Elflings

by Jael (erynlasgalen1949)

Summary

A childish prank costs Oropher more than Thranduil will ever guess. Thranduil; Galion; Oropher; Original Characters. Humor, rated PG-13 for adult innuendo. No toads were harmed in the making of this story . . .

Notes

This is a transformative work based on the world and characters of J. R. R. Tolkien. It is written for my own entertainment and that of my readers. I am making no money from this endeavor.

See the end of the work for more notes

We knew that land once, You and I,
and once we wandered there
"I dunno, Thran, this isn't a such a good idea . . ."

"Shut up, Galion and don't be such a chicken-heart. That's what you said when we smeared the honey on the privy seat, and we didn't get caught that time, did we?"

"What do you mean, 'we,' Thran? You put that honey on the privy seat, not me. And it was a waste of good food."

"It wasn't a waste," Thranduil protested, shrinking back into an alcove to avoid being seen by a hurrying chambermaid carrying a basket of bed linens. "I learned a new word. That's worth something."

Galion snorted, softly, as the sound of the maid's footsteps on the polished stone floor of the corridor died away. "You don't even know what huiitho means."

"Do so!"

"Do not!"

Truth be told, Thranduil did not know what the word meant, but he intended to find out as soon as possible. As the only son of Great Greenwood's newly established king, Thranduil took his exalted position very seriously, and he was loath to admit ignorance in front of his cradle-brother, even though Galion was the elder of the two of them by several months.

"If you know what it means," Galion continued smugly, "then tell me what it means."

"I can't. It's a word for grown elves, not babies like you." Thranduil felt himself safe in saying this, for it had been quite apparent that it was a word for grown elves from Lord Helegui's angry tirade, overheard when Thranduil and Galion had hidden in the bushes beside the privy to wait and listen for the inevitable answering of Nature's call.

"Hah!" responded Galion triumphantly. "Well, I do know what huiitho means. I asked my ada."

"What did he say?" Thranduil whispered, throwing all pretense of sophistication aside in hopes of enlightenment.

"The first thing he asked was where did I learn that word, and I told him I learned it from you, and he said he wasn't surprised."

"Why did you tell him a thing like that?" Thranduil said, in an injured tone. Galion's job in this partnership was to keep Thranduil out of trouble, not tattle on him.

"Was I supposed to tell him I learned it outside the privy after you put honey on the seat and your father's Seneschal sat down on it?" Galion replied.

"I suppose not," said Thranduil, mollified. "And then . . .?"

"He explained to me it's when the ada and the nana love each other very much, and then they
He explained to me it's when the ada and the nana love each other very much, and then they have great joy and delight, and then one year later the baby comes."

Thranduil shot his friend a dubious look. "Is that all?" It seemed to him as if Galion's father had left an important part out.

"He said I should never say that word again until I am at least fifty," Galion continued earnestly. "And then he told me it was wrong to waste food."

Thranduil raised one golden eyebrow. Had Galion's father suspected anything about the honey incident? No, he decided, it was not possible.

"And that's why I think this might be a bad idea," Galion finished.

The two boys had managed to make their way to the king's bed chamber, all the way from outside, without being spotted by either a servant or one of the workmen putting finishing touches on the construction. Oropher's palace on the hilltop at Amon Lanc, still growing to accommodate his court of Iathren nobles and the groups of Laegrim that joined them daily, was so new that they could still smell the oil varnish used to seal the woodwork.

"Why is it a bad idea? We aren't even wasting food this time," said Thranduil, shutting the heavy door to his father's room silently behind them.

"If I found something like that in my bed, I know I'd be unhappy," Galion mumbled. "Your father is the king, and Ada says that when the king is unhappy, everyone is unhappy. Besides, it's cruel to the toad."

"Is that so? Do you find it cruel, Little Toad?" said Thranduil, reaching into his pocket to remove a tiny creature the two boys had found sheltering in the tall grass near a foundation excavation. "Wouldn't you rather spend the night in here than out in the grass with all the snakes? Big snakes," he added, with a pointed look at Galion.

