Most Grievous of Partings

by AngelQueen

Summary

She came to him before the host started on its northward march.

The final parting of Nerdanel and Fëanor.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

...she came to him before the host started on its northward march...

They had chosen to camp outside the city, she noted. Those she and her party had passed upon the road had told of all Tirion being emptied. They spoke of the new king, his words against the Valar, and his desire to avenge not just his father's death, but also the rape of the Silmarilli.

She closed her eyes briefly. When she had been told of the oath sworn by the new king and his seven sons, she had known she had come too late. Nonetheless, she had urged her brown mare and her companions on. She had to do something, even if it was only for her own sake, even if it was futile.

They rode to the edge of the large encampment, only to be halted by several heavily-armed Elves. It made her shudder, the sight of her kindred wearing their weapons so openly.

"Who comes to enter the camp of the king?" one called, his voice full of arrogance as his hand rested lightly on the sword hilt at his side.

She said nothing, nor did she lower her white hood to identify herself. To her left, she heard the
The stern and loud tones of Narondo, the leader of her escort. "We have come to bring word to the king. Stand aside!"

The Elves remained where they stood. Their leader haughtily replied, "What word would a few bedraggled Elves bring to the king? What could you possibly have to offer him?"

Narondo, she knew, could have put the younger Elf in his place with ease, but she found that the Elf reminded her of her third son. Both were highly impetuous. So, following an instinct she had not felt in many years, she spoke. "Good King Finwë has harkened to the call of Námo and answers no longer to those outside of Mandos. In his place stands his son, called Fëanáro by his mother." Here she lowered the hood that had obscured her features before speaking again. "Curufinwë the elder is now King of the Noldor. Would you bar the path of his wife?"

All who stood before her paled as they recognized her. They bowed awkwardly, hampered by their many weapons. She did her best to hide a shiver.

"L-Lady," the elder stammered. "Please, forgive us. We had no word of your coming. I -"

"Of course you did not," she cut him off. "I chose not to waste time by sending word ahead. My message is for the king alone."

The group of Elves quickly shuffled out of her path, pointing out the location of the King’s tent. As she rode through the camp, sadness gripped her heart, as well as a sense of bewilderment. She recognized many of those present, but they were all milling about, working at some task that would aid in a rebellion. Had the world gone mad?

It certainly seemed so. The Two Trees had been destroyed. A monster had walked the lands of Aman. The King of the Noldor had been slain on the steps of his own house. Such things should not have been possible, but they had happened all the same.

As they came to a halt near the tent they sought, she could not restrain a joyful cry. Standing near the entrance were two of her sons, her two eldest.

They heard her shout and looked up. Their grim countenances faded, replaced by the beautiful smiles she had known since they were children. They hurried towards her, Makalaurë taking the bridle of her horse while Maitimo took her hand and helped her to the ground.

"Amme," her firstborn said reverently, holding her against his strong, armored form. She struggled again not to shudder. "We did not know if you would come. It is wonderful to see you."

"Indeed," Makalaurë added, his voice appearing from beside her and Maitimo. "So many have left. It is a relief to see someone arrive."

She gazed upon her second born and saw the great grief in his eyes and nodded. She knew very well the reasons for his words. His wife had written to her of her decision to return to the house of her father. Still, she had a purpose for coming here, one she was determined to uphold.

"My sons," she said firmly, carefully removing herself from Maitimo’s arms, "I have come to speak with your atar. I must hurry, for I know you mean to leave all too soon."

If either of them noted the bitterness in her tone, neither of them mentioned it. Maitimo only nodded and moved towards the tent. She followed him silently, aware that Makalaurë walked a few paces behind her.

The interior of the tent was larger than it appeared to be on the outside. A large table stood in the center, covered by many maps and other documents. Several smaller desks stood off to the side and a thin curtain separated a small sleep space from the rest of the tent.
She paid little attention to these details, however. Her eyes were drawn immediately to the form that stood hunched over the center table, intent on what lay before him.

"Aranya," Maitimo said in a soft, respectful tone, "Someone wishes to speak with you."

So he desires formality, even from his own sons, she noted disapprovingly. Was he really so insecure of his position? Finwë had rarely stood upon such things with his sons, finding it cumbersome and unwanted. It was yet another example of the incomprehensible events that were taking place. So much change in so little time.

"If you would, Nelyafinwë, deal with it in my stead. I am currently drawing up plans."

"Aranya… Atar… please," Maitimo interrupted pleadingly. "You should see her. She has come far to see you."

He looked up then and she saw the annoyance flicker across his features, only to disappear behind a solemn mask when their gazes met. After a moment of silence, he said, "Very well then, leave us. I would speak with her alone."

She watched both of her sons bow to their father before taking their leave. When Maitimo moved past her, he gave her a hesitant smile.

Once they were alone, their eyes again locked. He eyed her with what appeared to be dispassionate interest, the same gaze he had used during the days of their courtship. At the time, it had both amused her and made her heart glad, for she had greatly returned his interest. Now, after they had endured so much pain and grief, she merely felt weary under his eyes.

In the end, he spoke first. Maybe he could no longer stand the silence, or perhaps he just wished to avoid giving her the chance to berate him.

"Long years have passed since you have come to this city, Lady," he commented. "Yours was the first loss of the many that followed."

"Perhaps, but some losses cannot be avoided," she returned. She paused, and then added, "Would that the loss of your atar could have been avoided. His fate was cruel, and not one he deserved, my lord."

