Surviving in Middle Earth is difficult in itself without a lost memory. Add that to waking up in the immediate path of an army of Mordor, and very interesting events will unfold. Follow one girl with no recollection of who or what she is discover her place during the War of the Ring.
Of Mûmak and Memory

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Lord of the Rings however sad it may be. I only hope to represent Tolkien’s work with an OC of my own. What you do not recognize from the books or movies or appendices or anything else of Tolkien’s belongs to me.

“Not all those who wander are lost.” ~J.R.R. Tolkien

Elvish dialogue is italicized with its English translation directly after the quotations (still italicized).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

1.

Jolting awake, the girl squinted her eyes while the sun shone brightly in her face. She thought she could feel this strange falling sensation in her dream and right when she was about to hit the ground, she had found herself here; under a clear blue sky and breathing the clean morning air. For the life of her she could not remember what the rest of the dream was about. Actually, she couldn’t remember a thing.

Her head was pounding with a constant rhythm such as the beat of a drum; she closed her eyes again hoping that the sensation could go away. Rolling over onto her stomach, she almost screamed when she realized that she was on the edge of a cliff. If she had rolled over just a few more inches, she would have fallen over the edge one hundred feet into the ravine. However, the reason she did not scream was because of the thousands of men making up a powerful army right before her eyes.

They were strange, with dark skin, dark hair, and they were all wearing seemingly intricately woven armor. Of their faces, all she could see were their eyes, ears, and some tufts of hair sticking out of the dark fabric they wore. There were swords on their hips, bows on their backs, and spears in their hands. The army was completely uniform and marching to the same drum beat resounding in her head. They steadily marched with solemn expressions, ready to ride right into battle. Their features were twisted with war paint and every time one looked up or near her, the girl would completely flatten down.

The girl’s head twisted to the right, watching even more soldiers come out of the trees. But then with a loud crash, many enormous animals followed the foot soldiers. Trees were knocked down and the ground seemed to shake before her eyes every time one of the gigantic beasts would take a step. Their steps are the drum beats. The girl surmised. She could clearly see the animals’ backs and what looked to be small huts between their shoulder blades. On every beast there was a man sitting atop its head seemingly directing it.

The huts held everything from food, to people resting in chairs, to archers on the lookout. Even as they got closer to her hiding place, she widened her eyes in surprise at the many spikes attached to the animals’ trunks and tusks.

What are these people doing here? She wondered. Then after a moment, she also wondered, what am I doing here? What is going on? She tried to remember anything at all, yet no matter how hard
she tried or how deep she delved, she always formed a blank. She couldn’t even remember her name or, hell, if she even had one.

She was about to crawl backwards deeper into the trees and try to find someone to help her, when she noticed movement directly across from the ravine. Two people; small for adults and yet too mature to be children, were sprawled out much in the same way as her. One was slightly fat, with a mop of tangled blonde hair atop his little head. The other had black hair and was skinnier than the other. She realized after a moment what was so unnerving about him.

He was staring at her.

And she was staring back.

He started to crawl backwards as she had been planning to do before. She watched him stand and say quietly to his friend, “We should go.”

The girl widened her eyes in surprise. How had I heard that? Her hand immediately went up to her ear, wondering if she had just imagined his small voice in her head. As she felt her ears, she noticed something else. They were pointed. After looking down at the still-marching army in front of her, she concluded that none of their ears were pointy. Perhaps we are enemies. She thought to herself.

The girl gave up on the thought that maybe realizing her ears were pointy would trigger a memory of sorts after a few minutes of concentrating hard again. It was difficult to focus on anything with those giant beasts crashing around in front of her, however, and the noise really was starting to make her head spin.

Deciding she had nothing better to do than try to get out of here, the girl started crawling backwards once again. When she thinks she’s gone back far enough to stay out of sight of the men, she stands up, also noticing that the two little people she saw earlier are out of sight. She wasn’t sure if she was still actually detecting movement across the ravine or if it was simply a trick of the light.

She looked to her left and to her right, not knowing which direction she should go. When she heard a rustle behind her, however, she spun around quickly. Before she could move further, she saw a man dressed much like the others standing right in front of her with a blade pressed to her throat.

Wanting to back up, the girl somehow knew that it would only anger the man and cause him to lash out at her. The only thing she could do at the moment was to observe him and maybe beg for her life. This one had no cloth covering his face and head, and even more of the woven armor. His skin was darker than hers and very scarred, leaving white laceration marks where they were visible.

Somehow, she was getting a very bad feeling just being around him. She was itching to run away but she was stuck. She did notice that while she was observing and judging him, he was doing practically the same with her. She looked down immediately, not knowing if staring into his eyes like that could be taken as a challenge or if it would anger him.

“Who are you? State your business!” He finally said. The meaning of his words eluded her. She racked her mind searching once again for the answers he was seeking yet she found none of them.

“Man?” What? She asked timidly. She had absolutely no clue as to what he was saying; she couldn’t remember hearing that language before. He started staring at her again. She finally decided to look up at him again, showing obvious signs of confusion.
Suddenly a gust of wind blew through the trees which displaced her dark hair; the many layers flew into her face and obstructed her vision a bit, though she dare not try to correct it. Out of her peripheral vision, she saw his eyes flicker over to her pointed ears and back at her face, though his expression gave her no hint as to what he was thinking.

“‘A chi?’ And you are? He spoke, it seemed not to be a language very comfortable in for his tongue. With no response he spoke again with more force. “Man de?!” Who are you?!

“Man ebennig?” What did you say? She murmured and the man smirked, barely opening his mouth. She smelt his foul breath but did not react to it.

Then there was a loud yelling behind her. The man’s attentions snapped back to the ravine and his eyes narrowed. He dragged her to the edge. There was an attack or raid of some sort. Men in green cloaks covering them emerged from the foliage and then seemed to melt back into it as soon as they’d shot a few arrows at the army.

The people below scrambled around in surprise, but were also shooting at the tree men. The giant beasts reared and raced around, obviously frightened, though it didn’t seem like the tree men’s arrows were affecting them at all.

She was secretly rooting for the tree men, even though she had no idea what this feud could possibly have been about. The ambush lasted only a few moments before everything quieted down. The tree men probably had proved a point that they were watching and were ready to take on the army. The troops in the ravine were acting like nothing had even occurred. They had formed their ranks once again and seemed to be marching with more pride after the attack.

The man still holding the girl spun her around and put his knife back over her throat.

“Edhel, Man ceridh hí? Man i eneth dhîn?” Elf, what are you doing here? What is your name? He seemed calm but as if anything could make him angry. The girl barely breathed.

“An ngell nîn, Ú-istonl.” Please, I don’t know. She was becoming overwhelmed with the day’s events and was starting to tire. The man shook her arm roughly.

“Tell me now!” He yelled in her face, switching to the other language. She glared at the ground but stayed silent.

“Ídhron peded! Ú-cheniog!” I wish to speak! You don’t understand! She pleaded, her arm starting to ache from his hold. Instead of relinquishing her, he tightened his grip and looked even more suspicious.

“You are lying.” He spoke quietly. When she opened her mouth to say, once again, that she knew absolutely nothing, he spoke again, this time with his teeth clenched. “You must be a spy for the Men of Gondor. Tell me your name, Elf.”

All she could do was to stare. Men of Gondor? Were those the tree men? Elf? This time in reaction to her silence, the soldier raised his hand and slapped her across the face. Her head snapped to the side even though she could barely feel the sting.

“You are stubborn, Elf. When did you get here? How long have you been lurking?”

“An ngell nîn.” Please. She again tried the begging tactic and shut up when his fiery glare silenced her.

“Then you shall come with me and see what my captain is to make of you!” He sneered and started pulling her behind him. She had no idea where they were going, but she instantly started
struggling.

“Avon! Sevig thû úan!” No! You have the stench of a monster! She hissed at him. She tore out of his grip, causing five long scratched to start bleeding down her arm. The girl immediately turned away and ran in the opposite direction. She only made it a few steps, however, before the soldier grabbed a fistful of her layered hair that was flowing freely behind her.

Her head was jerked back and she groaned as she fell back into the man she had been free of for a few moments. He shoved her off of him without letting go of her hair. The girl was practically dragged behind him, having to crouch and stay near his hand so her head wouldn’t be torn off of her very shoulders.

When she scratched at his hand holding her hair, he seemed oblivious to any pain. At the same time, she was getting weaker. Pain, exhaustion, and stress finally made her collapse. She was still conscious, but the man let out a string of curses in Haradrim, his native language before picking the elf up and carrying her.

The girl was barely conscious when the soldier carrying her threw her down onto the back of one of the huge beasts. The hard swaying gradually brought her back to alertness and she sat up rather abruptly. Her hands were tied behind her to one of the posts of the huts on the animal’s back. From up close, they were much bigger, much louder, and much scarier. She flipped her hair out of her eyes and saw another soldier sitting in front of her.

This one had the same skin tones and general appearance as the soldier she came upon, but this one had fine metal armor instead of the woven coverings of the foot soldiers. His eyes seemed harder, but he also seemed more curious.

“Who is this?” He asked. It was the same question the other man had asked her earlier. She looked over at him and he approached the man in front of her.

The one who carried her hear brushed some of her hair behind the point of her ear. “She is an elf, Captain, though she does not speak Westron. It is Sindarin she responds to.” He bowed and stepped back.

“Indeed. Man de?” Who are you? He asked her.

“Ú-istonl.” I don’t know. She held her chin up and stared right passed him. She knew that she did not want to go through this again.

“That was how she responded to everything I asked her, Captain. She is either lying or is incompetent.” The other man said again.

“You have aggravated my scout,” said the captain, contemplating. “Now you must answer me instead. We come from the Harad…Ú-bedin edhellen mae. Ni cheniog?” I do not speak Sindarin well. Do you understand me?

She lifted her shoulders in answer, hoping the truth may be found in her actions rather than in her words. She recognized the word Harad only because it meant South in her tongue.

“She could be lying.” The captain said to the soldier and putting emphasis on the last word. She simply shook her head, still not looking at him.

“Send a scout disguised as a Man of Gondor. Have him speak of seeing an Elven maiden captured by a nameless enemy. See what they make of it.”

“Yes sir!” One man walked away and slid down a rope on the side of the animal. After he had
spoken of his plan, the captain stared into the mystery girl’s eyes intently; hoping for a reaction. When he got none, she knew that he was either thinking she was telling the truth or that she was trying to act.

“We have other ways of making you talk.” He spoke softly, “this way just makes it easier for us and for you. Not to mention how loud your scream would be.” Some of his men laughed behind him but the girl only frowned.

The elf looked to the side, wondering what to make of her situation. She was completely ignoring the man in front of her. The captain just looked at her, slightly annoyed. She thought she saw movement in the trees, but she said nothing.

“Mûmakil.” The captain said. She glanced at him in alarm in a second and he grinned, pointing down at the enormous beast they were riding.

She resisted the urge to roll her eyes and simply kept staring at the trees, hoping another ambush would occur so she might escape. Already she had tried to wriggle out of her bonds without anyone noticing, but the rope was too knotted, scratchy, and stinging the scratches caused by the scout who was still staring at her.

Chapter End Notes

Hey everyone, hedgiebelle here! You may recognize me or this story from fanfiction.net where I posted it first. I’m adding it onto ao3 because I really want more people to enjoy my story so here it is! I’ll be gradually posting new chapters every few days.

I also made a tumblr for this little project at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com

Enjoy and comment if you like!
The Battle of Helm's Deep

Chapter Notes

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2.

Her lips were cracked and dry, though every time she wet them, they would only sting from lack of moisture. It had been weeks since she was first imprisoned on the back of the swaying Mûmakil, and things were still looking bleak. No more ambushes had come from the tree men, and the army’s pounding footsteps were growing louder and more resolute each passing day.

On the back of the Mûmakil, hands still bound to one of the many posts holding up the makeshift tent on the animal’s back, she was not tortured and questioned so much as neglected and ignored. It would seem that with her threat of being a spy, the Haradrim would pay more attention to what was said and done around her. The captain and a select few of his men would spend much of their time poring over maps, arguing about which way was which and what paths to take that would lead them to their destination.

From what she could gather, the Haradrim were a very secluded bunch of tribes lying South of Gondor, wherever that may be. They had an ancient and sturdy alliance with the Mordor that was mentioned earlier. Every time that name was mentioned, a chill would creep from the center of her chest into every crevice of her body. Even some of the foot soldiers who were rarely invited up onto the Mûmakil would be visibly disconcerted when it was brought up.

Earlier, the captain had been speaking to some of his scouts, ordering them to leave and watch over the paths to Isengard, for that was where they were headed. As she understood, the Haradrim had been called to Mordor in preparation for a possible battle. They had camped there for many months until they were ordered to Isengard in a mission to try and protect the city from ill will.

“We will travel on the East shore of the Great Anduin River until we come across the Onedló Entwash. That smaller river has more cover and will allow us to move more freely next to it in a North Westerly direction.” The captain’s dirty finger trailed upward on the map in front of him and a few scouts. “At the tributary of Snowbourn, we will cross the river in the shallows and make a straight bound for Isengard across the West Emnet Plain.” The captain looked up expectantly.

“Sir, following that path will lead us less than thirty miles from the city of Minas Tirith; a city of man and possibly with the strongest defenses of any. Would it not be wiser to head straight East and then cross the Ered Nimrais Lamedon Mountains and then head straight North to Isengard?”

The captain looked up at the scout while still leaning against the surface holding the map. “Remember that a straight path from one point to another takes less time and effort than turning
corners as you suggest. You forget that the orcs of Mordor left before us by the Anduin River to lay siege against the Minas Tirith’s riverside guard post. Gondor no longer has the power to protect against enemies at the river. Of course, according to you we could simply cross the mountains and put us weeks off of our journey. Perhaps you would like to assist in pulling these mighty Mûmakil up the steep and narrow mountain paths yourself.”

The scouts all went quiet and agreed that their captain’s plan was the bet course of action. The girl sat watching carefully and hoping that they were wrong about Gondor’s men being powerless against them. She so wanted out of her binds and back on the sturdy Earth.

“The gap of Rohan has already been taken care of and a path carved for us through the great Fangorn Forest itself.” Whispers arose inside the tent and the girl desperately kept herself from bumping her head against the pole she was tied to in hopes of breaking it. Looking over the edge she was near of the giant beast, she knew it was a very long way down and would take an enormous amount of luck for her to not plummet to certain death should she fall. For now, it seemed her best bet was to stay silent and calm as long as she could manage that.

The girl counted the moons that rose and fell in order to keep track of the days while they walked steadily onward. She was also interested in how she could seemingly tell just which direction the army was marching at any given time. The first time she realized this, it had excited her to her core. Could I be remembering this place? Have I been here before? But no, the more she looked around the more lost she felt aside from the bearings in her inner compass.

True to the captain’s word, they had been following a great rushing river for many days and heading north. The roar of the water gushing over rocks and miniature waterfalls almost balanced out the constant pounding berating her eardrums that was driving her mad with every footstep the Mûmakil was taking. Almost.