Predictably, the toad had no comment about exchanging the grass for a prince's pocket and a king's bed, other than the cricket-like 'brik-brik' call that toads in these parts were wont to make during the summertime.

"You see?" said Thranduil. "He doesn't mind at all. I think a toad would be honored to share a king's bed.

"I don't think your father will be honored to share his bed with a toad," Galion grumbled.

"It's funny. He'll laugh. You'll see," insisted Thranduil, pulling back the covers and shoving the toad beneath.

Galion rolled his eyes and sighed, conceding the debate, as the two of them headed back for the door. "My nana just made a new batch of wine, Thran. Let's go see if we can steal a sip."

"Wine makes my head feel funny, Galion, but . . . all right."

As the door shut behind the two boys, a barely noticeable lump in Oropher's coverlet said, "Brik-brik?"

Oropher thanked Elbereth, Queen of Stars, for loose court robes. Ever since Amdir's sister had
whispered her astounding proposition into his ear at dinner, he had been sporting a raging erection, and a king, even of a newly established realm such as The Great Greenwood, must preserve his dignity.

"Are you certain that would be wise, Prestawen?" he had said, keeping his voice low so as not to be overheard over the sounds of the revelry. He had broken out the latest batch of fruit wine for his guests from Lorien, and this year's vintage proved especially potent. The company had swiftly grown merry to the point of raucousness. "Do you not fear a bond if you lie with me? Both of us have been married, after all."

"That is the beauty of it," she whispered back. "I am long widowed and your wife is passed also. Neither of us can make a second bond -- unless you are foolish enough to recite a new vow, which I do not think you are."

"Interesting, the way you think," Oropher murmured in reply. He had forgotten that Prestawen's husband, who perished when the sons of Feanor attacked Menegroth, had been a minor lore-master, skilled in the interpretation of old law. Evidently she had picked up some ideas over the pillow on those long ago nights in old Doriath. But leave it to Amdir's roguish sister to come up with such a thought! "You have, ah . . . tried this?"

"Mmmm . . . once or twice, with no ill effects," she said with a wink. "But to find a widowed Elf-man who both appeals to me and returns my interest is not an opportunity that presents itself every day. And Amdir, or Malgalad as he has begun to insist upon everyone calling him, is so tiresome! He says that as the sister of the king I ought to behave myself. Imagine!" she said, putting her lips into a pout.

"Yes, imagine," Oropher said dryly. It would seem his old friend had begun to have a care for the dignity of high office as well, even though he showed little evidence of it tonight. Amdir had spent the evening flirting with the serving maid who poured his wine, which had led to his consuming more of it than anyone else, and making off color remarks to all and sundry. He presently sat nodding in his chair, and Oropher had little fear of his overhearing the plot hatching between his old friend and his sister.

"Don't be so faint-hearted," she teased. "Here we are, presented with a Belair-bestowed opportunity. You know, I always fancied you, Oro, back when we were growing up."

Oropher raised an eyebrow. Fancied him? He remembered those long-ago days quite differently. Prestawen had always been quick to roll her eyes in scorn at her younger brother's shy best friend, telling him first that he smelled like a bed-wetter, and later like old parchment. He supposed he smelled like power now, which was always the best aphrodisiac.

Perhaps it was the excess of wine, but Oropher began to find the lady's arguments most persuasive. He had loved his wife, and mourned her still, but a man grew lonely. To experience again the pleasures of a woman's flesh would be so sweet! His gweth, ever reckless, had already responded, charging ahead enthusiastically where his more logical brain lagged behind.

At his other side, Amdir slowly toppled forward, and Oropher deftly moved a bowl of cherry soup out of the way before his friend could drown in his dessert. "Someone please see to the king of Lorien," he called loudly. Greenwood footmen and several of Amdir's retainers rushed in to help.

