved for my brothers. I didn’t ever expect to have you, much less that we were Ones. I didn’t want beads for you until now…” Nori shrugged.

Dwalin pulled away. “Oh…”

Nori smirked, “I’ll go see Kili right now, he’s not busy. He made these so he’ll make mine…”

“Is that wise with the Ori situation?” Dwalin retorted.

“Probably not but he needs to focus on something other than Erebor, he would want to do this.” Nori retorted.

“Fine.”

“Fine.”

Nori was upset that he’d hurt Dwalin but when would he have taken the time. It’s not like he would have had time before…

He headed down to see Kili, rapping on the Prince Regent’s door.

Kili called out, “Just a minute…”

Nori felt guilty when he saw Kili’s eyes were red. “Did I come by at a bad time?”

Kili shook his head. “Of course not,” he gamely attempted a smile, “we’re family aren’t we?

Were they? Would they be? Would Kili be able to forgive Ori for betraying their bond?
“I let Dwalin plait my hair and he was hurt because I didn’t have beads for him.”

“I remember these…” Kili said softly, “I thought when they were green and silver how nicely they would be in your hair. People used to tease Ori, that he had the boring hair. Dori’s looked like spun lavender silk, yours was forge-fire red and Ori’s seemingly a mousy brown. His hair is a mixture of both of yours but his has a similar texture as Dori’s looks… soft you know?”

Nori flinched.

“He really is in trouble… why won’t you tell me?” Kili asked quietly.

“I love you and I know Ori does too, it would break both your hearts if I let you. Please Kili, when we have to tell you we will. Until then trust me to look after him…”

“You are his brother…” Kili smiled weakly.

“If asking you is too much…” Nori sighed.

Kili shook his head, “I’m flattered really, will you trust me to make something worthy of Dwalin? The Blessing had me wanting to claim the forge for myself.”

“Let me come with you to the treasury and the Forge.”

Kili smiled, “Alright. I know you want to look after me but I suppose because you’ve commissioned beads I ought to let you.”

Nori’s heart twisted, how could Ori want to hurt Kili like this? Even knowing Ori was in trouble, he wanted to see him. Kili could push away his worry but it was still there…

They exited Kili’s apartments to see Bofur just about running out the apartment he was supposed to be watching Ori in. his clothes were torn again…

Bofur passed Bifur. “Sorry Cousin, he’s your problem I need to take a bath…I feel filthy.”
Kili stiffened.

Nori groaned, this wasn’t what he wanted. Damn it, he should have realised what time it was!

“Please…tell me Bofur wasn’t running from Ori…”

Nori couldn’t.

“Ori attacked him?”

“He attacks everyone…Bombur won’t enter that room anymore.”

“Is he dangerous?”

“To your heart? Yes, to himself? Yes… the only person he’s really hurting right now is himself. I don’t want you to see him like this… I want you to remember the Ori you love…”

Kili closed his eyes, “That’s hard, he changed so much over the Quest. I couldn’t see the Ori I loved in him…”

“I’ll remember for the both of us, now let’s go forge shall we?”

Kili nodded, glancing back at Ori’s door once before Nori led him away.

Why couldn’t Ori have come to him if he needed him? While he was Regent, Kili would have done something. Ori was one of the Fourteen after all…

How had he failed his One? He walked away first…
While exercising his craft would be nice, Kili couldn’t shake his own guilt even if he wasn’t sure how he was responsible exactly for Ori’s current trouble…

XooooooX

Mahal’s words rang in Balin’s head.

“You have always put your people first, Mahal has seen this and gifted you with someone worthy of you. He is your Blessing; you could only be matched with someone who has as large a heart as yourself.”

He had escorted Mahal and his beloved Yavanna to Thor’s old Apartments welcoming them and apologizing that the rooms were dusty.

Yavanna or Redhwen kissed his checks and told him it was no trouble.

Mahal and Salmar were speaking in a tongue that Balin didn’t know.

She laughed, “They are friends of old…go it is rare to be done early. You have a Blessed One waiting do you not?”

Balin blushed, “Yes.”

“Take this from me then.” The Lady kissed his forehead and ushered him out the door.