When the captain felt good enough and did not forget about her, he fed and watered the mysterious girl being held prisoner. Never did he speak with her because he gave up on her constant I don’t know’s and Please’s. He still believed her to be a spy in allegiance against Mordor and in turn, the Haraldrim.

After no less than sixty days heading north, the army shifted its bearing more westward. True to his word, the foliage was denser allowing for more cover from the captain’s enemies and the army began moving more swiftly without as many interruptions. The Haradrim all seemed to be more comfortable with moving in cover of darkness, even the darkness caused by trees. To their left, the water of the Onedló Entwash sparkled a hundred yards away. To their right, nothing but darkness and endless shrouds of black could be seen.

Finally, in half the time it took the battalion to follow the Anduin River Northward, they abruptly turned to the West, crossing the Snowbourn tributary where it was shallow onto the Western shore. The water was much more peaceful there, and under different circumstances, the girl would’ve liked to sit in the sun on the shore, listening to the leaves and the birds.

For some reason, she felt in sync with the nature around her. If she focused, she thought that her ears could pick up some distant whispers when she was near to the trees. At first she thought more men were watching them and were going to ambush them, but the whispers continued for quite a long time with nothing happening. The further along they traveled, the harsher and louder the whispers became; though when she tried to concentrate on actually understanding the mutterings, they would slip out of thought and out of mind until everything became deathly silent aside from the army’s marching. This alone frustrated her to no end.

When they eventually veered from the trees, the girl started feeling empty and as if all hope was lost. She knew not what she was hoping for, but she came to the reasonable conclusion that she
was simply hoping for another ambush. In the open Emnet Plains, she could see for miles and all was still, not one thing was out of place and so she felt emptier than ever.

When she had finally given up hope and lay slumped over the edge of the Mûmakil, a resounded cry caused her to sit erect and look all around the army. One of the scouts had seen something in the distance; a black shadow making haste across the grassy plain. With her sharp eyes, she saw that they were men on horseback. They were not dressed in green cloaks to hide their faces, but were clad in earth-toned battle armor, ready to take on the Haradrim.

The girl smiled, and waited for the Haradrim to see what she already had. To avoid the shadow coming closer, the captain had ordered the army towards the forest that could barely be seen.

“Change bearing West toward the forest cover!” The captain barked out his orders. “Prepare for battle with the Riders of Rohan!”

“You said Rohan was taken care of, sir!” A scout said, pulling on his cloth mask.

“They must be exiles, then!” The captain shouted at the scout and he eagerly flew down a rope to the ground to join the other foot soldiers.

The Mûmakil broke into a run, barely managing not to crush any of its allies. The prisoner bounced roughly trying to find footing so she could steady herself. None of the Haradrim present seemed to have any problems. Her wrists were only becoming more rubbed and raw as her body pulled against their bindings. She felt as if the jostling of her body would make her pass out, and partially wished that it would.

The trees were looming closer and closer with the Mûmakil’s bounds. As they approached tree line, the exiled riders of Rohan had come upon them and were either spearing foot soldiers from the backs of their horses, or shooting arrows up to the riders of the Mûmakil.

“Target the Oliphaunts!” The man in the richest looking armor said upon his great black horse. Oliphaunts? Are they speaking of the Mûmakil? The girl gasped at her realization and tried to flatten herself out as well as she could away from sight. She heard the twang of an arrow flying from one of their stiff bows, and the woosh as it flew closer. Her hearing was pinpointing its exact location and she relaxed; the arrow would not hit near her. It finally stuck with a resolute thump, but there was another sound.

One of the ropes holding the hut steady on the back of the Mûmakil was tearing apart; they must have sliced it with their arrows. Suddenly there were more bumps, more jostling and the cloth ceiling above her started to crumple overhead. Right as they broke through the tree line and into the coverage, the pole holding the Haradrim’s prisoner snapped in two. With great joy, she slipped her hands out from behind the shards of wood and rested them behind her. As the jostling continued, however, she realized what a bad idea that was.

Now matter how hard she tried to find a grip behind her, she could feel herself slipping from the mighty beast’s back. With nothing to brace herself, she fell quite a ways into a tall tree that just happened to pass by. The branches cut at her skin and tore at her clothes, catching her hair in tangled twigs while she kept falling, not as quickly, but the tree did not actually catch her.

She wanted to stop sliding, she hoped for a branch to land on that would steady her so she could relax for a few minutes. Instead, she kept falling, not able to see where the ground was since it was such a huge tree. In some ways, she thought the tree was even trying to help her. More than once she fell into another branch with more force than she thought her body could produce by simply falling into it. Her idea was absurd, but she found some strange comfort in the thought that maybe the tree was actually trying to catch her.
This thought echoed through her mind as she was falling the rest of the way to the ground, until landing quite ungracefully into a pile among the leafy forest floor. She felt no impact, only darkness, and she welcomed the oblivion as a way to ease her pain and discomfort for the time being.

If anything, it was the trees that eventually woke her up. The ground was damp from a recent heavy rain, as were her clothes and during the night she slept through she felt showers of acorns and other seeds fall onto her motionless body while she was sleeping, but finally the stinging of their hard shells pulled her back to consciousness.

The first thing she did was groan from he crumpled position, as many do when waking up in immense pain; though many are not in immense pain because they fell off a frightened Mûmakil in the middle of a forest with helpful trees as she was. With her bound hands, the stranded elf managed to push herself up into a sitting position. With quick, shallow breaths, she pinpointed the location of her worst pain; on her left side under her breast, there were several places that felt as though with each inhale, they threatened to tear out her skin and set her heart on fire.

Leaves and dirt were sticking off places where there were streams of dried blood. A particular gash in her thigh worried her greatly, as it was looking slightly discolored and felt numb. Deciding that her best course of action was to distance herself from the cruelty of the Haradrim, she set off in the direction she guessed was opposite of where the army had run. Little did she know that there was another force at large in her subconscious pushing her in the same direction.

The further she walked, the further she felt that she had covered no ground. She knew somehow that she had kept her bearing straight and had not veered off the path she felt was the right one, but the world still felt as if nothing had changed. The lights were bouncing off the leaves from above in strange ways; every time she blinked it was as if the light was coming from another direction. It is a trick of the forest, she thought, it must be very old to have such huge trees.

She also knew that she was not walking in the Fangorn Forest that had been in the Haradrims’ path; which pleased her immensely. Even so, something about the forest seemed stressful and anxious; making her feel much the same. Keeping eyes and ears peeled, she willed herself to not make a sound through the underbrush. Only when she unfortunately tripped ungracefully over a few tree roots could the animals around be alerted of her presence, though the dry twigs underneath her feet and the leaves she pushed through would not make a sound as she passed.

Perhaps that is one of the reasons I feel so uncomfortable, it is so eerily quiet here; so unnatural. Though she didn’t remember ever strolling through a forest as she was now, she could still sense the animosity in the air. Once or twice or maybe even three times, the girl was forced to lean against a tree and catch her breath, clutching her ribs and trying to let the many wounds she had accumulated prepare for more walking.

Then her great hearing picked up something far sooner than her eyes. The sound of metal-on-metal, of battle cries for rage and for glory, and of heavy conflict made her ears perk and her approach cautious. She was frightened, though the girl also wanted to leap for joy since there was finally a sign that she had gotten quite a ways in a short amount of time. She finally limped to the edge of the forest line. Before her, beyond the obvious fighting, were the smoking ruins of a great city resting against the mountainside. Debris lay everywhere in a depressing setting of ruin and blood. As she looked upon the scene before her, the stress built up inside of her even more. She could feel that this battle was the reason she had been so frightened in the forest gloom.

The fighting was obviously drawing to a close. Nasty looking creatures ran from the battle only to be chased and slain by the exiled Riders of Rohan! The girl perked excitedly; anyone who was an enemy of the Haradrim and these deformed creatures in front of her could most definitely help her.
She waited for a while, watching the rest of the terrible creatures be hacked to pieces or shot by arrows. She found a strange pleasure well up inside of her whenever another fountain of thick black blood spurted from the monsters, as if she knew they were evil.

In fact, she *did* know they were evil.

She just didn’t know *how*.

A wave of pain and exhaustion overtook her. She managed to curl up into a ball and stay still. Nausea was evident within her, and she pressed tightly on her stomach with her knees as if to soothe it, but it was not working. She stayed curled up until she heard a rustling in the bush right next to her feet. Her body pressed itself into a tighter ball, willing not to be seen. Her eyes were clamped shut and it took a lot of her strength not to scream or moan in agony.

She heard more rustling and then a tug on her ankle. One eye shot open and peeked over her legs, but what she saw startled her to the point that her mouth hung slack in horror.

One of the creatures was dragging itself up to her. Its legs hung limp behind it and there was an ax stuck right in its lower back. Its teeth were yellow and dripping in black blood. Its skin was unhealthily grey and covered in mud and blood, though its head was covered with greasy hair. She could smell its foul breath as it crept closer, laughing, coughing, and spitting over her all at once.

The nightmarish monster snarled at her with a voice tearing its way through her ears and made her jerk back, finally reacting. Behind her, her arms felt around for anything she could use for aid, though she truly wished they were unbound so she could simply crawl away.

As she watched, the monster before her reached down and removed a dagger so scratched and serrated, just looking at it hurt more than her wounds combined. Perhaps she should have screamed to let one of the riders know she needed help, but she couldn’t make a sound at all. She let her eyes close and she prayed to whom ever people prayed to in the land that she was in.

*Please let it be quick. Please, please, please.*

She flinched at the *thump* of an a blade hitting flesh somewhere nearby and opened one eye barely to see more blood draining from the monster’s mouth than before. A thick sword tip shone through its neck and it fell forward, sprawled over her body as if asleep. She could not move, being pinned under an armor clad monster more muscled than any man she had come across in the past months. All she could do was whimper under its weight, barely being able to breathe and barely able to believe how close to death she was.

Then she remembered the sword and looked up and over the monster’s body. A man stood wiping the blade in one hand with a cloth in the other. As she looked up and her dark hair parted to show the points in her ears, the man stood taller, and instantly a look of concerned was exposed on his features. He sheathed his sword and lunged forward, heaving the monster off of her and looked her up and down.

*“Im Aragorn. Odulen an dhen eithad.” My name is Aragorn. I'm here to aid you.* He spoke quietly, putting a filthy hand on her forehead. She could not concentrate on his words but his tone felt friendly, and something was urging her to trust this man so she allowed her eyes to close and to relax as he looked over her and at many of her wounds.

Aragorn reached for a small knife to cut her bonds, and hissed when he peeled the rope from her blistering skin. She was gently shaken when he realized that her eyes were closed.
“Dar echui. Man agorer anden?” Stay awake. What happened to you? He asked her. The elf regrettably opened her eyes to the man above her and looked at him in an expression somewhere between pain and confusion when she realized Aragorn was asking her questions.

“Man de?” Who are you? Aragorn asked a different question this time. Then he cautiously gathered her up in his arms.

She groaned. “Ú-istonl.” I don’t know. She stated for perhaps the thousandth time she could remember. This really got him going, he picked up his pace and ran into the now peaceful battlefield, sidestepping the monsters and leaping over fallen horses. The elf in his arms felt his footfalls on the grass, and the swaying of his body whenever he took a new step.

She forced herself to try and stay awake and to listen to the one thing he had told her to do, but she felt as if she was losing a battle inside of her. Her eyes shut once more as Aragorn ran into the city calling in Westron.

Chapter End Notes

Check out the tumblr for my project at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com

Enjoy!
Drinking Game

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Dialogue that is italicized from now on means that the characters are speaking in Elvish. There are too many difficult and incomplete elvish translations even for primarily Sindarin-speaking characters.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

3.

The elf woke up slowly, lying down in an uncomfortable bed with straw poking out of the sides. She could feel the fever in the air, though she had none. Miscellaneous moans of pain made her ears perk every so often. She shivered at what the sounds entailed; pain, and lots of it. Soldiers from the battle she witnessed were probably scattered around her in need of aid. Images from then plagued her mind as bad as any fever, and she felt hollow at what the men must have been feeling during and now after the fighting.

She forced her eyes open to look at whoever she could feel touching her. A fair woman with long blond hair was wrapping thick cloth bandages around the gaping gash on the elf’s thy. Moving her wrists, she realized that her bonds had been replaced with white bandages and she smiled lightly at the newfound freedom. She carefully twisted her torso, feeling tight wrappings over her ribs. Under the scratchy wool blanket, the girl also realized that she was unclothed.

“You are awake. It has only been a few hours; it is now three o’clock in the afternoon. I’ve done my best to heal you, my name is Eowyn.” The woman barely glanced at the Elven maiden’s face. The elf’s eyebrows furrowed when she realized that she was in more pain than she had been in before she slipped into unconsciousness. Noticing her discomfort, Eowyn tied off the bandage and replaced the blanket over her legs, looking at her expectantly.

“What is your name?” Eowyn said, this time asking a direct question and focusing her attention solely on the elf maiden in front of her. Eowyn had kind features, but a very sullen and downtrodden appearance.

“Man-” What- Her mind was fuzzy from the pain of herself and those around her. She still felt dirty and was pleased no one had attempted to bathe her while she was unconscious, though her skin did feel grimy. She tried speaking again after a few moments. “Man ebennig?” What did you say?

Eowyn’s features were clearly disappointed. “My lord Aragorn said that you may only speak in the Elvish tongue. I will return.” She left a confused elf behind as she stepped away.

This moment was taken to survey her surroundings. Many men lay around her, sheened with sweat and blood. The elf tried not to register the repulsive smell bound to the air, but she found
herself gagging nonetheless. She curled up and closed her eyes, attempting to somehow think herself somewhere else.

“My Lord Aragorn, you were correct in assuming that she does not speak Westron. I find myself unable to communicate with her.” Eowyn was approaching again, and it sounded like she was accompanied by the human who found her out there. The elf was suddenly very relieved and opened her eyes.

“Milady, how are you feeling?” Aragorn bowed his head and extended his hand from his chest in a seemingly customary greeting.

“I am in pain, but I am faring better than before. Thank you.” It was her turn to speak and she felt relieved at a lack of language barrier with at least one person. Aragorn turned to Eowyn and whispered in her ear. She nodded.

“I asked before of who you are. Do you still have no knowledge of this?” Aragorn asked. The elf before him sighed and shook her head. Aragorn once again told Eowyn of this.

With frantic hands, Eowyn suddenly reached forward, her long fingers coming through the Elven maiden’s hair and looking for any abnormalities on her scalp.

“You have no serious head injury, only a few bumps and scratches. Do you remember nothing of coming to us? You are at Helm’s Deep; a fortress of Rohan.” Eowyn’s features displayed concern. Aragorn translated the words to Sindarin and also took on a look of concern.

“I woke up South East of here and was imprisoned by Haradrim; riders of the Mûmakil. Their army was attacked by exiled Riders of Rohan and I fell off the back of one of the Mûmakil and into a tree. Then I made my way in the direction I thought opposite of where my captors had been heading.” The elf closed her eyes as she spoke, starting to feel the pangs of hunger return; she had not had a full meal since before she could remember.