"We can use this disturbance to slip away," Oropher whispered to Prestawen, as Amdir was helped to his feet and led from the hall. "Take him to his room, put him to bed and leave him a bucket," Oropher ordered. "I've seen him drunk enough times to know he will be well by morning."
Seeming to follow his stricken guest, Oropher lagged behind as soon as they had left the hall, while Amdir and his attendants headed on toward the guest wing. He ducked into an alcove, pulling a giggling Prestawen to his chest. "Hush now," he whispered, waiting for the others to be out of sight and hearing. "Elbereth knows what they would think if you were seen going into my bedchamber."

"Probably the truth," she snickered.

Hand in hand, the two of them ran lightly down the corridor of the royal apartments and shut the door of his bedchamber behind them, giddy with laughter. Before he knew it, they were locked lip to lip.

"Oh, how romantic -- crickets," she said, breaking away. "I love the sound of crickets on a summer night."

Oropher cocked his head. Strange, he thought. He knew the sound of crickets well, and something seemed not quite right.

"Now turn around, Oro, and don't peek," she said. "I will let you know when I'm in bed."

Women, he thought! Who could understand their thinking? Here she was, about to lie with him in defiance of long custom, and she was shy about him seeing her naked. He wondered briefly if a night in her arms were worth all the trouble.

He heard the rustle of garments slipping to the floor. Discreetly, he turned his head and caught a fleeting glimpse of pale bare bottom, illuminated by a shaft of moonlight coming in through the open window. It was a very nice bottom, and he decided that it was worth it, no matter what. His gweth concurred.

"Ah ah ah -- naughty!" she admonished, catching him in his surreptitious scrutiny.

Oropher quickly turned away and soon he heard the sound of her slipping in between his covers.

"Now you."

Oropher quickly shed his robe and the tunic beneath, tossing them over a nearby chair. "Shall I turn away for this part?" he teased.

"Don't you dare!" she laughed. Her eyes widened as he dropped his trousers and stepped out of them. "Oh, my -- Tall Beech indeed! How is it that I never suspected what I have been missing all these years?"

'Too busy calling me a bed-wetter?' he thought, wisely keeping it to himself. Some triumphs were all the sweeter for the waiting.

"What are you waiting for?" she said. "Come here."

As Oropher eased between the covers beside her, he again heard the 'brik-brik' sound of the cricket, strangely muffled and too close.

"Ahhh, the music of a summer night," she sighed, "and a handsome swain in my arms. I could not be happier."

"Oh yes you could," he whispered. "And you soon will be . . ."

"Oh, Oro . . ." she murmured. "Oh, Or -- aiieeee!"
She split the stillness of the night with a piercing shriek loud enough to be heard all the way to the Halls of Mandos. Oropher quickly put the heel of his hand over her mouth to stifle the din. Too late; he heard the sound of running feet and frantic pounding on his chamber door.

"My lord -- my lord, what is amiss?" He heard the voice of his Seneschal, filled with concern. Oropher cursed. To be caught in bed with the sister of his guest, both of them naked as the day they were born and the lady screeching like a stuck balrog, would cause a scandal that did not bear thinking about.

"Nothing, Helegui, all is well," Oropher said in what he hoped was a convincing tone. Beneath his palm, Prestawen began to struggle and make angry noises. "Hush, I implore you," he whispered. "We dare not be discovered." She seemed not to hear him, her movements becoming more frantic.

"I heard a scream, my lord, issuing from your chamber."

"Ah, it was only I, Helegui."

"You screamed that way, my lord?" Oropher could hear the disbelief in his Seneschal's voice even through the heavy door.

"Yes, I, ah . . . had a nightmare. About . . . ah, the sacking of Doriath. Kinslaying. Very terrifying. Yes, that's what it was." Oropher made a pained face in the dark. If Helegui believed that preposterous tale, then he was an even bigger fool than Oropher thought. Prestawen began to struggle even harder beneath him and gave the heel of his hand a vicious nip. "Ow! Huitho!" he hissed.

