Fallen

by Bellemainec

Summary

Gimli tells Eowyn that Aragorn has fallen.

Notes

Disclaimer: All the characters mentioned here belong to the late and still greatly lamented Professor J.R. Tolkien. However, this situation springs from an addition to the New Line Cinema, Wingnut Productions movie directed by the great and celebrated Peter Jackson, scripted along with Fran Walsh and Phillipa Boyens and vividly brought to life on screen by Miranda Otto, Orlando Bloom, John Rhys-Davies and Viggo Mortensen, all of whom are supported in every way by everyone else involved with this brilliant movie. May the light of the Valar protect all of them! This work is not meant to infringe on anyone's copyright, no payment of any form is sought, and no offence is intended. This was originally posted in 2003.

"He fell."

Gimli's words echo in my mind, and I know not if he speaks further. The horrid rushing in my ears renders me deaf, and for a moment I fear that my heart may actually stop. He fell? Lord Aragorn...gone?

Death is no stranger; he visits too often and too hastily. He has reduced the ranks of my kin to two; a brother and my uncle. My Cousin, my Aunt, my parents, all have been interred beneath the soil of Rohan. Our riders are cut down in mid flight, our farmers slaughtered in their homes, our horses scream in agony as they fall under orc arrows. Death stalks us.
It has called, and Aragorn has been forced to answer. I think I knew he would not return to us. To me. On the hillside, after my Uncle had ordered me to lead the women and children to Helm's Deep, there was a moment that I must now recognise as a farewell. I looked up as I was turning to lead the people downhill, and our eyes met. His horse was wheeling to the left, bearing him away from us and into battle, and for an instant it was as if the world around us stopped. In that instant, I allowed all my hope, all my longing to flood into my eyes. I believe that he saw it. I believe that he understood what I could not put into words, what I wished him to know. He did not respond by word or deed, yet there in his gaze I believe that I saw his answer. At least, that is the foolish whisper of my heart.

He cannot be dead. Where lies his body? Until I see him before me, I cannot believe him gone. They would not lie to me; they would not be so cruel. So many are missing, do they all lie at that hillside, left as carrion? How has it come to this? He might yet live! He might be but wounded, and in need of comfort. I should go to him. How many of our dead have been but merely wounded; begging for help as we drag their bodies from their horses?

Gimli catches my arm, stopping me in my tracks. I did not realise that I had even begun to move, yet he holds me in place. He speaks, and I force myself to listen to his words. "My Lady, he fell. We had to leave him there; he rests with the riders who fell upon the hillside, our valiant companions."

"You did not retrieve the bodies?" I hear the disbelief in my own words, the outrage. "Our Riders are never left behind."

"Your Uncle made the decision, My Lady. The danger was too great for us to remain, and we were forced to leave them on the hillside." My gaze lifts and I see Legolas standing before me. His voice is a mixture of bitterness and pain. "We would never have left them if there had been any alternative. They deserve our thanks, our respect and our grief."

He turned to leave, and I threw myself forward, my hands tangling in his cloak. "Did you see him fall? Are you sure that he is gone?" I hear the trapped sobbing in my words and curse the outward sign of my own weakness.

Legolas carefully disentangles my hands, his fingers closing steadily over my own. He doesn't need to speak, my heart sees the truth in the pallor of his skin, the glazed hopelessness in his eyes, the air of defeat that clings to him. My head refuses to see it, still clings stubbornly to the possibility Aragorn is lying there wounded, but waiting for me to rescue him.

Legolas's gaze drops to our joined hands, and I realise that something rests between our palms. Something cool, unbending yet fragile. He lifts his hand, and I see it is the jewel, the one given to him by a woman of Legolas's kin.

"I found it clutched within the foul grasp of an orc. He lay dying near the top of a precipice, and he told us how Aragorn fell. The tracks there showed a warg dragging a human over the edge." He hesitated, then continued, "My people call it the Evenstar, and it was pledged to him by Arwen Undomiel. I can not believe that Aragorn would have voluntarily taken it from about his neck."

In that moment, I force myself to accept that he is gone. I feel the first shameful tear slip over my cheek, and Gimli pats me on the arm. "There lassie, he met a brave end. His loss is a bitter blow for all of us."

I nod, unable to form words for fear of unleashing only a howl of unmitigated grief. Legolas gathers the Evenstar in one hand, and wipes away my tears with the other. Softly, taking care that none but Gimli and I should hear his words, he says, "He deserves our grief, my lady, but he would not wish it to endanger our lives, or the lives of these people here. Many have been
wounded, and all will need our care. The King stands alone, and the women will look to you for
guidance." He turned his gaze to the gates, and for a moment it was as if he was seeing far off into
the distance. "Your uncle believes this to be a simple siege; I am not so sure that is what Saruman
intends. Your people will need you, Lady Eowyn."

My nails dig into my palms, and the small pain allows me to focus my energies on stopping the
tears. My eyes find Gimli's; the dwarf is solemn and reassuringly solid. I look up and meet
Legolas's gaze; he too is unsmiling, cool and in control. They nod approvingly as I slip the mask
of duty over my grief, and allow the demand of noble blood to straighten my shoulders.

"I must speak with my uncle. There are no doubt many preparations that must be complete by
nightfall." I seize my courage, and allow the request fall from my lips. "Would you accompany
me? Your counsel would be most highly valued by my uncle."

Gimli chuckles beside me, and a slight smile curves the elf's mouth. Each offer an arm, and I place
my hands lightly upon both. Together we enter the citadel to seek out my uncle and prepare
ourselves for whatever the night will bring, to face the enemy that has already cost us more than
we can bear.

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