Eowyn sat down abruptly on the straw mattress beside the elf and reached out to feel her ribs.

“No wonder you were so broken when Aragorn discovered you! You fell from an Oliphaunt. Indeed you are lucky to have lived through it.” Eowyn looked around, again returning to her sullen attitude while frowning. “That must have been a battle of your own.” Aragorn continued to translate the conversation.

“What happened for such a gruesome conflict to occur here?” The elf said nothing more of her experiences, but instead changed the subject.

“Uruk-Hai from Isengard marched upon our fortress in the night. Many of both sides were slain, but the men prevailed and drove the Uruk away.” Aragorn spoke quietly and vaguely. He thought it best to withhold some information from the Elven maiden; at least until Gandalf the wizard could pass judgment on the Elven maiden’s purpose.

“Isengard?” The elf withheld herself from flinching at the mention of it.

“You’ve heard the name before. Do not worry, Isengard will be taken care of. A few brave men are setting out in order to gain information from Saruman the White Wizard.” Eowyn leaned closer, eyes wide with curiosity. The woman could exchange moods in the blink of an eye, though she was always surrounded by an aura of despair.

“The Haradrim that held me prisoner spoke of Isengard as their destination. I believe they said they were meant to protect it. I do not know what from.” She relaxed again, willing her strangled breathing to return to normal, though she suddenly became curious. “What is Uruk-Hai?”
“They are the filthy warriors of Mordor; stronger, smarter, and more ferocious than their predecessors; the Orc.” Aragorn placed a look of disgust upon his face; nose crinkled as if a rotten smell was wafting up from directly underneath it.

“Orc?” The elf asked with one word. It did not roll off of her tongue with ease.

“They were once elves; like you and your kin. But they were corrupted by an evil lord long ago. Now they live separately and only serve the darkness.”

“The blood of an Orc is dark as the night, attempting forever to fade the white light.” Eowyn spoke of an ancient rhyme, told to children to instill fear in their hearts for all that is evil.

Eowyn stood and made sure the elf was comfortable. She would go get some stew to satisfy the hunger that was obviously evident in her weak body. Aragorn left in search of a wizard who could possibly unveil the mysteries of the elf.

In her straw bed, the elf relaxed, willing herself to heal quickly and trying to ignore her hunger pains which only caused her condition to worsen minute by minute. She tried forcing herself to rest in order to pass the time before Eowyn might come back and answer more of her many questions. Sleep would not come, however, and she instead looked around at the wounded men before her.

Other women tended to the soldiers, but there were too few to help them all who needed it. Only a few rows away, she could not see a man’s chest rise with breath, or hear the expected sounds of respiration through his pale lips. She’d seen dead men before, in fact she secretly took delight whenever one of the Haradrim was shot or slain in an ambush. Now, however, it caused her great pain to look upon that man who could have been saved if only the women had not neglected him.

She realized that her thoughts sounded quite angry at the women doing their best to help the wounded, but it was not so. She could practically feel the dead man’s disappointment of surviving a battle, but dying in the aftermath. Dying before he could know that his comrades were truly safe. Dying before he could see the affects victory had on a depressed, compressed civilization.

Then, she felt angry at herself. How could she have commanded the attention of Eowyn when there were far more people with far worse injuries to worry about? Could Eowyn not see that because of her socialization, a man has died who she could have saved? The elf’s eyes were watering before Eowyn returned with a bowl of something steaming and a man so clad in white, she could barely look upon him.

Eowyn sat beside the elf again and brought the bowl up to her lips. The bearded man leant against his long staff and watched while the mysterious elf drank the thin broth steadily. The first thing the wizard noticed was the pointed ears on either side of the girl’s head, displaying that she was, indeed, an elf.

Said elf searched around the room, looking for Aragorn to once again translate her words. She didn’t know what to expect of the old man or why he was staring at her so intently.

“Greyhame” Eowyn spoke when the bowl of broth was empty. “I do not know what has happened to her memory. There are no injuries to be found that could affect her so, and I thought it best that you would see and speak with her yourself.” The bearded man nodded, squinting in thought and jutting out his bushy eyebrows as well.

“Your kin would call me Mithrandir in the Elven Speech, but you may call me Gandalf.” His voice was deep and commanding, and his very presence seemed to dissipate much of the gloom in
the healing hall. “What may I call you?”

The wizard asked her much of the same things Eowyn did, to which the elf responded the same also. All three of them were becoming frustrated, that was obvious, because none of them knew what had happened to the elf. Gandalf stood silently, seeing nothing as he stared into the distance. Finally he had had enough.

“May I?” The wizard had reached out his hand to hover over the elf’s forehead. She looked at him, unsure, but nodded anyway.

Gandalf closed his eyes as he searched within the elf’s head, muttering an incantation as he did so. Her eyes closed as well, willing him to find anything that could help her to understand what was going on. Gandalf searched through the black abyss inside of her head, trying to find a clue as to her identity or why she was there. The faster he repeated his incantation, the more darkness he could glide through, and finally he seemed to see “light at the end of the tunnel” as you could say.

The wizard was optimistic of his discovery, even knowing that it was probably a stronger memory block than any spells his previous form, Gandalf the Grey, could cast. The light was brightening, taking on an orange and red glow, but the more of the light he could discern, the greater the despair inside of him built up.

It was the Eye; it clouded his vision suddenly, catching the wizard by surprise as it always did. A roaring in Gandalf’s ears caused his arm to retreat, letting go of the elf’s forehead and allowing her to fall back. Her eyes were wider than his, for she had seen exactly what he had, but she was not as strong and more affected. If elves could sweat, she would be lying in a pool of it, but alas they cannot.

“What was that?” She asked the wizard fearfully.

“I’m afraid your memory has not been lost by any injury or locked away by any spell, but stolen by Sauron; Lord of Mordor and enemy of all good people in Middle Earth.” Gandalf was sorry to have to tell the girl of this, but he had heard one word through the roaring of the Eye’s flames.

“I do believe that your name is now known to us, my dear.” Gandalf smiled a bit when she looked at him expectantly. “Your name is Erynell, a Lady of the Forest.”

“Erynell? Erynell…” No matter how many times she rolled it off her tongue, she felt no connection to the words. “If you say so…”

Eowyn smiled lightly and stood up, leaving the elf and the wizard who was chuckling at her response.

“Perhaps you will get used to it. An unfamiliar name is better than no name at all.” He picked up his staff and left Erynell to rest. Outside of the great hall that was in use for healing, Gandalf was pulled aside by Théoden, King of Rohan.

“Who is the elf, Gandalf? She was not in the battle, why is she here?” He asked the wizard.

“She was no Elven warrior, it is true, yet she was found right outside the battle with no memory of who she is. She has been tainted by the Dark Lord Sauron.” Gandalf replied. He did not expect a positive response to that statement, and he did not receive one.

“What?! Gandalf, if she has been corrupted, then she must leave immediately! She is already taking up space that could be put to good use for the recovery of one of my Riders.” Théoden was obviously disconcerted.
“Not corrupted, Wise King. Simply tainted; touched if you will. Her memory has been stolen by Sauron. Whatever the enemy is trying to protect, it is likely to aid us in his defeat.” Gandalf muttered to Théoden as some children passed by. “I believe I can help her and help us all in affect.”

“She will be closely watched, Wizard, and restrained until her motives have become clear.” The king snapped.

“She means no harm!” Gandalf tried to explain calmly, but his annoyance was also threatening to overcome him. “I have been inside of her mind, seen everything she could know and witnessed every motive of her’s firsthand.” Théoden knew better than to question the wizard after he’d done some intense magical feat. He wished to not be spoken down upon in his own fortress. Without another word, Théoden retreated down the corridor.

The next day, Erynell woke up to Eowyn standing over her once again. In her arms was a thin towel and an earthy brown dress.

“We leave today to return to our kingdom of Edoras. I am to help you bathe before the journey.” Eowyn recited the words carefully while looking above Erynell’s head. The elf had to concentrate on listening to Sindarin in the unpracticed tongue of another, but ended up nodding. Eowyn smiled and reached down to help the elf before realizing that Erynell could stand on her own.

“I walked for many miles without these bandages. I believe I can walk a few corridors with them.” Erynell glanced at Eowyn and saw no understanding in her eyes. Erynell sighed, she must have simply learned that one line in order to repeat it upon her awakening.

Erynell’s limbs were very stiff, but other than that she was able to walk with her chin lifted and her back straight. The water she sat in was lukewarm, but it felt wonderful to have the grime float off her skin and to wash the grease and leaves from her hair. The dress Eowyn lent to her was a bit too short for Erynell’s height, but she would not be doing any walking on the voyage to Edoras anyway.

Many wagons were filled with wounded soldiers not to be left behind. Erynell was put on one of the last ones, so it was not as crowded as the others. She sat up against the wagon’s rail and looked out over the familiar-looking plains. They were the ones that the Haradrim had marched on. Erynell clenched her teeth whenever the wagon hit a rock or a tough clump of glass, jarring the passengers. It hurt, but she could manage.

Most of the journey she spent in the presence of one wounded soldier who was not even a soldier. He had seen too few winters to be in so much pain, but he told her of being shot in the lower back with an arrow of an Uruk and now not being able to move his legs. She sat with him also whenever the people made camp and she learned that his name was Háleth, son of Háma. Most of the time was actually spent in silence unless Gandalf or Aragorn were there to translate.

Of course, it seemed they always had better things to do.

Erynell was holding Háleth’s small hand as the kingdom of Edoras came into view. There were cries of joy from the people all around the boy and the elf as they saw their homes again. The kingdom was smaller than Erynell thought it would be. Eowyn made it out to be a majestic home for royalty and for commoners, though it was the only home Eowyn knew, and Erynell did not actually know if she could be disappointed or not since she didn’t remember ever actually seeing a kingdom herself.

Erynell had been given a room in the King’s manor at the request of Gandalf himself. She was an interesting case for him, and he not only wanted to help return her memory to her, but he wanted
to study the effects of such power. To have one’s memories stripped from them did not seem very healthy to the wizard.

In her room, Erynell really tried to stay still and rest, but she needed to move, she felt weaker at every moment that she lay still, and the felt more tired the more she slept. Finally, after long internal debate, Erynell decided to leave the room and seek out Eowyn or Gandalf; anyone to give her company.

As soon as she stepped into the corridor and closed her door as silently as she could, Erynell came across a very short, very thick man with very, very bushy red hair.

“Oh! And who might you be, lass?” He asked her. One of his eyes was squinted partially shut as he looked her over, not noticing her ears. She concentrated hard and after a few seconds recognized the phrase he asked. He seemed to wish to know her name.

“Erynell…” He cut her off.

“Gimli, son of Gloin at your service.” He took a slight bow and she curtseyed in return. His eyes traveled to her visible bandages. “You’ve been healing, have you? Follow me; a pint will do the lady well.” He beckoned her so she nodded.

Erynell raced after him as he abruptly turned away. The man took surprisingly long steps for one so small. She couldn’t help but stare down at him, wondering what he could be.

“I see you looking down at me. You must be wondering about me and my kin. Aye, lass, I am not a man, but a dwarf!” He seemed to yell out the last few words, Erynell could tell that he was proud of his kin. She said no more to him, but a simple glance from her lead him into many tales that she sadly could not understand.

Erynell simply followed his steps leading to a great hall crowded with many men and a handful of women. Eowyn was sipping from a goblet and laughing with Gimli, who had just joined her without Erynell’s notice.

She took a goblet for herself next to the barrels that men were crowding around rowdily. Recognizing no one but Eowyn, and not wanting to intrude upon her spirited conversation with the dwarf, Erynell situated herself at a small table near the door of the great hall. Watching the people celebrate, Erynell noticed a young and lithe man, tall and sturdy as a young tree, walk through the entrance to the hall. She kept her head down and watched Gimli excused himself from Eowyn’s company and practically dragged the man over to an empty barrel.

While he walked gracefully behind the excited dwarf, Erynell saw his long blond hair reveal his ears. They were pointed, just like hers! Could he be my kin? Erynell thought to herself while feeling her ears and the soft tips on top of them. With her keen hearing, Erynell heard most of the conversation between the two as another blond man, perhaps a Rohirrim man, handed Gimli and the blond elf pints of a liquid.

“So it is a drinking game.” The elf made his statement in a soft voice, completely out of place among the laughter in the hall. Erynell looked down at her own drink and realized she had not even attempted to sip it. She raised the glass to her lips, took a small drink, and coughed. How could anyone drink this? She thought, looking back up at the two.

“It is the dwarves who go swimming with little hairy women!” Gimli bounced up and down with his deep chuckling and downed another one of his glasses; there was a pile already in front of him. The elf meanwhile, raised an eyebrow at the dwarf’s display and calmly grabbed another glass for himself. He practically dropped it when he finished and looked at his fingers in fear.
“I feel something.” The men watching the two quieted down and looked at the elf expectantly. “A slight tingling in my fingers; I think its affecting me.” The men watching sighed and started to laugh once again, but right then Gimli started slurring his words in a way Erynell could not understand and he fell backwards. Erynell laughed with the rest as the blond elf smirked a bit.

“Game over.” He said.

Erynell returned her attention to her drink, knowing that it would only be respectful for her to finish it. She sighed. Then, one man she had not noticed in the room before sat down opposite her at the table.

“I believed none of Elven kind approve of that particular brew.” Aragorn had long dark hair and wore earth-toned traveling clothes. A beautiful pendant hung on a silver strand from his neck. As he spoke he gestured to her goblet.

“It does not suit my tastes, unlike-” Erynell started to reply before she realized she had no idea what she was saying. She’s completely forgotten what it was that she wanted to refer to. She let out a frustrated groan and the man raised his eyebrows.

“Your memories will more than likely take time to recover. Do not fret.” He smiled, lines around his eyes crinkling in a friendly way.

“At least I know my name to be Erynell.” She spoke her name and it still sounded unfamiliar. Her eyes travelled behind Aragorn after she spoke her name and saw Eowyn coming towards them with two goblets in her hand. Aragorn lifted his chin for a moment before realizing her attention had been drawn elsewhere. He stood up when he saw Eowyn behind him and graciously took the goblet from her hands. Tipping it to her, he swallowed a gulp of the liquid, making Erynell cringe.

After a few moments of being alone again and even fewer sips of her drink, Erynell heard a small banging noise. She looked up. There was Gandalf standing before her, looking down with crinkled eyes.

“You, my dear, should be resting.” He said softly. She could tell that he was not really upset at her, more amused than anything.

“How can I rest and miss such joyous celebration?” She asked him, smiling and gesturing around the hall.

“True, true. Elves are known to enjoy merriment now and again.” Gandalf chuckled and leaned on his staff. His head lifted when stomping and clapping reverberated through the great hall and he chuckled when two child-like adults (now the second she’d seen in her memories) started up a merry drinking song.

"Oh you can search far and wide,
You can drink the whole town dry,
But you'll never find a beer so brown,
Oh you'll never find a beer so brown,
As the one we drink in our hometown,
As the one we drink in our hometown.
You can drink your fancy ales,
You can drink them by the flagon,

But the only brew for the brave and true...