"Are you sure you are well, my lord?" Oropher could swear his Seneschal fought to hold back laughter, no doubt at the thought of his king screaming like a maiden.

Yes, Helegui, I am quite sure. You may return to your bed now." 'Please do it soon,' he prayed silently. His hand stung where Prestawen had bitten it, and her writhing had begun to cause him a different kind of torment. "There is nothing more for you to do here."

"Very well, Sire. As you wish. I bid you a good night."

Oropher waited until Helegui's footsteps had died away and then turned back to Prestawen. "If I remove my hand, do you promise not to scream again?" She nodded frantically, and he took it away.

"Let me up, you lout!" she hissed, evidently realizing the need for quiet at last.

He rolled away and she scrambled over him, managing to give him a painful dig in the testicles in the process, and stood trembling, whether from fear or anger he could not tell, a safe distance from the bed. Her earlier coyness forgotten, she seemed quite oblivious to her nudity.

Oropher massaged the palm of his aching hand. "What in the name of Thangorodrim is the matter with you, woman? I barely even touched you."

"No, but that did!" she said pointing.

Oropher turned his head to discover the object that had inspired such horror. "Brik-brik."

"Oh, for pity's sake," he said. "It's just a toad."

Prestawen struck a most ungraceful pose, hands on hips, eyes glaring. "I might have known,
Oropher. You are still a lackwit, a fool, a jackanapes, a . . ."

"An idiot," Oropher finished for her, summoning up the memory of Master Pethdan's list of words that all meant the same thing, destroyed when the Dwarves of Nogrod sacked Menegroth, along with the old Lore-master himself.

"Yes, an idiot! What kind of inept king rules a realm where such disrespectful nonsense occurs? You and Amdir have not changed at all. You are both no more than silly upstarts, playing at being monarchs. You are little better than . . . elflings!"

Oropher's eyes narrowed. She was making rather a large fuss over a little thing like a toad. "If you are done insulting me, do you care to return to bed?"

"Do you jest? I would sooner share it with you in the days you were wetting it than now. Whatever madness possessed me to consider it has fled."

She turned and bent over to retrieve her gown from the floor. Oropher groaned.

"Here," he said, picking up the little toad in the palm of his hand and holding it out to her, "take him along with you. If you kiss him he may turn into Fingolfin, or Turgon, or perhaps even Elu Thingol himself! One of those 'mighty kings' you seem to find so compelling."

She gave him a nasty glare. "I would sooner bed a Golodh than you, Oropher. And let me warn you, if you ever speak of this, I will be very displeased."

"Have no fear on that account," he replied sourly. "I am highly unlikely to share this charming incident with anyone."

"See to it, then," she said, her hand on the door latch.

"Have a care to go quietly on your way back to your chamber," he called after her. "Gah -- on second thought, you needn't bother. I do not give an orc's arse if anyone sees you. It is your reputation, not mine." But the door had already shut between them.

Oropher turned his attention back to the toad. "Well, my little friend, you have certainly managed to put a crimp in my plans for a pleasant evening!" Although, he reflected, perhaps it had happened all for the best. Bedding Amdir's sister had surely not been the wisest thing Oropher had ever contemplated.

He laughed softly to himself. The old saying was true: when the gweth awakens, wisdom sleeps.

Oropher stared down at the toad, which looked back up at him with beady eyes. "I suppose you are eager to go back outside, eh?" He hesitated to drop it out the window, as his chambers were on the second floor, and he had no wish to dress again and carry it outside at this late hour. "I am afraid you will have to spend a chaste night with me, my little friend, but I know just the place to keep you cozy and safe." He reached under the bed to haul out the chamber pot and placed to toad inside it. The toad settled in, looking as happy as, well . . . a toad in a chamber pot.

Oropher lay back on his pillow to ponder. What sort of realm was it, where a king finds a toad in his bed? A realm where a widowed king strove to raise his motherless child alone. A clever, strong-willed child who was proving to be quite a handful for his put-upon father, for this prank could have been engineered by none other. 'Oh, Thranduil, Thranduil,' he thought. 'What am I going to do with you? And how am I to teach you wisdom, when I seem to have so little of it myself?'