Mahal’s Beloved blessed him…

Balin returned home in a daze.

Dori met him with a kiss.
Balin knelt and pressed his cheek to the swell containing their child. “I have never doubted Mahal but,” he held Dori’s hands and kissed the back of them, “knowing he crafted you as worthy of me by giving you a large heart…”

Dori frowned, “What brought this on? Are you well…”

Balin laughed, “Better than I have been in a long time. You both make me young.”

“You look different…you smell like an elf.”

Balin rose cradling Dori’s face in his hands, “From Mahal’s beloved.”

Dori felt as if he were standing in a warm beam of summer sunlight surrounded by flowers and songbirds.

Dori blinked, the warmth surrounding him like a blanket…

We fit together because Mahal forged us that way. How could I not see it? I will never again be blind to what you mean to me Dori, amrâlimê…”

Dori melted at the endearment… his younger self would have agreed to anything to head Balin call him that.

“Do we have time?” Balin asked caressing Dori’s pregnant body.

“Time?” Dori moaned softly. “Yes? Its only soup…”

Balin smirked, “I want to touch you…”

“Anywhere and everywhere…” Dori breathed, his body had been ready the moment Balin touched him. How much was because Balin had showed him nothing but pleasure in his arms and how much was due to how sensitive his pregnancy made him, Dori didn’t know or care.
Balin loved how expressive Dori was and how he was always eager to couple when he asked.

Balin would never tire of asking…

Chapter End Notes

As cruel as asking Kili to craft beads for Dwalin might be, he is flattered to create a set for Dwalin after making the ones that Nori is wearing. I think Kili needs to create beauty to regain some of his confidence…
Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

Nori and Dwalin as well as Balin and Dori consummate their bonding.

Chapter Notes

Surprise semi-public sex...
Is this a Ri thing?
Also, recommend reading The View prior because that is the bonding one-shot.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 24

It wasn’t until Thorin left swept away by Salmar, that Nori decided to go.

He dragged Dwalin by his prick and shoved Kili along, he wasn’t about to leave him alone.

Kili was still forbidden to see Ori…

Fili was already gone and Nori was certain that given that Lady Redhwen (whom Nori was silently convinced was Mahal’s One Yavanna) had stayed in the smial, it was undoubtedly protected.

Given what Salmar had done to orcs upon his return but especially Azog, Nori had not trouble trusting the Hand of Mahal with his king.

Which left Nori and Dwalin to see to Kili’s safety before Nori consummated their bonding.

Dwalin too was restless, he’d been eager since Mahal called him Blessed. Unlike the Edain, Khazad saw the conception of an heir as a Blessing. Dwalin was so pleased that Mahal had seen fit to bless him that he didn’t care how his Army would take it…
Dwalin and Nori saw Kili to his apartment, made him swear to remain there all night.

Kili nodded.

Then Dwalin was dragged prick first into their apartment where they excitedly removed one another’s clothes.

Dwalin had been exhibiting ‘nesting’ behaviours a bit like Dori and he seemed to be putting on weight under candle light.

Nori pushed him onto the bed, “Blessed…I like the sound of that… almost as much as I enjoy seeing my ring on your finger.”

“I wanted your son, Salmar must have pleased Mahal and he blessed us.”

“Likely he rewarded your duty to the House of Durin…” Nori calmly retorted.

The priest’s previous blessings flitted through their memories but then vanished.

Dwalin disagreed but he wasn’t willing to fight when he was floating on such bliss which was unlike anything he’d ever felt. Beyond the joy of finishing his apprenticeship, his seventy-seventh birthday or being named captain of the guard in Ered Luin.

All that mattered was that he belonged to Nori in all ways and was blessed with his child…

Nori kissed Dwalin roughly breaking him out of his musing as he kneaded the very slight swell on his chest.

Dwalin gasped, his chest was so tender and Nori’s touch burned in a good way…

Nori broke the kiss to nip along Dwalin’s throat and then smugly bit one of Dwalin’s nipples.
The tenderness of his chest sent pleasure-pain straight to his hammer… and to Dwalin’s embarrassment he came with a whimper.