...Comes from the Green Dragon!!"

“Gandalf?” She turned to the wizard laughing heartily at the performance. “What are those two? I’ve now seen men, elves, dwarves, and wizards, but I know not what they resemble.”

“Those, my lady, are Hobbits. The tall one is Merry and the shorter one is Pippin.” He studied her face, curious as to why the elf was asking. After a short moment, he came to a realization. “They are not the first ones you’ve come across. Tell me.” Erynell was surprised by his sudden seriousness, but she told all she could about the two hobbits she’d seen before being taken by the Haradrim.

“Sam and Frodo, thank the Valar.” He looked up at the ceiling and sighed in relief.

“They probably would have been caught with me if not for the tree-men. Well, the Haradrim called them Men of Gondor. If they had not ambushed the army, the Hobbits would not have gotten away.” She smiled, thinking that this would be good news to tell the wizard. Instead of looking more reassured, his face drained of color.

“I must go.” He said and departed once again. Erynell watched him speak hurriedly to Aragorn, who in turn went to the blond elf and a very drunk Gimli and told them what Gandalf had said. She could hear it from that distance.

“Gandalf believes Sam, Frodo, and The Ring were taken to Gondor. He does not know what is to happen.” Aragorn spoke to the two carefully. The blond elf stood up straighter.

“We must help them, let us depart and save them from the hearts of men.” He started to stand Gimli up and push him away.

“Calm down, Legolas.” Aragorn said. His eyes flickered around and landed on Erynell who was silently watching. The others in his company turned to her as well. Erynell looked down at the table and stood. She didn’t know if they were all aware that she couldn’t be eavesdropping since she did not understand Westron, but she thought it would be time to take her leave anyway.

Chapter End Notes

Check out this tumblr at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com

Thanks!
4.

Weeks passed at Edoras, but Erynell felt that she belonged there no more than she did on her first day. She realized that elves were treated differently than those of the race of man, and though she was regarded differently, Erynell knew that she held no respect from the Rohirrim men. She spent much of her time with the wizard Gandalf, asking about Middle Earth and the One Ring everyone was so drastically afraid of.

She had learned a great deal more about the current events taking place, but Gandalf told Erynell only as much as one could expect. Some of her questions were put aside coolly by Gandalf. She knew that no one fully trusted her because of her memory loss and because of what Gandalf had seen inside of her mind while at Helm’s Deep. She had begun to even mistrust herself because of everyone’s suspicion.

No one knew who or what she did before she lost her memories, and Legolas did not recognize her as one of the Woodland Realm, though her name definitely hinted that her origins were in a forest such as Mirkwood where Legolas was prince.

In passing, the men of Rohan would either ignore her completely or bow their heads in her direction. Aragorn and Gandalf were very kind when she encountered them, exchanging words of greeting and smiles that would get Erynell through the days. When Gimli had finally learned of her race, he too withdrew a small bit, acting more proud around her than the others. She noticed some of that same hubris when the dwarf was around Legolas, the other resident elf at Edoras, but even their relationship seemed friendlier than what her and Gimli’s had become.

Then of course, there was Legolas himself. In encounters with him, Legolas would bow his head in much of the same way as the men but with more of an indifferent aura upon him. Erynell, thinking that all elves might be that high and mighty, would also bow her head and continue on her way. Even though they were of the same species, Legolas and Erynell shared no kindred.

Being driven away from the populous of most of Rohan had caused her to be somewhat of a recluse. Most of her time was spent in her room, looking out of the window at the rolling plains beyond the borders of Edoras. This caused her mind to wander, wondering what the Haradrim had done after arriving at Isengard to find it “taken care of” as Aragorn had said to her after their return from the journey to Isengard.

Erynell could be found spending time with Eowyn when not in her room. Eowyn held the respect of Erynell unlike many whom she had met before. The flame in the heart of the niece of Théoden King was inspirational and comforting, though it was doused when Eowyn was present around
men. Even so, Eowyn had been urging Erynell to learn the tongue of Westron.

By spending time around so many of its speakers, Erynell could recognize a few phrases and respond to them in kind, but the barrier was setting her apart from all the others.

Erynell realized that like herself, Eowyn was treated differently because she was of the fairer sex. The men acted around her as if she was fragile and anything they said could shatter her. In fact, when most women were around the men, conversations would go from war and evil to small talk about the weather and how beautiful one is.

More than anything, Eowyn wanted to fight just like the men in order to protect her home, her king, and her way of life. Whenever alone with Erynell, Eowyn would spout off in another rant of how “war is not just the realm of men” and “my heart is no different from theirs. I will fight!”

Sometimes, Eowyn would urge Erynell to fight as well, showing her some weaponry techniques with the sword of the fallen Theodred, which had apparently been lost after his death. After enough pestering, Erynell had agreed to fight if it came to that, but knowing that many would die, probably herself and Eowyn included, she hoped that it would not.

Eowyn then started showing her techniques she knew with a sword and at the same time, barking words or phrases in Westron. This was very helpful and Erynell was even starting to comprehend the language without translation.

After a few more days of being in the kingdom of great horse masters, Erynell decided that it would do her good to learn how to ride a horse. With borrowed riding boots from the closet of Eowyn, she entered the stables one day. She was apprehensive because in her memory, never had she been near to a horse, and she had no idea what to do around them.

“What do you need, my lady?” A voice startled her and she turned, looking at Prince Éomer saddling the horse next to him. While looking around at all the horses in the stalls, she hadn’t noticed she was alone. He smiled a bit. “Elven kind usually do not startle as you do.”

Erynell suppressed a smile of embarrassment at his words.

“I wish to...” She started quietly but could not finish. In exasperation she simply pointed at the nearest horse.

“You have never ridden a horse?” He asked. His voice held a tone of surprise which made her cross her arms in annoyance.

“I can’t remember.” His smile dropped at her tone of voice and a look of suspicion flashed over his face as he mentioned her memory.

“I can have one of my men show you. I am late for my patrol.” Éomer mounted his horse and rode out of the stable passed her after calling to a man right outside the door. She sighed; it was a guard that had been following her much of the day. King Théoden had probably ordered him to keep a close eye on her. Why could the King not trust Gandalf at his word that she meant no harm?

“My lady, Éomer has mentioned that you wish to learn to ride a horse.” The guard looked at her expectantly. More like ordered you to teach me, the elf thought to herself. To the man she merely nodded and smiled. With her affirmation of his words, he looked around at the horses. Reaching out, he opened the stall directly behind Erynell.

“This is Léod, a dun horse.” Léod’s ears perked at his name, but his head stayed down in a depressing manner. Erynell noticed the tan color of his coat contrasting with the black of his mane and tail. He had small black striped above his hooves and a pink scar on his shoulder. The guard
noticed her apprehension.

“Léod became very docile after the fall of Háma, his rider. You have nothing to fear.” The guard assured her.

“Háma?” Erynell looked at the guard immediately. He barely glanced at her as he saddled Léod.

“Yes, Lady Erynell. You knew him?”

“I knew of him. Háleth, was wounded at Helm’s Deep.” Erynell remembered the boy, not knowing if he was able to walk again or not.

“Háma fell defending the gate of the fortress when the orcs broke through.” The guard placed the bridal on Léod, who was now standing erect, though still calm. “Now,” he said, “to ride sidesaddle, place your right foot through the stirrup here,” the guard moved Erynell to the horse’s left side, “and lift up to sit on his back.”

Erynell attempted what he had said, and she squirmed on Léod’s back. Sitting on a horse like that was very uncomfortable, and Léod kept shifting below her.

“Stop moving like that, Lady Erynell, you are causing him to be uneasy.” The guard grabbed Léod’s reins before he might bolt. Erynell slid off his back in relent.

“That is no good.” She paused, still wanting to ride but hating how she sounded either young or stupid, or both, with her words. “Might you teach me how to ride like a man such as yourself?” The guard looked down, averting her eyes.

“That would be very improper, my lady, and you are not clothed in such a way for it to be possible without, er, scandal.” Erynell didn’t understand and looked down at her dress, he said something about the clothing she wore.

“I shall change and return if you will wait here.” Erynell emphasized her last words, giving the innuendo that she knew he had been following her. The guard looked away again but nodded. Erynell turned away and rushed into the Lord’s house and straight into the room of Lady Eowyn.

“I need clothes.” Erynell spoke to the blonde woman who was standing at her window.

“What is wrong with the dress I lent you?” Eowyn turned around with a cocked eyebrow and a hand on her hip.

“The man said as I was riding sideways that I can’t ride right in this.” Erynell smiled. Eowyn had to think for a moment before realizing what she meant.

“Oh! Alright.” Eowyn dug into her chest beside her bed. “Here, these are some of my mother’s old rising clothes. She refused to ride sidesaddle as well.” Eowyn handed her clothing consisting of leather leggings, a blouse that looked like the torso part of a dress, and a long slit overcoat to hang over the sides of a horse. Erynell curtsied to Eowyn quickly and rushed to her room to change.

When Erynell returned to the stables, the guard looked at her strangely, probably recognizing the garments the elf was now wearing. However, he also noticed how well the clothes fit her.

The guard taught her how to mount and walk the horse. Léod was steady and tranquil as the guard said, and seemed to be enjoying the time out of his stall since he wasn’t ridden much after the death of his rider. Erynell noticed that riding was not as smooth as it looked and she was constantly swayed from side to side. The guard had to keep reminding her to sit straight and to
trust the horse’s movements as she would her own.

After a few days, Erynell finally got the hang of the walk and the guard, whose name she finally learned was Gamling, had taught her how to trot and canter. If Erynell got off center on Léod’s back, the movements would become jolting and jarring, though she was pretty good with riding.

Every day after the lessons, Erynell would give Léod an apple she had kept from dinner, and slowly she felt that he was starting to accept her as a new rider. The thought had crossed her mind, though, that she had simply accepted him as her ride. Even with that thought, Erynell learned how to gallop at full speed beside Gamling and then without him.

As captain of King Théoden’s personal guard, he was very uptight and serious. Erynell was barely able to wait until she could ride without him, and enjoyed it when that time finally came. She rode Léod for a few hours every day, for both of their benefits; she enjoyed spending time with one who could not judge her as the citizens of Edoras could, and he was able to get exercise.

One night after a particularly long ride with Léod, Erynell passed the door to which she knew Gandalf and some of the others he had traveled with were staying. She heard a commotion and was about to keep walking when her ears pricked at a pained and strangled cry and then something rolling around on the ground.

“Fool of a Took!” There was an angry whisper directly on the other side of the door and Erynell jumped back slightly, before racing to her room to rest.

The next morning, Erynell learned that Gandalf was gone along with one of the dancing hobbits she had barely met. Pippin had apparently caused some trouble and was forced to go to Gondor for reasons unknown to Erynell. Merry, Pippin’s closest friend was devastated, and after watching his companion ride away towards Minas Tirith, he had run into Erynell with tears streaming down his cheeks.

“Pardon me, my lady.” He sniffled and looked at the floor. For some reason, Erynell felt compelled to bend down and lift his chin.

“Chin up, Sir Merry. Close friends could never be parted for long. You sing again, I know.” Merry smiled at her words but choked on his tears some more. Erynell drew him into a hug and let him sob onto his shoulder for a while. His tiny body shook in her arms and they sat there for a while, letting his tears dry and his spirits rise a bit.

Erynell was also partly distraught at the loss of Gandalf for now. She didn’t have to feel self-conscious of her words around him since he spoke Sindarin. Now there was just Aragorn and Legolas who spoke her language, though she had had no conversations with the latter.

“Thank you, Lady Elf.” Merry smiled widely at her and then raced down the hall. Erynell stayed kneeling, wondering when she had become so motherly and then wondering if she was a mother. She shook her head at the thought. Erynell knew she wasn’t a mother; something inside told her so, but even then she felt protective of the hobbit and swore that she would look after him.

Erynell stood up as Eowyn rounded the corner in front of her and raced forewords.

“There you are! Come, the armory is empty and Gandalf has left. Battle will be upon us soon. You need weapons.” Eowyn grabbed her wrist and pulled back the way she came.

“You have a weapon! And I’m hopeless!” Erynell followed, stumbling, but unsure of what Eowyn wanted of her.

“You don’t remember ever using a weapon. Maybe you have before and you’ll remember how to
do it then. If not then you can learn!” Eowyn stopped suddenly and turned to the elf. “You did agree to fight beside me.” Erynell relented at the blazing gaze of her friend.

The armor was down a few corridors and behind a locked door that Eowyn had somehow procured the key to. Inside were walls of spears, swords, bows and arrows, and practically any other medieval weapon imaginable. Erynell cringed when she passed a collection of maces, knowing that anyone using one of those was cruel. Passing war axes, she felt almost as much apprehension, as though something deep inside her was deathly afraid of its swing.

In front of her was the collection of swords. Their quality varied greatly along their stands. One in particular drew in the attention of Erynell. She reached out and grabbed it by the sheath. It was not the most ornate, and not an old rusted blade such as many of the ones in front of her. She withdrew it from its sheath and studied it.

The hilt was simple, with tightly bound leather over the steel. There were runes that Erynell had never seen before pressed into the leather, with faded green ink making them more noticeable. The blade itself was white and the same runes from the hilt were printed down the cool metal of the blade to the tip of the sword. There were designs etched into the metal where the rune ended, making the tip serrated and resembling the pattern found on a leaf.

Eowyn approached Erynell and stated, looking down at the blade. “It’s been here many years. The wielders of this sword have always returned from battle. Let us hope you fare as well as they.”

Erynell sheathed the sword and smiled, hiding it under her overcoat. She wore the riding clothes Eowyn had given her everywhere. The elf found they were more comfortable than dresses and much more maneuverable. Before leaving the armory, Erynell also took a few short knives that could be thrown since she might need more protection than the sword could give her at some point.

The two retreated, locking the armory behind them and then separated; Erynell went to the stables and Eowyn returned the key to where she had retrieved it from in the first place.

With Léod, Erynell was able to practice riding with a sword at her side. Whenever anyone passed, she was careful to make sure it was hidden from sight, though as a general rule she liked to ride away from people. In practice, she would draw the sword mid-gallop and hold it aloft before her to get used to its weight and the feel of the draw.

Léod ran faster when he saw the sword, too, for he was a battle horse who knew that a sword meant caution and most of all, power, though he was a little confused as to why his rider was holding a blade when there were no enemies to cut down.

After bequeathing Léod with an apple, Erynell went into a quiet part of the King’s gardens where Eowyn told her she sometimes practiced at. It was a clearing surrounded by what were basically the only trees in Edoras, and it was comforting to Erynell that they were there.

The elf had taken a small target from the archery range down the path from the King’s house and placed it in the clearing before her. She threw the small knives she stole at the target, careful so as to not hit the trees, and happily hit the target more times than not. For a few hours, she continued throwing and retrieving knives until sundown, when she hid them in her boots and went into the great hall for supper, leaving the sword at the roots of a tree where she knew it would be safe for about half an hour.