Oropher laughed sadly and settled deeper into his sheets, for some small matter of unfinished
business remained to be taken in hand before he would find sleep this night. Too late, he
discovered that the toad had left him a moist present, dead center in the bed.

"Ah, huitho!" he said.

***

"Guard yourself, villain!"

"Villain? What villain am I this time, Thranduil?"

The two boys had been up at the first pipings of morning birdsong. They ate a quick breakfast of
fruit given them by Galion's mother and then ran out onto the still dew-soaked grass of the hill top,
hoping for a few hours' play before Thranduil's tutor collared the two of them and dragged them
inside for lessons. They had fashioned wooden swords by lashing together pieces of scavenged
lath from the construction piles with leather thong, and now they faced off to spar. The summer
sun shone gently down upon the bare summit of Amon Lanc, and below them, the treetops of
Eryn Galen spread as far as the eye could see, hazy in the summer heat.

"You can be Caranthir. I'll be Thingol."

"You always get to be Thingol," Galion complained. "Why do I have to be Caranthir?"

"You don't have the right hair for Thingol," Thranduil explained in a patient, superior tone. "With
your dark hair, you should be Caranthir. Or Fingon, maybe."

"Thingol, Thingol. Always have to be Thingol," Galion muttered. "You'll end up living in a cave.
Nyah-nyah, cave-dweller."

"Is that so?" Thranduil said. "Well, maybe I'll like it." He brandished his sword.

"If you like living in a cave so much, then maybe you should be Finrod, with all that yellow hair,"
Galion shot back, bringing his sword up into a defensive posture.

Thranduil narrowed his eyes. He had overheard his tutor, Master Istion, secretly telling Helegui
that it was unwise to educate the Laegrim, it would give them ideas above their station, even
though Oropher insisted otherwise. Galion's use of history against him tended to confirm this.
Well, two could play at that game.

"So, perhaps with your dark hair, you should be Melian. Then you could live in the cave with
me," he said wickedly.

"Melian? Aiieee, take that back!" Galion yelled, throwing down his makeshift sword and
launching himself at Thranduil.

Thranduil dropped his own weapon and threw himself into a crouch to fend off his outraged
cradle-brother. Over the last year, Thranduil, always the larger of the two, had begun to get his
growth, and he was taller still. Yet Galion remained more agile, quicker, and his willingness to use
underhanded tactics gave him an advantage. The two boys grappled, until Galion managed to
hook a foot around Thranduil's ankle, and the two of them rolled down the slope.

They tussled about in the grass for a time until they broke apart, laughing. Thranduil picked an ant
out of his tunic.

A loud voice made them freeze, and the shadow of Thranduil's tutor, Master Istion, fell upon
them. "Boys. Your Lord Father's study. Now!"
Oropher glanced up from a sheet of plans for yet another new wing on the palace as his Seneschal entered the room. "Yes, Helegui?"

"The prince and his companion are in your antechamber, Sire. Master Istion brought the two of them in only moments ago."

"Before you call them in, Helegui, tell me, has the king of Lorien arisen yet?" Oropher imagined his friend would be suffering from a vicious hangover.

At the mention of Amdir, Helegui looked as if he had sucked a pickle.

"What is amiss?" asked Oropher.

"He is awake, Sire, but not arisen. Mereth is with him."

"I am not surprised," Oropher said, hearing the name of the serving maid who had filled Amdir's cup so many times last evening. "I would imagine he needs some gentle tending."

"Not tending, exactly, but most certainly gentle. She is in his bed."

"What?" Oropher raised an eyebrow. "How did that come about?"

"Last night, Sire, Mereth volunteered to stay with Lord Amdir and empty his bucket. As no one else seemed particularly eager to empty his bucket, we all agreed. Evidently, sometime during the night, he recovered himself, one thing led to another, and now this morning Lorien has a new queen. We've not yet informed the Lady Prestawen, for she is still abed."