Nori licked the offended nipple chuckling, “That eager are we?” he was gentler on the other nipple as much as he would have liked to have Dwalin’s nipples pierced it would likely cause issues with breastfeeding.

The picture in his mind of his huge tattooed warrior of a bearer naked and breastfeeding was quite erotic. The reality couldn’t come too soon!

Dwalin felt filthy as his One used his own seed to prep him, not filthy as in needing to bathe but filthy as in perverse.

He enjoyed it which Nori clearly knew if that smirk was any indication.

Mahal! Any part of Nori inside him was amazing but he still craved to be stretched and filled by Nori’s hammer.

Nori was a great deal thinner in the hammer then Dwalin himself but it certainly felt big inside him.

Dwalin groaned as Nori thrust into him, finally…

Something between them crackled almost like fire…

Dwalin rocked back into Nori’s hammering, eager to participate in their consummation of their bonding.

Blessed by Mahal, bound to Nori… could anything be better?

How blessed only Mahal knew and he could ask Oin later but Nori shifted driving into that spot that made him scream from pleasure.
Nori planned to tie Dwalin down sometime and see just how many times he could make him come by stroking this spot.

It made him rather smug that he was the first to find it and make Dwalin come by fucking it.

Dwalin was quite different since Azog had him whipped, the whip marks remained off course. Tauriel only knitted the skin together faster…

Those scars were quite sensitive and well, Nori loved to lick them when he hammered Dwalin face-first into the mattress.

In fact, that sounded like a lovely idea for their next round.

Given the feast to celebrate the first bondings in Erebor since before Smaug came looking for Thorin, it was unlikely that anyone would rise early.

Nori had every intention of hammering Dwalin into exhaustion, he was unsure if he would let Dwalin hammer him tonight but he was going to spill so much seed in Dwalin that his barukê would be dripping it down his ample thighs.

Dwalin’s arms were twice his own or even Dori’s, yet Dori was somehow stronger than Dwalin. Nori had never tested to see whether he or Dwalin was stronger. Perhaps, a test for another time…

Something like that kinky sex game Nori had considered about seducing the captain of the guard…

With Dwalin’s arse sucking him in like this, he might not last…

XoooooooX

Balin was one of the last to leave the celebratory feast…

In Kili and Thorin’s absence, he felt it was his duty…
That didn’t mean he didn’t enjoy himself.

In fact, he had. Dori might be furious in the morning but Balin would handle it…

He had claimed a chair in a dim corner, pulled his Blessed bonded into his lap and used his hands to make Dori come. Touching his amrâlimê through his clothes…

Dori buried his face in Balin’s coat, trying to keep his moans quiet. Master Balin was taking full advantage of how easily he could be sexually ready for him.

The party was starting die down when Balin wiggled wine drenched fingers into Dori’s arse.

“Balin…” he gasped gripping his newly bonded One’s coat as he was breeched.

“Would you let me claim you here?”

Dori was starry-eyed, “You know I would let you claim me anywhere.”

Balin kissed him roughly as he prepared him.

He didn’t press his hammer into Dori’s cave until the last of the celebrators left.

Dori clung to Balin, flushed with embarrassment. “Ah!”

Balin broke the kiss to groan in his ear, “Ride me amrâlimê…”

Dori did his best to obey, he’d never imagined doing something so forbidden and reckless.

Letting Balin touch him in public only to take him in what could be considered a public place even
if it were empty.

Balin felt himself drawn tight and then Dori came, his body tightening around him.

They both came with loud grunts.

Dori sagging in his arms.

“You’re so brave…” Balin murmured.

It was Dori who put the idea of ‘public sex’ in his head.

Balin helped his debauched amrâlimê up and helped him to their room where he stripped Dori to lick his One’s seed from his body before claiming him for a more languid lovemaking…

They were among the first to be bonded before Mahal, Balin still had hope that his Blessed One would have Erebor’s first child.

For now, having Dori wearing his ring and his beads was enough. He would have to add a braid tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

Reading recommendation- read The Final Blessings prior to the next chapter.
Chapter 25

Chapter Summary

The morning after Dori and Balin as well as Nori and Dwalin were bonded.