Erynell was correct in thinking that the sword would not be taken, though it seemed to have been shifted a few centimeters. Instead of simply laying next to the tree where she had set it carefully,
some of the roots that were above ground seemed to be hiding the sword from view. Erynell was puzzled but she grabbed the sword from the little nook it rested in and started holding it up in front of her.

From then on, every night directly before and after dinner, Erynell practiced her knife-throwing skills and her sword play techniques.

She was improving greatly with the knives, now usually hitting the target’s center when she threw them, though a moving target that was actually fighting back would be much harder to hit than the small, harmless target in front of her.

It was the sword which Erynell was having trouble with. Practicing with it tired her greatly and she was only able to do it for a short amount of time. It felt cumbersome and strange when she held it aloft and swung it around. How could she use it in battle against orcs and not on a garden against the air?

After a few minutes of practice one night, she realized that someone was watching her from the shadows. She dropped the sword immediately and looked around. Behind one tree, the one she usually placed the sword under each night, the shadow seemed displaced and out of shape compared to the others. She glared in that direction the figure that she could barely see spoke.

“You are unlike any elf I have seen.” He says, stepping into the light. By the blonde hair and pointed ears, she recognized Legolas. Bending down, she picked up her sword again, him watching her the entire time and her watching him.

“You are the only elf I have seen.” She crossed her arms with the blade in hand. Legolas smiled slightly, his blue eyes crinkling around the edges at her remark.

“May I see your sword, my lady?” He asked her, holding out his hand. She nodded and handed it to him. “I have met this blade before, many have. It is Hathelas, meaning Leaf-Blade, forged by the elves. How did you come upon it?”

“I got it from the armory.” Erynell spoke honestly. He handed Hathelas back to her.

“And what are you planning to wield it against?” Legolas asked, looking around the clearing at her invisible enemy.

“Whatever I must.” She said. Legolas nodded, not as all surprised by her answer as she thought he would be.

“And what is it they call you?” Legolas was looking at the trees as he spoke with his head tilted to the side, as if listening. Erynell was surprised that he had not heard her name before from Gandalf, Aragorn, or Gimli.

“I am Erynell.” She said slowly.

“You sound as though you almost believe it.” Legolas narrowed his eyes at her and regarded her with more curiosity.

“Gandalf pulled it out of my head so it must be true. Though of all the things to find in there,” Erynell lifted her hand and tapped on the side of her head, “I am probably the least concerned with a name I don’t even recognize.” Legolas nodded at her distress and then motioned to her sword once more.

“You are not very able with that.” He pointed out.
“I realized.”

“I can help you.” Legolas surprised Erynell once again with his words.

“You do not think it wrong?” She asked him warily; knowing that any other man would probably just take the sword away and force her not to fight.

“I am not a man with their simpleminded ideals.” He spoke as if reading her mind. “The edhil of Mirkwood all fight; elleth and eledhyn alike.”

“The what?” Erynell asked him, realizing he was speaking partly in Sindarin and not Westron which she was not accustomed to.

“Apologies, Lady Erynell. I stated that, ‘The elves of Mirkwood all fight; lady-elf and male-elf alike.’ One of my best guard captains in youth was a lady like yourself.” Legolas sighed a bit.

“Where is she now?” Erynell was genuinely curious.

“Tauriel faded of a broken heart.” Legolas looked down and then simply walked away. Erynell berated herself for asking.

With that Legolas started teaching her how to use Hathelas as an extension of herself to fight. Every night after dinner he would approach her and improve her stance, attacks, and blocks with the sword. Every knight they would spar and though she no longer became tired wielding her sword a lot, Legolas would have her defeated in mere minutes.

On the last night they would be able to practice, Erynell had actually held up against him for nearly ten minutes and was extremely proud of herself. She was going to make the remark that either she was getting better or he was getting worse when the two elves heard yelling from the Golden Hall. Both elves ran into the building, leaving their weapons among the trees.

“Gondor has called for aid!” It was Aragorn who had been yelling after seeing a bonfire light up in the distant mountains. Now the hall was looking at Théoden expectantly.

“And Rohan will answer.” The King replied, staring into he eyes of every man standing around him. At that moment, Eowyn and Erynell also caught each other’s eyes. A silent agreement was passed in between them. Erynell’s eyes swiveled to a pair of blue ones also looking directly at her. She nodded at Legolas politely as if nothing was amiss, and then walked up to Eowyn who was speaking with the Théoden.

“Lady Erynell and I shall ride with you to the edge of battle to see you off.” Eowyn smiled at her uncle whose eyes flashed to Erynell.

“But you must stay here and rule in mine and Éomer’s stead.” He spoke, returning his attention to his niece.

“I cannot bear to imagine you leaving now and not being able to see you ride into battle as is custom. I must see you off, Uncle.” Eowyn was completely sincere and Erynell knew that no matter what, her uncle would come first; not Éomer, Erynell, or even Sauron.

“You may escort us and then return as soon as you are able.” Théoden kissed Eowyn on the cheek.

“I will be anxiously waiting for you to come back, as well, Uncle.”

When it was finally time to ride out the next day, Erynell saddled Léod up and hid her secret
armor in the saddlebags laden across his back. Her sword was strapped under a rolled up mat next to the saddle and she had a lot of food in a rucksack on her back. Erynell fed Léod an apple from her hand and started feeling anxious. Her eyes were darting around at the many men around her. *Who here will live after the battle? Who will fall to never see again? Will any survive? Is there any hope?*

Gimli was smoking next to her, sitting on a barrel while Legolas saddled the white horse they shared.

“Not to worry, Lass, we will find our way back to you.” Gimli addressed her and patted her shoulder. Erynell smiled and nodded. *I hope I find my way back as well,* she thought to herself. But her mouth and her mind said it differently.

“I will anxiously wait for the moment of your return home.” Speaking, her eyes flashed to those of Legolas, who was then watching her. As their gazes caught, he turned away from her dark brown eyes and placed the last sidesaddle on the horse.

Everyone mounted their horses and rode away from Edoras. Many would never see the Golden Hall again.

Chapter End Notes

Check out this story's tumblr at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com

Woohoo!
The company traveling from Edoras flew with the speed of the Valar across plains and hills to reach their destination. It would be a four day ride to Dwimorberg where the armies allied to aid Gondor would meet before traveling to Minas Tirith. Each rider in the company was losing faith, losing sleep, and gaining apprehension at the thought of the oncoming battle. Tensions arose with each hoof beat stepping them closer to their doom.

Eowyn and Erynell also felt the party’s ill-will. However, their own apprehension was perhaps worsened by thoughts of their common purpose.

“Lady Eowyn, why do you accompany us to the horrors of battle?” Soldiers would ask one after another. Always Eowyn replied with the same excuse.

“My guest and I are riding to the encampment for luck so you may all return to us safely. Tradition calls for it.” The men bought this easily and practically fell off of their horses when Eowyn would bow her head and flutter her eyelashes.

“You should not tease them so!” Erynell bent over to Eowyn atop their horses after another unfortunate young man rode away from them gaily.

“If I do not then how could we get rid of them so quickly?” Eowyn laughed and flipped her golden hair out of her face.

“Tell them of our plan, then. It would drive them off soon enough.” Erynell was joking of course. If anyone found out about their plan, they would be practically thrown back the way they came.

“They would think us insane!” Eowyn cried and drew the attention of a soldier walking nearby. He turned to them with concern in his eyes only to have his attention caught elsewhere. Eowyn smiled “Your Westron is improving. Possibly it is now too great, for you will surely give us away!”

“Make camp here!” King Théoden called back from the front of the procession. In all their teasing and bantering, the two women had not noticed the sun sink low to the horizon and the lengthening of shadows surrounding them. Erynell and Eowyn dismounted their horses and stepped down to help as they could.

“The grove of trees behind us, meet me there with your weapons tonight.” Eowyn whispered in passing to the elf. The two had been practicing as often as they were able in secret. The hobbit,
Merry, sometimes would join them also, yet he did not know what the girls were training for. He, however, was determined to be the best Esquire of Rohan there ever was.

With the sword, Erynell was proud to have bested Merry, but not so much with Eowyn. The princess had been practicing for much longer than Erynell, though she still did not compare to Legolas.

Erynell had thought of going to Legolas and asking for help with her sword, but that would only alert him to the fact that she was training for this particular battle. He had barely spoken ten words to her aside from sword fighting tips. She had no idea what he was really like and did not know whether she could trust him not to turn her in. With those thoughts, she withheld herself from going to him for aid and simply kept fighting with Eowyn and Merry.

“Dead.” Eowyn said as her sword fell to Erynell’s chest. Erynell closed her eyes and sighed. 

I’m not nearly ready for this. I am going to die. Why did I ever agree to this? Then she opened her eyes when she felt the pressure on her chest drop. Eowyn was looking at her with concern. 

“What is wrong?” She asked. Erynell shook her head, not wanting Eowyn to know that she was having second thoughts. Eowyn had nothing to worry about; she was ready for this and would protect her uncle even if it meant her death. Perhaps that was what scared the elf so; she was not quite ready to die for the people she barely knew.

“Nothing. You beat me again. Now it is Merry’s turn.” Erynell turned around and raised Hathelas once more.

“I would be honored to succeed in killing the lady, though it has not come to pass yet.” He mock bowed, accidently sticking his sword into a tree branch as he swung his arm. Erynell laughed through a slight pain she felt in her gut. She helped Merry remove his sword and then rubbed the cut in the branch with her hand. The pain in her gut subsided.

“Now I am prepared to die, my lady.” Merry smiled and swung his sword at her. Erynell leapt back to avoid his dull blade and giggled a bit.

The two fought for a time, Merry almost constantly having to use defensive stances against the elf’s ongoing attacks. He thought she was being a slight bit more aggressive than earlier but he was happy he was able to hold up.

When one of the trio started to yawn and grow drowsy, they all started to perform with less accuracy and precision. Erynell found that she could last the longest. After she regained all of her strength at Edoras, she found that she slept less and less, and realized that elves did not sleep unless it was necessary to their wellbeing. Still, she obliged to quit practicing when Eowyn or Merry started falling asleep where they stood.

The three also slept quite close. Eowyn and Erynell had invited Merry to set up camp near their tent and they spent most of their time together. Merry was also the one that kept Eowyn and Erynell in high spirits. He was a joker and was good at making people laugh. However, Erynell knew that without his companion, Pippin, he was quite depressed. So, she tried to keep him in high spirits as well, and they were coping together.

The company journeyed on for three more days to Dwimorberg. There were high cliffs leading to their destination and a thin road that wound steadily upward, going back and forth. Then when they passed under the shadow of the mountain, the company grew even more fearful.

“What is this place?”
“What evil resides here?”

“Must this be our camp before war?”

Many men were asking these questions amongst themselves, doubting the decisions of their king. If they were not loyal, most would jump back on their horses and ride away to anywhere but where they were. Erynell felt the cold chills, too. She trembled looking up at the cliff faces and the jagged mountain slopes. Many people noticed her distress once again.

“My lady, you will be safe. There is nothing to worry about.” The first to approach her was Gamling, the captain of Théoden’s guard and the one who left her Léod.

“I am reassured, thank you, sir.” She responded. Often Gamling would speak to her in passing. He was simply kind. Still, Eowyn was always teasing her.

“He seems a bit old for you, my lady.” Eowyn mocked her in their tent.

“He is kind, Princess.” Erynell sneered at her friend in retaliation.

“And he is sixty-three years old. And he is compassionate towards you. And he gave you a horse.” Eowyn laughed.

“Eowyn.” Erynell sighed and leaned back.

“I am only teasing. Gamling is a very honorable man. His wife died long ago and he and my father were great friends.” Eowyn smiled with her memories. Erynell did not say anything. She often stayed silent at the mention of Eowyn’s parents. “And anyway we don’t even know if he is your senior. You are an elf! You could be thousands of years my senior and still be sharing a tent with me!”

“And yet I remember none of it.”

“You will though. Amnesia is not usually permanent; especially when you have a great wizard to help you.” Eowyn lay back onto her cot as well and said nothing else. After a while, Erynell figured her to be asleep so she exited the tent.

The moon was just barely shining over the top of the mountain. The eerie, pale glow succeeded in giving everything a surrealistic yet beautiful shine. Looking around at everything bathed in the light, Erynell found she could hear a whisper in the back of her mind. She was drawn to the edge of the cliff faced and saw a great pine branch emerging from a hidden clove of rocks below her. Cautiously, with knowledge that if she fell she would not be able to get back up, Erynell climbed down a bit.

The elf did lose her grip when one rock she tried to hold broke off. She fell back, too afraid to scream and let go of the rock which she heard echo down the cliff she tried to balance on the small ledge where her feet rested, but she ended up tipping too far backwards.

When she closed her eyes, she expected to fall to her death. Instead, she landed with a rush of air on the very tree branch she had been trying to investigate. The branch shuddered and the elf felt as if she was being laughed at. The pines below her were soft, tickling her as she sat up.

“Thanks.” She spoke out loud, not knowing why she felt compelled to thank the tree that caught her. She was amazed that she had fallen just right so that the branch would catch her. When she had looked down from her position, the branch was not directly below her. In her fright she must have kicked off the wall with enough force to land her directly on the branch.
Erynell slowly crawled over the branch to the clove where she set her feet and stood, rubbing the tree bark. She smiled at the tree, surprised that such a little thing could hold her weight.

“You appear young, but you feel very old. Your roots are weak but your aura is strong. Grow tall.” She didn’t think as she spoke to the tree, reassuring it. “This rock must not have many nutrients and the water that falls mostly misses you. How do you survive?”

Erynell smiled and looked around before nearly jumping out of her skin.

_Determination._

The voice came from inside her head. It was croaky and deep, and Erynell looked around in surprise.

_I must need to sleep tonight. Perhaps I am unwell._ She shook her head and climbed back towards camp.

Erynell gripped the edge of the cliff, knowing she was not going to be able to pull herself up.

_I haven’t felt this tired since I needed healing._ She frowned and closed her eyes.

_One…

_Two…

_Three…_

The elf yanked up as hard as she could and used her feet to try and find catches along the cliff edge. She was about to fall back down when a hand came out of nowhere. She grabbed it without thinking and was pulled up like she was made of air. She was light, being an elf, but the person who pulled her up must have been strong still.

“What were you doing, hanging from a cliff?” Legolas spoke as Erynell stood.

“I was making a new friend.” She sighed and dropped her shoulders. Legolas looked over the edge of the cliff and smiled.

“A strong little tree.”

“And old.” Erynell spoke with deep breaths. Legolas looked back and forth between her and the tree. He smiled slightly at her.

“You must be from the woodland realm if you can speak to him.” His bright blue eyes, shining in the moonlight, looked excited for the first time she had seen. For once he did not look cold and calculating.

“I do not know what you mean. Trees cannot talk.” She answered, her Sindarin was very quiet.

“There are other ways to communicate.” He smiled and turned away. Before he left, he turned back slightly. “That tree is rooting for you.” Erynell smiled a bit, still confused, and returned to her tent where she did sleep.

“Erynell.” Eowyn was shaking her. Dim light was seeping through the tent that Erynell saw as she returned to consciousness. “You sleep with your eyes open.”