Oropher shook his head and chuckled.

"Sire?"

"Nothing, Helegui. I am merely laughing at the ironies of life. I suppose I shall have to give them a wedding gift. Have you any suggestions?"

The Seneschal shook his head.

"Never mind, Helegui; the solution has just occurred to me. I shall present them with a barrel of wine -- and the bucket." Oropher leaned back in his chair and sighed. "I suppose I must now deal with my two wayward youngsters."

"And high time, too," Helegui muttered, for although the incident of the privy seat had never been proved, Oropher knew his Seneschal entertained his suspicions and had never forgotten. "I shall bring them in."

"No -- wait. One at a time, I think. Divide and conquer."

"Excellent idea, Sire. Which one do you want first?"

Oropher thought for a moment, and then smiled wickedly. "Galion."

* * *
Oropher was not by nature cruel, and the look of apprehension in the young Laegren boy's dark blue eyes almost moved him to pity. However, the interrupted session with Amdir's sister had put an itch into his nether parts that would not soon be allayed, limited as he was to his own efforts. He focused on the dull ache in his groin to bolster his righteous anger.

"Young Master Galion," Oropher said sternly. "Do you know why you are here?"

The youngster shook his head. "No, Sire," he quavered, dropping his gaze.

'Aha,' thought Oropher, 'he does know!' His son's friend was a very bad liar.

"Then I will enlighten you. Do you, by any chance, recognise this?" he said, sliding a round earthen vessel partway across his desk.

The lad's dark brows shot up in understandable trepidation at being asked to identify the contents of a chamber pot. He peered cautiously over the edge. "Ah . . . a toad, Majesty?"

Oropher sighed, for he still had not become accustomed to the formality his position required. "Sire will do, Master Galion. Yes, it is a toad. I found him in my bed last night, and during the mating season too. Do you know what this means?"

"The mating season, Sire? Is that when the toads have great joy and delight?"

"Ah, yes," said Oropher, biting the inside of his cheek. "This little fellow has been kept from the propagation of his kind, to his frustration, and I am . . . vexed. However, I meant to ask you how he came to be in my bed on a night when he surely would have preferred to be somewhere else. I rather think someone must have put him there."

"Brik-brik," concurred the toad, echoing hollowly from within the crockery.

"Have you any idea who might have done this impertinent thing?" Oropher continued, fixing Galion with 'The Look,' a baleful stare that never failed to produce results in subordinates, young or old. "Lord Helegui, perhaps? One of the chambermaids? Or was it . . . someone younger?"

Galion shifted uneasily.

"Someone in my own family, perhaps?" Oropher prompted.

Galion swallowed and took a deep breath. "Sire; I put the toad into your bed."

Oropher paused, taking a deep breath in his own turn, for the lad’s response had been unexpected. Such loyalty, and in one so young! "Admirable, young Master Galion, but I find myself in doubt. You do my son no favors by shielding him, you know. You cannot spend the rest of your life cleaning up after him."

Galion made no answer, continuing to stare staunchly into Oropher's eyes.

"Is that your final answer then?"

Galion nodded.

"Very well, Master Galion, so be it. You have made mock of your king and thwarted the destiny of an innocent beast. A most serious offense indeed! My judgment in this matter is that once you have come of age your duty shall be as a servant to my son, where you will have ample opportunity to clean up after him since you seem so bent upon it." 'And may you never leave him!' Oropher added silently. "Meanwhile, I have the proper punishment for you . . ."
Oropher could never look into the eyes of his son, or see the golden glint of his hair without feeling a stab in his heart. How like his dead wife the boy was, and Oropher could count the years he had been without her with each of Thranduil's Begetting Days. 'Oh, Collwen, my love' he sighed inwardly. 'If only you could be here with me now to see him. And to help me raise him.'