Chapter Notes

I recommend reading The Final Blessings prior.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 25

Nori woke first, he wasn’t exactly sure why but he did.

He remembered his dream…

He had been born in the wrong vessel for his spirit because he had lessons to learn. That was a bit annoying but if his reward was Dwalin bearing his children, then he wouldn’t complain. Who would truly expect Dwalin of all khazad to bear children, much less wish to. Not all bearers chose to, some were married to their craft or occupation rather than another being.

Mahal could not have fashioned someone more perfect, even if they had been rude and in some ways, cruel because they didn’t wish to see it.

Nori had barely learned to weave because that was Dori’s true skill, aside from parenting the reforming guilds that is. So aside from playing people which was an art form in itself, Nori didn’t see himself as an artist like his brother Dori so it was easy to trust Kili. Kili had made Dwalin’s beads, which were as the crown prince of Erebor put it ‘stunning and perfect with Nori’s hair’. It seemed appropriate to trust the young khazad to design and craft beads for Dwalin even if his brother’s One was suffering because Ori was an idiot.
What little hair Dwalin allowed himself was braided but now bore the courting and betrothal beads, this was distinguished by the artistry of the beads, their placement and even the type of braid. Braids even varied by gender, role and even status in khazad culture. A lecture that Kili recited for Nori when he crafted the beads for Dwalin, likely learned from Princess Dis that Nori had missed due to his travelled.

Dwalin chose to shave his head so his tattoos were visible but that didn’t keep his bonded from wearing the beads that Kili crafted for Nori.

They only needed the bonded beads that forever marked a khazad as ‘taken’.

The spymaster owned the general of Erebor to some extent, they were well-balanced. Dwalin preferred to be the anvil in their lovemaking most of the time but on occasion, was interested in being the hammer. This was the opposite of Nori, but they were both more drawn to vigorous, bordering on violent lovemaking.

Nori was smaller in stature than Dwalin and thanks to his reforging, had darker skin between his shoulders and knees. Something that out of his Khazad kin only Dwalin was aware of.

Kili’s arm was reforged but stayed wrapped, it was either covered by a sleeve or a glove. Nori was suspicious that this was his way of hiding the different tone of that skin. Thorin and himself were lucky that their reforged parts were more easily hidden.

If Ori even returned to himself, Nori hoped that his brother accepted Kili’s reforged arm rather than shamed him for it.

Nori had fallen asleep with his hand on Dwalin’s stomach, his bear of a warrior had his arms wrapped around his stomach.

A child…

Nori had never expected to have one due to his previous physical gender, because the idea of carrying one himself was unnerving and also because he had been incapable of siring before. Now, he was amazed that Mahal had saw fit to allow them a child of their own.

“Three…” Dwalin murmured sleepily.
“Three what Dwalin?” Nori asked as he teasingly, licked a scar.

Dwalin moaned, “Sons… Mahal said three sons…”

Nori swallowed, three sons?

He had never expected, much less imagined such a gift. Were dreams after consummation usual for Khazad bondings?

“Are you sure?”

“Fine doubt me, but he said I am carrying a son…” Dwalin groused.

“I don’t doubt you… I am shocked. One child was beyond my expectations but three sons…”

“You are pleased then?” Dwalin’s voice was half-unsure and half-defensive still.

“Of course, who wouldn’t be pleased? A son… Mahal saw fit to allow us to be parents… me… an Adad…”

“You’ve been good to Ori, I’m sure you’ll do fine by our nadan.”

“I promise not to disappear for years at a time at least.”

“Good…”

They rose and bathed before separating for their own duties.
Kili woke to a warm bed...

He distinctly remembered going to bed alone, who dared enter his private quarters?

Blinking, Kili soon recognised the familiar ‘mousy brown hair’ of his One. What was Ori doing here? Wasn’t he still under ‘house arrest’?

“Kee?” came the familiar but broken voice.

“Ori, how did you get here?” Kili asked sternly.

“I…” Ori paused, “do you not want me here?”