“I usually don’t sleep.” Erynell replied and sat up, running her fingers through her dark hair.
“Make preparations, tonight we leave.” Eowyn emphasized the word so Erynell would understand. They were going to sneak away, change to appear as men, and then ride to battle.

“Is the company riding out tomorrow?” She asked her friend.

“At the crack of dawn.” Eowyn picked up her sword and swung it around. The blade separated the air with a woosh. “Let’s go practice.” Erynell picked up her sword and knives and followed Eowyn cautiously outside.

A group of men gathered at the top of the cliff, looking down at the growing number of tents below them. Erynell listened to their conversation as she followed Eowyn.

“They are coming less frequently and with fewer men. There is no hope.” One said, taking off his helmet and running his hand through his hair.

“We cannot face another army like the one at Helm’s Deep and this one will be five times the size.” Another dropped to his knees. Erynell shook her head of the negative thoughts and ran to catch up with Eowyn who had just disappeared behind some trees. As she broke through the tree line, she felt a point on her back and immediately dropped her sword.

“On guard, elf.” Eowyn’s voice was deeper, much like a young man. Erynell laughed and bent down to pick up Hathelas. She unsheathed the sword and the two started sparring. They spent most of the day like that before sitting in the trees to talk about who they will pretend to be as men.

“You shall call me Dernhelm; Young Squire of the North.” Eowyn smiled and started cleaning her blade with the hem of her dress.

“Call me Wynléas; Hopeless Volunteer of Snowbourn.” Erynell leaned back and let her face be shone on by a small ray of sunshine that was soon covered by cloud, just as the Rohirrim rays of hope were quickly fading.

The two practiced their deep voices and back stories with each other until the sun started to sink below the horizon.

“We should go pack.” Erynell stood, sheathing Hathelas. Eowyn nodded and did the same with her sword.

“It is time.”

Walking back to their tent, a few men approached to say farewell and that the ladies would see them again. Said ladies were not so sure, but exchanged pleasantries all the same.

When they returned to their tent, they found Merry dressed in his armor. Eowyn bent and adjusted his helmet.

“There! A true Esquire of Rohan.” Eowyn smiled at him. He exhaled, excited and terrified at the same time. Then he drew his sword quickly, almost hitting Eowyn. Eowyn jumped back, laughing while the hobbit looked at her sheepishly.

“Sorry. It isn't all that dangerous. It isn't even sharp.” Merry looked at his blade with a bit of disappointment. Eowyn crossed her arms.

“Well, that's no good. You won't kill many Orcs with a blunt blade. Come on.” Eowyn ushered Merry back the way that her and Erynell came. “To the Smithy, go!” She called at him and nearly pushed him away. He passed Éomer and Gamling who were finishing a meal by a crackling fire when he hurried away.
“You should not encourage him.” Éomer slurped on the last bit of his soup.

“You should not doubt him.” Eowyn crossed her arm and approached her brother. Erynell could imagine steam coming from her ears.

“I do not doubt his heart….Only the reach of his arm.” Gamling stifled a laugh and almost choked on his soup. Eowyn then turned on the both of them.

“Why should Merry be left behind? He has as much cause to go to war as you. Why can he not fight for those he loves?” Eowyn spoke the last part to herself and tears suddenly shone in her eyes. She turned away from the soldiers as they looked at each other curiously and threw back the covering of her tent to pack her things.

Erynell had gone to Léod to get away from the emotional and passionate Eowyn. When she passed, Gamling looked at her apologetically and kept eating his soup, and Éomer looked at her with a bit of concern. As she fed Léod a ripe, red apple, she knew that her worry must’ve been showing on her face. Erynell felt a hand on her shoulder and she turned around. Léod lifted his head to stare at the newcomer. It was Éomer.

“I give you my apologies, my lady, if my words offended you.” He looked down and bowed his head. Erynell bowed hers in return.

“You are forgiven, though I was simply worried.”

“Do not worry too much, Lady Erynell. I’m sure that many will return. Yes, some will not and it could be anyone but-” He stopped at the look on her face. “What I meant was, you’ll be in good hands with whoever comes back no matter who it is.” He sighed. Erynell smiled but was less reassured than ever.

_How many times must I hear variations of this same speech?_ She thought. Éomer looked around and left, thinking that he helped while he did not.

Erynell placed her weapons under the saddlebags and knapsacks on Léod’s back and once again felt a presence behind her. She turned slowly, hiding Hathelas behind her back. This time, the visitor was Legolas.

“I know what you are planning to do and I would advise against it.” His blue eyes were narrowed. Erynell didn’t know what to say.

“Oh.” She simply said, looking down.

“You should go back as you planned.” He restated.

“I will not. I will defend these people.” She said. She simply wanted Legolas to leave.

“A shadow grows in my mind. The outcome of this war will be terrible enough without the bodies of two women on the battlefield.” His eyes softened but his words were no less harsh.

“I have faith that I will come through. I made a promise to die for what I believe in.” At least she hoped she had faith.

“Do you believe in the race of man? If I am correct, then I am the only elf you’ve met and Gimli the only dwarf. Do you believe in these men or are they the only ones you are able to believe in?”

“It is the same thing.” Erynell crossed her arms and frowned. “I will fight and you will not hinder me. Besides, you are the one that helped me with my fighting.”
“I taught you how to defend yourself. If I was aware of this being your goal, I would not have obliged.” He frowned as well.

“This was my goal and you did oblige. Now please leave me, I have preparations to make and your words offend me, Master Legolas.” Erynell turned back to her horse. Legolas did not say anything else, he just stood there watching her and she could feel it. It was not until Gimli came and said that he needed Legolas that he finally left.

Erynell turned to watch the elf walk away and mentally punished herself.

_That was uncalled for by me. He is a Prince and I spoke to him as my equal._

She was about to return to preparing Léod as if for a long journey but saw Aragorn first leave his tent and then another hooded figure follow him out. She looked at the hooded man in curiosity, wondering who he was before he paused and looked at her as well. Light barely shone under his hood and all she could see was the glint of a golden circlet upon his head, and then when he finally turned away, one pointed ear, not quite tucked under the hood. Her breath caught.

_An elf._

Erynell wished she could go and speak to him, but she held back, figuring that he was some foreign diplomat coming to aid the armies and she might see him again. She was wrong, but she continued with Léod nonetheless.

After finishing, Erynell returned to the tent she shared with Eowyn only to find her friend on her cot, sobbing quietly. She rushed to her side.

“Eowyn, what is wrong?” Erynell was deeply concerned, something terrible must have happened for her friend to be acting in such a way.

“My Lord Aragorn” Eowyn paused to take a breath, “he is deserting us.” Erynell looked up and felt her own chest tighten.

_Then there really is no hope, for even the strongest among us are leaving._

Erynell stood and raced out of the tent to see Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli retreating through the mountain pass that so many would not go near. She raced to Léod then and jumped on his back, not thinking. She needed to know if they were really deserting. She passed surprisingly unseen by the men who were gathered at the entrance. They were arguing amongst themselves and were too preoccupied to care who was going through the frightful pass.

_This night has not gone as planned._ Erynell thought to herself looking around. Only after a few hours had Erynell realized that Eowyn would have thought she had run off, too. _If I survive this and if she does as well, then I must find her and explain my reasoning. At least she has Merry._ Her heart went out to the poor hobbit and wondered if he had been able to ride out.

They would be leaving right then; the sun barely peaked over the jagged pale rocks surrounding the pass. Erynell looked around once more. She was aware of the lack of greenery and perhaps that is why she was so apprehensive, though she knew the feeling of dread growing in the pit of her stomach was not one caused by anything within reason.

“What kind of army would linger in such a place?” Erynell heard the gruff voice of Gimli and fell back; knowing that if she could hear the ones she followed, then Legolas could probably hear her, too. Legolas had started into some long talk, explaining who the men of the mountain are, when Erynell fell back and lost their voices.
Even without her hearing, she knew she still followed them because there was one path leading to one place. Before her rose the dark ridges of the mountain, looming closer and closer. She gulped and took a drink of water while Léod’s steps shook beneath them. Erynell dismounted and decided to walk beside him, reassuring him that she was there, too.

After a few more hours, Erynell decided to pick up her pace so she wouldn’t fall too far behind. Soon after, she heard the voice of Aragorn.

“….The way is shut.” Erynell’s mind spun. What way? Would they be coming back this way only to see she had followed them? Erynell doubted that they would accept her company readily.

She heard nothing for a short while so she rounded a corner of a jagged rock. A dark stone passage, much like an abyss the way it seemed to swallow the light around it, lead into the mountain. The trio had gone in there, Erynell was sure of it. Léod had bolted as soon as he had seen the passage and left her behind.

Erynell was never more frightened in her entire life. She had not idea what she was frightened of, other than the fact that every five steps there would be another skeleton littering the ground. The elf was constantly thinking about keeping her breathing steady and even. The terror and adrenaline coursing through her veins was causing Erynell to tremble, and every step further into the mist was like walking to an executioner’s block.

In her restlessness, Erynell could have sworn the mist was forming ghostly shapes. Pale hands grasped at her, pulling her further into the darkness. Behind her, she thought she could hear a soft pounding like footsteps, but they were too light even for an elf. The more time she spent moving forwards, the more time Erynell was sure something was closing in on her from behind. She was being watched, though she knew not by what.

Every time she turned her head and her hair ran across the back of her neck, Erynell would shiver and nearly freeze in terror. More than once she felt something scurry over her foot and she heard the sharp *crack* of a bone underneath her foot with every step. If she didn’t get out soon, Erynell was sure she would collapse and not wake again.

More hours passed and soon Erynell saw a faint green glow in the passage ahead of her. She didn’t know what could cast such a light, but she started walking forward; glad to be out of the darkness and the mist. Only when a cruel laughter chilled her to the bone did she slow, and even then she was barely shadowed from the sight before her eyes.

Men of all shapes and sizes and decked out in old battle armor glowed in the giant hall before her. Erynell tried to study them, but the more she looked at any one of them specifically, the more they would disappear before her eyes. These were not natural beings. Over a great chasm to her right, men floated still; not falling, panicking, or even taking notice of the darkness beneath their feet. The elf could see through the men at a glance, and in the middle she saw those whom she had been following.

Erynell was frozen, watching the ghostly figures in front of her in horror. There was one who was being held with Aragorn’s sword at his throat. More of the dry, rasping laughter came forth as the apparent leader opened his mouth and before Erynell could catch her breath, the figures started disappearing, only leaving Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli in the center of the room.

All was quiet while Erynell tried to pull herself from near-hysterics and Aragorn turned disappointedly toward his companions. But then a loud, resounding *boom* echoed off the walls as rocks dropped from the ceiling and cracks appeared in the walls.
“Run!” Aragorn yelled, the word meant for his two companions, but Erynell straightened up and heeded the command anyway, especially when some of the rocks raining down on them were not rocks, but skulls.

What sort of place is this!? Erynell screamed in her mind, wishing to be back at Edoras where she could be safe. She practically swam through the skulls littering the ground, rising ever higher, trying to bury her and add her own skull to the collection. Still, the burning adrenaline coursing through her told her to just keep swimming and follow the strangled cries of one dwarf who was in front of her.

At one last moment, Erynell spotted a small opening at the top of a tunnel. Knowing this was her only chance, the elf dove foreword and immediately felt herself falling. Erynell slid on the smooth skulls and bit her tongue to keep from crying out in disgust.

Finally, Erynell was lying on solid ground; she could feel it. She started coughing and opened her eyes to see the sky a beautiful blue color and the sun high in the sky. Around her were piles of more bones, dirt, and dust. She stood immediately and started brushing the bone shards and filth from her leggings and overcoat. Then she saw the man, the elf, and the dwarf looking at her.

Legolas smiled slightly, letting Erynell know that he knew she had been following the entire time. Aragorn did not look so pleased. He was frowning and looking around her, probably wondering if Eowyn had followed as well. Then there was Gimli. The dwarf was simply looking on at her in shock. No one said anything; there were more important words to be said later.

Aragorn turned around to look at the river flowing before them. He recognized the fleet of pirates he had been warned about and fell to his knees, knowing that nothing could be done now to stop them. Legolas turned to put a reassuring hand on his arm and Gimli simply rested his arms on the ax that was almost as tall as he was.

Erynell placed a hand to her chest, finally trying to let herself relax after her numerous heart attacks in the caves. She turned around to look at the way they had come, and nearly fainted when one of the green apparitions she thought she had seen the last of emerged from the wall. With her gasp, the others tuned to look.

The ghost passed by her without a glance and approached Aragorn who stood up proudly.

“We fight.” The figure spoke in rasps. Aragorn smiled and drew his sword. Gimli picked up his ax. Legolas held his bow aloft and Erynell unsheathed her blade which she had thankfully removed from Léod before he bolted. Erynell stood by Legolas as they waited for the ships to approach, finally with what little courage he had before renewed.

When the ships finally got close to shore and the pirates looked on at the company now of four, they laughed sharply, not taking two elves, a dwarf, and a man seriously.

“Prepare to be boarded.”

Chapter End Notes

For those of you who are interested, I created a tumblr page for this story! Find it at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com
Aragorn lead the way onto the closest ship of the secret fleet when all the pirates were finally gone. At first when they found the strange company of four, the pirates only laughed in the faces of those trying to threaten them. Then, the ghosts appeared.

In hoards of green mist, the undead emerged from the side of the mountain. They practically boarded the black ships while the men were still laughing in the face of their destruction. However, once they did see the ghosts, the pirates needed little incentive to throw themselves from their vessels and into the mighty river below.

Erynell was smiling widely. It pleased her greatly that she need not have even lift her sword in defense. Maybe the army of the dead would be a strong asset. Maybe many more men would return home because of it.

The woman was the last to step from solid ground and onto the edge of the ship. But as she was still practically balancing over the surging current below, she froze. The rushing of water and calling of gulls overcame her. She could smell and taste salt as if from the sea. A breeze from behind her blew her hair to the West.

Erynell closed her eyes and saw herself in the water with white shores before her. In her mind, that place seemed heavenly. She wanted nothing more at that minute to let go of the side of the ship and fall straight into the rapids. After all, all rivers lead to the ocean. Then she did let go.

For a split second, she was falling down, the rushing water growing ever louder in her ears. Then, something soft yet hard as steel was clamped around her left wrist and the force of suddenly being pulled up made Erynell slam into the side of the ship where she opened her eyes again and become very confused as to why she was hanging over the edge.

Aragorn was the one to see her close her eyes and decide to fall. He lunged over the side of the vessel and caught her wrist in his hand just in time before she was swept away. Aragorn pulled Erynell up and looked at her with concerned eyes.

“It would be unwise to fall into the water now, my lady.” Aragorn spoke to her softly, as if speaking to a child. Slightly ashamed, Erynell tried pulling her wrist from Aragon’s hand. The skin was quickly turning black and blue from how hard he held her, though the bruise was fading as quickly as it was forming. Oh, the healing of elves.

It was her shoulder that made her clench her write fist and bite the inside of her cheek to keep
from calling out. She could not move it without it sending fiery pain throughout her left side. Aragorn sighed.