Thranduil had her spirit too, or at least her spirit as it should have been before life had wounded her. Never more evident than now, for Oropher found himself staring into bright blue eyes that blazed with a fire not usually found in the folk of Elu. Such a fire must be tempered with wisdom, Oropher knew, or else lead to disaster. He took a deep breath for courage, hoping he could find some of that wisdom for himself.

"I found this in my bed last night," he said, holding out the chamber pot with the toad inside. "Needless to say, I was not amused. What am I to do with you . . . elflings?"

"But, Father -- that is such a low term!" Thranduil protested. "'Elfings' is a word used by the Edain, or the Naugrim, or any of those who think us enemies."

"Indeed? What else can you expect when you and Galion behave no better than goblin imps? My dignity and inconvenience aside, I might have sat on this poor little creature and done it an injury. Did you not think?"

At this, Thranduil looked troubled, but said nothing, continuing to stare in silence.

Oropher paused and threw up his arms in frustration. "Gah! I forget -- you know nothing of this, for Galion has assured me so."

He watched as his son's brow crinkled in perplexity at what, to any other child, would have been good fortune. "Thranduil," he said, gesturing as if to encompass his palace and all that surrounded, "what do you think being a king means? It is far more than wearing jewels and drinking fine wine and having the best bed, even if some mischievous child puts a toad in it. With the power and the privilege comes responsibility. You owe a duty to those who obey you, for if you make the wrong decision, you lead them into folly as well. And whatever we order, no matter how risky or painful, we must share in it. I pray to Elbereth that our realm will never have to go to war, but if we do, you shall find me leading my troops from the forefront rather than from behind the lines. This is what it means to be a king."

"I'll never be the king. You're the king, and I'm the prince. That's the way it will always be."

"Yes Thranduil. Kings rule, and princes serve." Oropher paused and allowed himself to speak more gently. "But the king serves the most of all. And even a prince must have a care for those he commands."

Thranduil still met his gaze boldly, but Oropher felt he could detect a sight quiver at the corner of his son's mouth.

"Ah, well, it is no matter though," Oropher continued airily, "for Galion has confessed to playing the prank, and he will be duly punished." He paused to take a sly enjoyment in Thranduil's sudden look of dismay.

"But, Father, I . . ."

"You 'what,' Thranduil? Surely you do not wish to accuse your young friend of lying to his king in addition to everything else? His punishment is already most severe."
"You did not . . . beat him?" Thranduil's face was almost laughable.

"No. What purpose would that serve? Some pain, quickly forgotten; it is too easy. Instead, to recompense me for the loss of my dignity, Master Galion will do me, and the realm, a useful service. With the recent additions to the palace, our privies need to expanded as well. I have set your friend to the digging of a six holer for the new west wing."

"But, Ada, that will take forever!"

"Yes, it will, with only Galion digging. I will leave it up to you, Thranduil, to do what you think best. Oh, and, son," Oropher said, holding out the toad, "take this little fellow outside and set him free. Out near the west wing might be a good spot."

* * *

Galion swatted angrily at a fly biting the back of his neck. Out here in the sun, the insects could be vicious, and he was perspiring heavily. "Huitho!" he said, delighting in the new, deliciously forbidden word.

He heard the faint rustle of footsteps through the lush vegetation of the sward, saw a figure stoop down, and noticed a tiny creature hop away into the tall grass. "Brik-brik."

"There's another shovel here. How come?"

"I dunno, Thranduil," said Galion. "Lord Helegui left two of them. That's all I know."

"Ow!" said Thranduil, as Galion heard the unmistakable clunk of a shovel hitting a rock. "This ground is hard."

"Don't be an idiot, Thran, your father thinks I put that toad in his bed. You're free and clear. I took the blame for you."

He heard a sigh and the sound of a shovel cutting into dirt. "Shut up, Galion, and keep digging."

* * * * * * *

End Notes

Translations from Sindarin:

huitho: The affirmative command of 'huithad,' meaning the marital act
lathren: Doriathrin
Laegrim: Green-elves, Nandor
gweth: Manhood
Golodh: Noldo

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!