A flash of pain crossed his face and his thoughts seemed to drift off. His eyes were bright as he said in a low tone, "No, no he did not. But his loss, and many others, will soon be avenged. None shall hinder us in this."

She flinched and turned away, moving further into the tent. His absolute and utter certainty with which he spoke filled her with fear.

He appeared to come out of his reverie when she moved. Watching him from the corner of her gaze, she saw him stare at her, his expression revealing none of his thoughts. Again, it was he who spoke first.

"Your sons have missed your company in our home. Especially Nelyafinwë and Kanafinwë." He seemed to waver for a moment, and then continued. "As have I. Your absence has been a hole in my heart, Nerdanellya."

She closed her eyes and bowed her head lest he see the tears that welled up. This man, who spoke softly and with a gentle fire, was who she had missed ever so much. When she had left Tirion, she had left behind a man who raged violently at the slightest provocation. Now, like so many other
times before, she questioned whether the gentle man she longed for truly existed, or if he was only a shell that hid the fell one she had left behind.

"I have missed you as well, my husband," she replied, making no effort to disguise her grief. "But sometimes, that is not enough."

The words needed to be said, but she regretted them all the same. Almost instantly, the tenderness that had adorned his expression vanished, leaving in its place a cold detachment. Her heart began to ache anew when a fell fire was lit in his eyes.

"Why have you come here? You surely have not come to take the place of Indis as the King’s wife." Here his tone turned snide. "You certainly found being the wife of the King’s heir distasteful enough, and you have no desire for positions of power and influence."

… [Nerdanel] begged that Fëanáro should leave her the two youngest, the twins, or at least one of them…

"I have come," she said calmly, refusing to be provoked by his behavior, "because I have been informed of what you plan to do. You are going to take the Noldor who follow you and return to the lands from which we came."

"Many know of my plans," he said dismissively as he turned away from her. "It does not surprise me that Aulë would tell you these things. Long has your family rested within his shadow."

She pressed her lips together, determinedly ignoring the insult. "I come not as a doomsayer, Fëanáro. I know better than anyone that when you choose your course, you will not turn from it. I have not come to dissuade you. I come only as a mother and ask that you allow the twins to remain in Aman. Or, if you insist upon having them with you on this journey, one of the others. I wish to keep at least one of my sons with me."

He stared at her for a moment and she waited for his answer to her petition. When he began to laugh, she glared at him fiercely.

"I fail to see what is so amusing, my lord," she hissed, her control slipping. "I have traveled here in the hopes that one of my sons might remain with me instead of setting out upon a quest doomed to fail."

His laughter halted abruptly and he glared at her. With not a trace of his former amusement in his tone, he coldly informed her, "I am afraid, Lady, that you cannot be accommodated. I have a great need for all seven of my sons on our noble mission. I cannot afford to leave any of them behind."

"And what of your wedded sons?" she shot back. "Would you destroy their marriages? Already Marunya curses Carnistir and names him a fool. Lintesúl weeps tears unaccounted for her spouse and bemoans the loss of Telperinquar her son. And Aiwëoma sings no more in joy, but laments the fate of Makalaurë." What of them?" She glared at him before adding, "What of me? Am I to lose my sons and my husband in one swift stroke?"

He replied: "Were you a true wife, as you had been till cozened by Aulë, you would keep all of them, for you would come with us. If you desert me, you desert also all of our children. For they are determined to go with their father."

"… And as for my son’s wives," he added harshly, "I would say the same for them. If their
marriages are to survive, then the effort must be made on their parts, because their husbands will not turn from what must be done."

He turned away from her then, dismissing her. "No, Nerdanel," he said, sounding disturbingly cheerful, "you shall have none of your sons. They go with me to break the bonds of thralldom."

She clenched her fists angrily. If she thought it would do any good, she would have flown at him, beating, scratching. Alas, she knew it would accomplish nothing except to arouse the full force of his fury.

"Fell and fey are you become, son of Míriel," she growled at him. "But heed me now…"

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...Nerdanel was angry and she answered: "You will not keep all of them. One at least will never set foot on Middle-earth."

"… He will not tread on those shores," she finished. Her words seemed to ring in her ears. They were more than words, something whispered inside of her. They were truth. "You will not keep him, Fëanáro."

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..."Take your evil omens to the Valar who will delight in them," said Fëanáro. "I defy them."

"Return to your father’s house. Weep to your beloved master, Aulë. Let him comfort you however he may," he said. "I am done with you."

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So they parted.

The tears did not come until she had almost reached her waiting horse. It was Narondo who bore her up when her knees buckled beneath her. Her grief was great, but she still heard Makalaurë’s voice call to her, as if from a great distance. She had no strength to answer him, however, and her eyes closed against the world. She felt Narondo’s chest rumble briefly as he spoke curtly to her son.

She vaguely noted someone putting her on a horse and joining her, but she did not protest. In her heart, she knew she would not see her husband or her sons for many years, perhaps until the undoing of the world. Fire and madness had taken her family from her.

Only the fires of remaking could bind them together again.

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End Notes

I wrote this story years ago and just recently looked at it again. I was a bit horrified at how overblown it was, and so decided to do some editing on it before I reposted it here.

Most of the names you probably recognize, but Maitimo and Neylafinwë are the mother and father names of Maedhros, while Makalaurë and Kanafinwë are the mother and father names of Maglor. Carnistir is the mother name of Caranthir.
Amme - mother
Aranya - my king
Atar - father

The bits of text separated by the lines and in italics are excerpts from the *Shibboleth of Fëanor*. The names of the wives of some of the sons are original, because the Professor, while mentioning their existence, never gave them names of their own.

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