“I was under the impression that you were in serious trouble. I watched one of our companions leave your apartment with torn clothes and in tears. I love you, but surely you understood that as one of Thorin’s heirs; our people must come first. I did not wish to make you feel abandoned or rejected but duty must be served.” Kili wished to embrace Ori and promise all would be forgiven but the seriousness of his One’s actions must be discussed.

“I’m sorry, I was so angry and alone. I wasn’t officially claimed or seen as your One, I was just one of the Erebor Fourteen. Dori was busy with guild business or looking after Balin. Nori and Dwalin were dealing with our security…”

“Security that you yourself put in jeopardy.” Kili grumbled. “You were found with conspirators to my assassination! Not only that but you were found passed out and used. My own One, someone I loved and trusted betrayed me. You shamed Bifur by complaining that an ally was helping you in the library doing menial tasks. A prince sorted through manuscripts, rebuilt shelves and helped safeguard our history and you complained! Later you insulted his One, offering yourself.”

Kili’s voice broke, “I loved you, I trusted you. I knew that you disliked secrets and lies but I hoped that you would realise that my not claiming you as my One was for your protection! It’s the same reason that Bilbo didn’t mention carrying my nephew to anyone outside of the Fourteen and our Ones. With Thorin’s life in the balance, I was seen as his probable successor. Until our power base and authority was secure, claiming you as my One was unsafe. I didn’t want you to be targeted. I was pleased when I heard that Elladan was helping you in the library!”
Ori blinked, “Why?”

“He was a warrior-scholar, very much like his sire but gentler. The library was in a mostly abandoned and unfrequented part of the Mountain. He could assist you and guard you without looking suspicious. Elrond is renowned for his library, his wisdom and his skill as a warrior. All that was done was complaints, no one attempted to attack Elladan. Elladan was willing to continue to assist you, even when the complaints began. He knew that you were important and must be protected.”

Ori pulled away, trembling with shame.

“I don’t want to lose you, I don’t wish to give you up but Ori, how can I trust you? You were involved in a conspiracy to have me killed and you allowed others the pleasure of your body. I could hardly look at Bifur, Bofur, Elladan and Ferumbras knowing how you treated them. You were not only disrespected our mateship but that of others.”

“Do you wish to be free of our betrothal?”

“No. I don’t wish to give you up but ill or not, your actions have left stains. Nori and Dwalin found you! They had to inform Balin and Balin had to choose to keep this from Dori. Our friends have tried to protect your reputation, your brother didn’t want me to see you because he wanted me to remember you as the person I fell in love with. They hoped that Thorin would recover so he could handle your case.”

“Thorin knows?” Ori squeaked.

Kili shrugged, “He hasn’t mentioned it so I don’t know. You betrayed us, you betrayed me. I have to live with that, and a part of me will never fully trust you again. I never imagined that I would ever need to question your loyalty to our relationship. In bonding to me, you would be subjected to a higher level of scrutiny. How long do you think your betrayal might be kept a secret? Our children’s parentage might eventually be questioned. I hope Uncle Thorin has children, because since I can’t give you up; I don’t believe that my children have any right to succeed him than Fili’s.”

“Fili’s with that hobbit!” Ori protested, “It’s not the same thing.”
“That hobbit is my brother, their bonding was overseen by Mahal himself.” Kili said icily.

“Of course, it was. Its tradition.” Ori scoffed.

“You don’t understand, Mahal and his One came. They bonded nearly all of the fourteen, only ourselves and Bombur were exempt. Bombur because he was already bonded before Mahal and as for us, it was because we are not an official couple. As your One, your failings are my failings. My choices drove you to do what you did.” Kili said solemnly.

“My choices had nothing to do with you! I was lonely yes, but I chose to do what I did.”

“Officially or not, Ori we are betrothed. We may not wear the beads openly like Dori and Balin have but I was loyal. Prince or not, I was loyal! I would have rather died then betray you that way. It hurt me deeply to not be able to raise you to the level of esteem you deserved. I wanted to shout from the battlements, my One defeated the trolls but I chose silence to better protect you.”

“You never said anything!”

“I didn’t want to be seen meeting you privately and giving anyone leave to question who we were to one another. It was not a message I wished to trust to anyone for fear it would go astray. I hoped you would know me well enough to realise I was protecting you!”