“Forgive me, Lady Erynell. I seemed to have dislocated your shoulder.” Aragorn bowed his head and grabbed onto her upper arm.

“You are forgiven, you saved my-” Erynell was cut off by her own scream as Aragorn snapped the arm back in place. She panted, clutching her arm for a good minute. “-life.” She finished.

“What was that?” Erynell asked, now sitting against a barrel and looking over the edge of the boat. Legolas turned to answer.

“That is the Sea-longing.” Legolas said, looking over the water with a pained expression. Erynell realized that he felt it too.

“Why was I just about to kill myself?” Erynell asked him, knowing that he would be the one with the answers. Instead of giving a straight answer though, he spoke in rhyme.

“Legolas Greenleaf long under the tree,
In joy thou hast lived, Beware the Sea!
If thou hearest the cry of the gull on the shore,
Thy heart shall then rest in the forest no more.”

Erynell still did not understand. Gimli looked confused at the rhyme, as if trying to figure out its meaning. Aragorn smiled softly and continued steering the ship, which he had been doing since he reset Erynell’s arm.

“That prophecy was spoken to me by the Lady Galadriel of Lothlorien. I assumed she was speaking of my death, but now I know she was speaking of exactly where the Sea-longing would overcome me.” Legolas sighed, torn between the forests of his father and the white shores of his people. “All elves will experience this and eventually sail to the white shores across the sea by passage of boat or by death.”

“Why were you not overcome as I was?” Erynell asked, not liking the sound of this white shores place.

“I have been preparing for this my entire existence.”

“Someone could have told me.” Erynell straightened her collar against the icy wind of the river and crossed her arms against her chest. Legolas smiled.

They spent a long time in silence, just sitting on the deck of the ship. Erynell was embarrassed of her actions earlier and did not want to ask any more questions. She was afraid of appearing clueless and incapable. She leaned her head back against the barrel and looked up at the sky.

The atmosphere surrounding them as they sailed to battle was chilling and overall evil. Erynell shivered, though not from the cold since elves do not chill easily, and looked around. The ghostly men would be watching them, invisible. They would be listening and paying attention to everything that was being said. With thoughts of their presence, Erynell remembered the questions she could not help but ask.

“Who, or what, are they? The men under the mountain.” Erynell looked first at Gimli who seemed as frightened as she was and then at Legolas.
“They are the undead, pulled to battle in service by Isildur’s Heir.” Legolas nodded his head at Aragorn. Erynell remembered learning about Isildur in Edoras when she was researching where she was and if there were any hints to her existence. Legolas went on to explain about the men’s oath and how they went back on their word, cursed for all eternity until they could be free of their promise. As it was explained to her, Erynell swore she could hear the guttural sounds of laughter on the wind.

“Now for the really important questions” Gimli butted in just then, nodding his head as he spoke. “What are you doing here and why did you follow us?” Erynell froze for a minute, thinking back to Eowyn and again feeling guilty.

“Princess Eowyn was in our camp saying that some soldiers have deserted us and were leaving through the mountain passage. I wanted to verify her words and ended up following you.”

“Deserting! No one was deserting! We were off to find reinforcements!” Gimli growled. Erynell smiled at his insistence.

“I know that now. I did not then.”

“Then why did you not turn back when you discovered our true purpose.” Legolas sat cross legged and suddenly spoke with a harsh tone in his words.

“I do not know.” Erynell looked at him straight in the eye. She knew what he was going to say next.

“You could have gone back and avoided this war entirely.”

“I will fight. I made a promise and I intend to see it through, no matter the consequences.” Erynell felt as if she wanted to throw one of her knives at Legolas if he kept telling her not to do this.

“Then when we arrive you should stay on the ship.” Legolas said calmly, somehow thinking Erynell may just change her mind.

“Do not try to persuade me off this course of action. I will see it through.” Erynell’s tone left no room for discussion and surprisingly, the Elven prince stayed silent after that. Noticing the tension, Aragorn came over with a whetstone.

“I found this on board. Sharpen your blades.” He said and handed the stone to Erynell. He quickly demonstrated how to do it, and left her on her own. She sharp metallic sound the stone made on the lade made Erynell cringe, though she continued working with it, glad to be preoccupied so no one could question her motives.

She was almost done with her second to last knife when the first sounds of battle could be heard from afar. Erynell continued working though she became slightly sick to her stomach. Soon after they could hear screams of men and beast alike, and the clanging of swords. Erynell wanted to cover her ears before the shrill shriek of one particular creature might’ve caused her to panic and jump over the side of the boat all over again.

“What is that?!” She turned to Aragorn, fear in her eyes.

“The Nazgûl. If you come across one, run, and hide.” He responded, drawing his sword. Legolas, Gimli, and Erynell all followed suit and crouched down, hiding behind the ship’s railing. The ships all slowed and then froze near the shore. Erynell saw a crowd of orcs gathers a hundred yards from where they would jump off the ship.
“Late! As usual! Get off your ships, you sea rats! There’s knife work here needs doing!” One orc called from land. He looked on at the ships while the battle raged behind him.

Suddenly, Aragorn stood up and leapt over the ship onto the ground with a battle cry. The orcs did not know what to think of him and did not even raise their weapons until Legolas and Gimli followed as well.

“….Plenty for the both of us….May the best dwarf win!” Gimli’s retreating figure called to Legolas.

The orcs tightened their ranks as the three were still running towards them and looked amongst themselves. Erynell stood up and walked in a small circle, debating on whether she really was going to jump over to the earth. She remembered Legolas trying to keep her on the ship and laughed sharply before jumping off and following the trio into the battle.

As soon as she jumped, there was another mighty roar from directly behind her. The army of the undead quickly overcame her, climbing over themselves in rolling hills looking like ants tying to get to the enemy. The rolling mountain of ghouls swept all the orcs before them away before Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, and Erynell could even reach them. The army then dispersed to dispose of any enemy they could find.

Putting it simply, battle was pure hell. Erynell was driving Hathelas into anything near her that moved, praying it was no ally, but the only way to survive was to cut down practically all in her path.

Occasionally, Erynell would find cause to throw knives into enemies. For example, when she first saw the Haradrim on their giant Mûmakils for the first time since she was their prisoner, she had been trying everything to cut them down, one by one, and her throwing knives were very effective.

Erynell had been following Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli as closely as she could while still keeping an eye out for Eowyn and Merry. However, she could not lie, everything was a blur around her, and she had no way of knowing who was who among her allies and enemies.

The only way she was able to follow the man, the elf, and the dwarf was to constantly be on lookout for Legolas’ green attire and blonde hair, or to keep her ears honed for the sound of Gimli’s yelling.

More than once, Erynell had turned around to catch a blade about to fall on her just in time. She was able to stick the attacker after about half a minute of swordplay, but overall, orcs were not strong with their defense. They constantly tried to attack and Erynell was able to use that to her advantage.

The elf was about to catch up to Aragorn and his company when he called out to Legolas. In understanding, Legolas jumped onto the back of a Mûmakil, cutting the Haradrim from its back and bringing it down with three arrows to the head. Legolas landed on his feet gracefully in front of Gimli after sliding down the limp trunk of the Mûmakil. The dwarf then started to yell at the elf.

Is he even real? That cannot be possible! Erynell was running through bodies of orcs, occasionally getting her feet caught and clumsily landing on her hands and knees.

Erynell finally caught up to Aragorn once again, before noticing one of the surviving Haradrim creeping up behind him, sword raised and an evil sneer on his face.

“Aragorn!” She yelled and ran faster, ready to kill the Haradrim. While running, her foot was once
more caught between a body and the ground. With her force, Erynell flew forwards and landed on Aragorn, knocking him to the ground. He looked up and saw the Haradrim and he saw Erynell stand up immediately and cut off his head in fury.

When she turned to see if he was alright, Aragorn stood and nodded his head to the woman whom he owed his life. They returned to battle and cut down many more orcs before the field seemed to freeze. A gusty wind blew and on it was carried a shriek and the sound of the crushing of metal armor.

*What could that be?* Erynell looked around, wondering what to make of the noise. She saw Legolas doing the same while everyone else was still fighting. Legolas caught her eye and Erynell slightly lifted her shoulders, ignoring the ache that had been present in her left one since Aragorn reset it. Legolas nodded and they continued fighting, though the number of orcs had gone down drastically.

Erynell allowed herself time to breathe, something she did not believe she had been doing for hours. The scent of blood was heavy on the air and it caused her to feel sick once again. Bodies lay as far as the eye could see, chilling Erynell to the bone. Fleeing the battle, a shadow of hundreds of orcs could be seen retreating to the forest. Erynell smiled at their screams of fear.

Behind her, closer to the white city, Erynell could see the green mist of the hundreds of the undead gathering. Erynell ran that way, knowing that there is where Aragorn and the others would have gone off to.

*Does this mean the battle is won?* She thought as she surprisingly did not trip on any orcs.

The small crowd of those gathered before the undead army consisted of Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Gandalf, and Merry’s best friend Pippin. Erynell had not been able to properly introduce herself to him and smiled that they now could. At the sight of the little hobbit, a shadow of doubt grew in the back of Erynell’s mind.

*If Pippin is here, where is Merry? Where is Eowyn?* She did not see them among the crowd gathered there.

Snapping her out of her thoughts, Aragorn approached the ghost king slowly.

“Release us.” The apparition barely moved his mouth, but his words were strong and haunting.

“Bad idea. Very handy in a tight spot, these lads….despite the fact they’re dead.” Gimli spoke and then backed away when the ghost king seemed to snarl at him.

“You gave us your word.” The undead turned back to Aragorn.

“I hold your oath fulfilled. Go. Be at peace.” Aragorn bowed his head to the ghost king who looked up at the sky. The army seemed to disintegrate and dissolve into dust, blowing away with the wind as the sun broke through the clouds. Aragorn turned as soon as no trace of the army was left and looked at Erynell and the others. Next to her, Gandalf bowed his head in respect and homage, obviously pleased with Aragorn’s decision.

Those gathered started to disperse, looking around for all familiar faces among he dead and wounded. Pippin raced off, looking around, his legs carrying him quickly despite his size. Erynell followed him, a bit slower. She needed to find her friends as well.

Her feet were like lead as she threaded her way around bodies. Erynell was careful to step on neither orc nor man. She had been following Pippin at first, but realized that if he did find Merry then he’d probably want to be left alone with his best friend. So, Erynell started to thread her own
way among the bodies.

There’s that soldier who spoke to Eowyn and I about returning.

I killed that orc. I wonder if he really deserved it.

There you are. I was wondering when you would show up. Erynell stopped walking to look at the soldier before her. He was sprawled out on the ground with a knife wound in the middle of his stomach. Erynell could see the shining of his entrails in the sun.

“Hello, captain.” Erynell spoke harshly to the man Harad who had first held her captive aboard his Mûmakil. For battle, his black hair was braided with gold and sticking to his forehead with sweat. He wore a scarlet tunic with a gold collar under his golden breastplate, and his sword was still lying in his hand.

While she was looking down at him, Erynell realized that his eyes opened. The elf jumped back and kicked the sword out of his hand, thinking he was going to kill her. The man simply looked at her with faraway eyes. She wondered what he was seeing.

“Who….are you?” His breathing was ragged and Erynell realized that he did not remember her.

Good. She thought.

“I am no one. Do not worry.” She spoke, and watched a trail of blood drip down his chin.

“You must be here to escort me from this life.” Erynell could barely hear him, so she kneeled next to him.

“Yes, I am.” Her ill will towards the Haradrim and this captain were pushed aside as she decided to comfort a dying man. A thought stuck her. “What is your name, so that I may tell your god?”

“Suladân.” He stared at her and barely smiled, obviously pleased by her promise. Then his bloody, dirt caked hand grabbed hers. She let him hold it to his chest. “Thank you.” He spoke one last time and closed his eyes, only for them to open again when they saw nothing more.

Erynell relinquished one tear for this Suladân and removed her hand from atop his breast. She stood and then felt a presence approaching her. Gandalf came and stood be her, also looking down at the man she had just comforted.

“You know this man.” Gandalf knew she did, because he had once before read her memories of the Haradrim. The wizard wanted to know what Erynell would say.

“He was the leader of the Haradrim; the one who ordered me a prisoner atop his Mûmakil.” Erynell sighed once and rested her hand on Hathelas at her side. “Did he deserve death, though? All he wanted was comfort and reassurance as he died, he did not wish death upon me.”

Gandalf nodded once and moved his staff to his left hand before putting his right on Erynell’s shoulder.

“How are you faring?” He asked. Erynell just shook her head. Gandalf’s brow furrowed in concern and his lips puckered in thought. “I give you my word that I will do whatever it takes to return your memories. However, if the One Ring is destroyed as it ought to be and the forces of Sauron fall, I think I may have an idea for the restoration of your past.”

“Thank you.” Erynell suddenly turned to hug him around the waist. Gandalf was much taller than her, anyway. The old wizard soon turned away and allowed Erynell to resume the search for her
friends.

At the sound of a pain-stricken yelling, Erynell turned around abruptly and noticed Éomer dropping to his knees and holding the thin body of a soldier with long blonde hair to his chest. Erynell dropped to her knees then as well.

_Eowyn... dead? She died... thinking I betrayed our promise?_ At this, Erynell wanted to cry, but though she found her throat constricted and her chest aching, Erynell did not shed a tear. Instead, she turned back to the horizon where the sun was beginning to set in the west. In that direction, a profile larger than a man was making its way towards her swiftly. She was about to draw her sword before she turned a bit and noticed it was a horse. Her horse.

“Léod!” She called. Léod must have heard his name called and he started running even faster, though his run was off. It was as if he was bucking with every step, as if trying to throw a rider off. Erynell caught his reins in her left hand as he passed and bit her tongue as he pulled on her bad shoulder before stopping. Then she noticed he was being ridden.

On Léod’s back was a dead soldier of the Rohirrim. His hand was tangled in Léod’s mane and his feet wrapped in the stirrups. Erynell was surprised he had not fallen off with Léod’s gallop. The Erynell realized something with the movement of his chest. The soldier was not dead and was using the last of his strength to hold onto Léod. Erynell quickly felt the soldier’s forehead and whispered soothing words in his ear. The she lead Léod to the white city with the soldier on his back.

_Léod must’ve returned to the troops somehow after he bolted and been put to use._ She thought.

As they entered the gates of Minas Tirith, some women from the healing room immediately came and carried to soldier from Léod’s back and into a makeshift bed for healing. One soldier came and tried to take Léod’s reins from her, thinking she just found him and brought him back to the soldiers. Erynell held the reins tighter and glared daggers at the man who then released the reins and backed off. Erynell mounted Léod then and rode passed the insolent soldier and to the stables. There were very few horses in the stables; most were still out on the battlefield or dead there as well. Erynell brought Léod to the brightest stall she could find and was about to unsaddle him when Aragorn and Gandalf strode in behind her. They stopped to look at her and she stopped taking off Léod’s bridle to look at them.