“How did I get here anyway?”

“Given that you were sealed in your apartment by Salmar, I would guess that you were brought here by Mahal.” Kili shrugged.

“Do you wish me to leave?”

“I want you to realize that our relationship will never be the same, I don’t want to give you up because that would be saying that I bore no responsibility. I don’t know how I can trust you but I love you.” Kili’s voice cracked.

His façade at attempting to maintain his royal dignity shattered.
Ori had never seen Kili so broken…

Kili was devastated. He had worked so hard to keep it together for the sake of Erebor, emulating the older brother that he worshiped and had put his own needs aside.

He couldn’t throw Ori away but how could he trust him? He loved his shy but surprisingly sexual scribe. Perhaps, he shouldn’t have been surprised that Ori had found others to satisfy his sexual needs but it still hurt.

Ori wrung his hands, he knew that he had meant to hurt Kili because he himself felt hurt and abandoned. Yet, he clearly had hurt Kili and far more than he had intended. Ori hadn’t thought beyond his own hurt, which had begun earlier with learning that Nori lied to him about their gender. Discovering that Dori had lied about their One being dead had compounded his hurt, especially when no one else seemed upset with his siblings.

Kili’s abandonment which was at first emotional and then physical had just pushed him over the edge. Thorin was right, he wasn’t really mature enough to be One to a Durin. Ori didn’t want to give up Kili either but he was very unworthy right now. He should have considered how his actions would affect a Prince of the House of Durin not just how it might ‘teach Kili a lesson’ or make Kili jealous.

Why did it matter so much? Kili could have done better; a friendship between their mothers didn’t really make Ori worthy of one of Thorin’s heirs.

Ori had no idea what to do to make this right or even if he could…

XooooooX

Balin woke first, the morning after their Bonding before Mahal. He might be the older of the couple by a handful of centuries but Dori was pregnant and he did want to do something nice for his One. Especially after having his way with Dori practically in public.

He slipped into their kitchen and started a pot of oatmeal, they had a selection of dried fruits that they could add if Dori had a preference.
Balin remembered his Aman being pregnant with Dwalin and how tired she was towards the end, he tried to come home at a decent hour so they could eat together and sleep early.

Another reason why he reluctantly agreed to keep Ori’s probable treachery to himself, he didn’t want to add to Dori’s stress. The last thing he wanted was Dori to decide to break their betrothal so not to sully him with being related to a traitor. Knowing Dori, who was so utterly selfless, Balin knew that was a probable choice.

Not that it would have done any good; Balin wasn’t about to release Dori from their mateship any more than Dwalin or Nori would have agreed to separate because of Ori.

Thank Mahal, Dori hadn’t noticed Ori’s absence last night.

Dori ought to worry about preparing to have their child, Balin didn’t even care about the gender as long as they had a healthy child and Dori recovered from the birth.

Balin had only known about Dwalin being a bearer because he had become his brother’s guardian early, he had learned quite a bit about male bearers prior when he realised that he was more interested in males. This was a good thing since males were the predominant external gender…

Dori was more beautiful then he’d ever dared acknowledge, he supposed that Dori’s reverent demeanour and his adolescent friendship with Dwalin prevented him from seeing prior to Bag End.

They did mostly move in different circles, Dori mixed more with the bearers with children thanks to Princess Dis, while Balin spend more time with Thorin and his ‘council’ that had handled business when their hereditary leader was off making coin.

Balin was pleased to be an adad, even if he was quite a bit older than most when it came to having a first child. Yet between Mahal’s blessings and his union with his One, Balin felt centuries younger.

He dished up the oatmeal and poured hot water into a tea pot, bringing a selection of fruit and tea with him. Then he headed to their bedroom when he found his very delectable One, curled up with a soft smile on his face.

Pregnancy only served to bring out more of Dori’s beauty.
Balin set the tray aside and went to wake up his blessed One, their first morning as a bonded couple. One of many if Mahal willed it....

Chapter End Notes

No, Ori has not been suitably dealt with by Thorin. Thorin will be very upset when he FINALLY learns about Ori's reprieved betrayal of Kili.

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