Aragorn was cleaned up. Instead of his old leather and worn clothes, he was wearing new, silky fabrics and armor. His breastplate had a white tree on it and his hair was much neater then than it was no more than an hour ago.

“My lady.” Aragorn bowed his head after a moment of silence. “I was not able to properly thank you for saving my life in battle.” Erynell smiled and nodded her head in response. Gandalf passed Aragorn with a smile and stood directly in front of Erynell.

“We ride to the black gate of Mordor. Will you be there to see the forces of evil fall?” Gandalf asked her straight out, with no warning, with no doubts as to her abilities.

“I will see this through.” She smiled and placed the bride back onto Léod. Gandalf smiled as well. He would have persuaded her to go eventually anyway. The wizard wanted to see if she would get her memories back if they succeeded and he wanted to be there for it.

“Of course, there is a small chance of success. Are you sure?” Gandalf would not lie to the elf.

“I have nothing to lose and everything to gain, Gandalf. I’m sure.”
“We leave now.” Aragorn rested his hand on his sword and left the stables. Gandalf followed with a swish of his robes.

“Here we go, boy.” Erynell spoke into the ear of Léod. He nicked softly and pawed his hoof impatiently. Together, they rode out of the stables to join the company headed to Mordor.

Chapter End Notes

For anyone who's interested, or who absolutely loves this story, I made a tumblr for it! It's at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com
Erynell could feel Léod’s weight shifting beneath her. Looking around, she wondered whether or not Léod was nervous as well. Of course, how would Léod know to be nervous? He could just think they were off on their way to the familiar Edoras. Léod would have no idea that his life was being put in danger by one he trusted.

Well, I hope he trusts me, Erynell thought, though I haven’t given him any apples in quite a while.

“We ride!” Aragorn called from right in front of Erynell making her nudge Léod into action. The sun was setting rapidly even though the plan was to leave Minas Tirith immediately after the Battle of Pelennor Fields. Even Aragorn in all his haste was not able to pull the surviving soldiers from their families immediately, especially when the soldiers were told of this suicide mission.

Erynell, however, was ready to ride to the Black Gate of Mordor immediately after Gandalf had asked her to accompany them. There was nothing for her in Minas Tirith. Her friends were all riding to attack Sauron’s forces and she was almost certain her memories lie in wait with the Eye of Sauron everyone would speak of.

The girl was surrounded by familiar faces as they rode to the East. Before her was Aragorn, leading the soldiers and galloping on his kingly horse, Brego. To her right rode Gandalf, adorned in white and carrying his great staff with Pippin on Shadowfax in front of him.

On her other side rode Legolas and Gimli who were arguing over who killed more enemies in the battle that just passed. Their words made Erynell slightly sick, but she managed to ignore them for a while. Finally, riding behind her were Éomer and Merry.

After the battle, Pippin had told of how he’d pulled Merry out from under the body of a hideous orc and carried him all the way to the healing hall of the white city. After all his turmoil, the smallest hobbit had been delighted to discover that Merry was not sick or wounded. His best friend was only exhausted and would be ready to partake on perhaps their final journey together to defend Frodo and ensure the future of Middle Earth be bright; even without them in it.

All of those surrounding her had accepted Erynell’s company for various reasons. Aragorn now considered her a great friend since she had saved his life from a now decapitated Haradrim and had resolved within himself that now he was indebted to the strange elf. Like the others, he was determined to help her reclaim her memories.

Erynell was glad to have her newfound friends, though she wasn’t sure how happy Legolas was
with her since she had once again resolved to put herself at risk in battle. Gimli still didn’t know what to make of the elf though he seemingly had accepted her as an acquaintance since she did not act as high and mighty as the other elves he’d known; one Blondie included. Then there were the hobbits who both seemed so eager to trust all of those around them. Perhaps that is why they appeared as mere children to Erynell.

Finally, Éomer seemed to have eventually started to trust Erynell once she had fought and killed for the cause of man. He was now determined to protect the girl just as she had protected many of his soldiers at their recent battle.

“So where are all the other elves in these endeavors?” Erynell turned to Legolas. It was the middle of the night and they were allowing the horses to walk at a slower pace in order to regain their stamina.

“Most have already left Middle Earth to go to the shores of Valinor across the sea. Those who remain believe the cause of man to be long lost and are busy defending their own borders from the evil of Mordor.” Legolas looked straight ahead when Gimli scoffed and muttered something about “good for nothing elves.”

“Will you all leave forever?” Erynell was concerned. The Sea-longing was still pushing her to the shores Legolas spoke of, but she had just arrived in Middle Earth and wished to see all that she could.

“Every elf eventually goes to Valinor by boat or by death, but there will still be colonies and small kingdoms present during the next age.” Legolas spoke at first shaking his head and then turned to Erynell.

“And what age is that?” Erynell asked.

“The Fourth age is coming quickly, though it is possible that the next age will be the Age of Sauron or the Age of the Orc if the Ring of Power is not destroyed. That would be the end of all things.” Legolas spoke sadly with a tinge of apprehension in his voice.

“But we are going to Mordor to ensure the destruction of the One Ring,” Erynell paused to turn to Gandalf. “Aren’t we?”

“The outcome of this day is clouded. No one can tell what will happen with our arrival at the Black Gate. It may be our last stand but it will be valiant.” The wizard smiled at his words, as if they had a deeper meaning. Erynell turned away from the old man and looked back to Legolas.

“Will you leave?” Erynell asked him.

“Unless I am taken by the sword of an orc at the Black Gate, then my withdrawal from Middle Earth is far into the future.” Legolas smiled, confident in his abilities and chuckled softly. “Besides, there is still evil threatening my homeland. I can feel it.”

“I feel nothing.” Erynell searched inside her for any clue of her own homeland and then huffed. “Where are you from anyway?” She asked Legolas.

“I hail from Mirkwood where my father, King Thranduil, reigns as Elvenking….” Legolas paused before continuing, his eyes narrowing as he stared into nothingness. “And I know I should want to return, my mind says so and I do miss it, but just as the prophecy stated….”

“Your heart yearns for the sea.” Erynell finished his sentence for him as he nodded. Aragorn looked back briefly only to give an order.
“Pick up the pace once more!” He shouted and had Brego run faster with everyone else following his lead.

They all rode hard with the stars above them. As she rode, Erynell found herself looking above her and studying the small lights twinkling in the heavens.

*How can sky so beautiful cover a world that is so dark?* Erynell was saddened by her thoughts and forced herself to stop thinking them by instead focusing on the thundering hoof beats of those behind her and the breathing of Léod beneath her.

It was another few hours before Aragorn allowed the troops to slow once more, and this time Erynell found herself speaking to Pippin. Merry who was still riding behind her was fast asleep and recovering from stabbing the Witch King and leader of the Nazgûl in the back of the knee.

“It’s so green and everything is so peaceful. Not to mention the food is plenty, pipes are always lit, and the ale is the best in all of Middle Earth.” Pippin was of course speaking of the Shire. Erynell had become curious of his homeland as well when he spoke of it fondly.

“Of course, you’d have to be there to see it to make sure I’m not making it up.” The young hobbit hinted. Erynell smiled.

“Of course I’ll have to see it! ....As long as there is plenty of food.” The elf winked at Pippin, making him blush.

“And, unlike other places people speak of, no evil has tried to invade our borders!” Pippin leaned to look at Legolas who raised his eyebrows and turned away.

“Then I feel it is my duty to venture to your Shire, since I find evil to be so cumbersome.” Erynell was trying to keep herself lighthearted and succeeded in doing so when she found that her comments had lifted Pippin’s spirits as well.

“Then there’re the best made hobbit holes in all of Arda and of course the forests and the parties! Bilbo Baggins – he’s Frodo’s uncle – had one once for his eleventy-first birthday and the entire Shire turned up! It was magnificent, of course then he had to go and disappear....” Pippin continued long into the night, barely stopping for breath. Gandalf chuckled lightly at the hobbits endeavoring speech.

I hope you can find your way back to the land you are so fond of. Erynell smiled sadly as the hobbit kept talking. She was only half listening when Pippin stopped suddenly. Erynell turned, wondering why he’d stopped and saw him looking down at Shadowfax’ mane. The elf raised her eyes to the landscape in front of her and saw the storm of Mordor above them, illuminating the black hills and a tower far away, with a light atop it gleaming with a chilling light.

The Eye. She thought, suddenly. Erynell was able to tear her gaze away from it to look at the hobbit once more.

“There was one night I was on my way to my room at Edoras when I heard strange noises coming from the other side of a door I passed. You left the next day. Did you have something to do with it?” She was genuinely curious and was not expecting the look of shame on the hobbit’s face as he looked up at her or the look of warning from the old wizard behind him.

“I looked into a seeing-stone that Gandalf had. I was stupid and attracted the enemy to me at Edoras. I had to leave with Gandalf to Minas Tirith.” Pippin looked down again and silenced himself. With nothing else to do, Erynell turned again toward the eye on its great tower.

Aragorn once again gave the order to go to a gallop, and Erynell heeded his command, though she
was still looking into the great eye. The eye was not gazing in her direction, but the elf found she could not look away. Instead she studied the flames and the intense darkness of its slit pupil. While Pippin could not bear to look upon it, Erynell could not bear looking away. She was drawn to it, and was being called in deeper as the troops approached and the appearance of the eye became clearer.

Gandalf noticed Erynell staring at the eye before then, and he merely thought she was curious. He observed her behavior and only lightly tapped her on the shoulder to bring her out of her stupor after the elf had stared at the glowing orb, unblinking, for nearly half an hour. She was the only one who could bear looking into it for that long, even Gandalf was having trouble focusing on the eye for an extended period.

Erynell snapped out of her trance and turned to Gandalf confused. They were still galloping fully towards Mordor, and she had no idea why the eye intrigued her so. Gandalf wouldn’t give her any hint and instead looked away, for he himself did not know. Erynell started grasping the strands of Léod’s mane as they galloped on, fully unnerved at her own behavior and impatiently waiting to retrieve her memories.

Finally the dawn arrived. A red sun rose over the dark horizon, almost hidden by clouds immediately, but still shedding hopeful light on the small army. The higher the sun rose, the closer and clearer the black gate appeared before them until finally the army stood in its shadow, packed together and preparing for whatever was coming.

Many men were exhausted from the sleepless night of riding to Mordor, though Erynell was bursting with energy, and she knew the same was true of Legolas who was inspecting his arrows next to her.

After a long moment of uncomfortable silence and waiting for something to happen, Aragorn finally pushed Brego forward to the gate with Legolas, Gimli, Gandalf, Pippin, Merry, Éomer, and a fully armored soldier of Gondor behind him. Erynell stayed put on Léod with the other men, not thinking she had the right to interfere with negotiations.

“Let the lord of the Black Land come forth! Let justice be done upon him!” Aragorn yelled right outside the gate. Everyone could hear him and shifted nervously among themselves.

In less than a minute, the gate opened a mere crack to allow a tall figure on an armored horse through. Something about him unnerved Erynell. Maybe it was the fact that his mouth was twice the size as normal and his helm had no eyeholes. It could even be the fact that he was simply from the Black Land as Aragorn had called it.

The small group that had approached the gate spoke for a moment with the tall figure. Erynell had to look away because her elf eyes could see his black mouth, filled with blood, and seemingly corrupted, as if tainted by the very words the figure spoke.

The figure suddenly held up a shirt that was glinting in the small amount of sunlight breaking through the clouds. Merry and Pippin both remarked in dismay at the sight of the object. Erynell wondered what the shiny shirt was a token for.

Aragorn approached the figure with his hand resting on his sword. When he leaned in, Erynell thought he would simply whisper something to him, maybe a threat. Instead, Erynell flinched when Aragorn roared and swung his sword so as to cut off the head of the thing.

The group turned and rode back, looking grim. In response to her curious eyes, Legolas simply nodded and returned to his spot next to her.
“What happened?” Erynell leant to ask Gandalf. The old wizard just shook his head and drew his sword. Erynell did the same, following his example, and turned to see the black gate open wide, letting an army of thirty thousand orcs out of Mordor. Erynell’s breath caught in her throat, looking to Aragorn in panic.

“Hold your ground—hold your ground! Sons of Gondor—of Rohan….my brothers!” Aragorn caught Erynell’s eyes before turning away and galloping in front of the army to inspire them.

“I see in your eyes the same fear that would take the heart of me. The day may come when the courage of Men fails; when we forsake our friends and break all bonds of fellowship; but it is not this day – an hour of wolves and shattered shields, when the Age of Man comes crashing down – but it is not this day!!! This day we fight! By all that you hold dear on this good earth – bid you stand! Men of the West!”

Aragorn held Anduril aloft, enticing the others to do the same. In Erynell’s hand was Hathelas, heavy and not ready to stab more beings, but the elf would do what she must. With Aragorn’s word, the army dismounted from the backs of their horses. Erynell briefly wished Léod good luck, telling him to stay out of trouble, before she turned to smile at Aragorn. She was scared out of her mind, but she would try and be optimistic for others’ sakes.

“Never thought I’d die fighting side by side with an elf.” Gimli gruffly spoke and glanced at Legolas. With a smile, Legolas looked down upon Gimli.

“What about side by side with a friend?” He spoke quietly, causing Erynell to smile as she eavesdropped.

“Aye, I could do that.” Legolas dropped his hand on Gimli’s shoulder while she turned back to the orcs that were steadily growing in number and surrounding them.

Before either army made any moves, a sudden light burned over the men waiting in the sea of orcs. The eye was glaring at Aragorn in its fury. The would-be king stepped forward briefly lowering his sword and looking at the eye in awe. Erynell was afraid that he was being corrupted by the eye’s sick power, but he then turned around to face Erynell and all the rest of the group.

“For Frodo.” He spoke with tears in his eyes and once again led the charge into the enemy. There was a moment of silence before anyone else gathered the courage to run, but the ones who did were the two stout hobbits accompanying the men. Erynell smiled and lifted her blade, a tear sliding down her cheek.

The rest of the army, including Erynell, leapt forward with cries of their own and quickly overtook the brave hobbits. They were soon engaged in their second battle in two days and fighting bravely.

Erynell was seeing men of Gondor and Rohan alike falling on blades left and right. She could barely manage to dodge the orcs herself and was using defense for nearly the entire time of her fight. The only thing she could think of was surviving and defeating the enemy, for she had more cause than most to want Sauron to fall.

It was only a short time then before Erynell recognized the shrill screeching of the Nazgûl. She closed her eyes slowly and opened them again to look above her. There were only eight of them now, though that did not give anyone much hope.

Erynell looked around to use the quick distraction to see who was still alive. Surprisingly, most men had been faring well, and not as many had died as she thought. All of her new friends were alive and fighting, and that’s when she spotted Gandalf.
The wizard was whispering frantically to something in his hand as he was looking up at the Nazgûl bearing down upon them. Opening his hand, Erynell saw a large moth flutter away and quickly out of sight. She had no time to ponder, however, before she had to continue defending herself.

Erynell was lucky that she had been missed by the claws of the Nazgûl whenever they had raked down a lot of men surrounding her. There had been close calls, however, and Erynell was starting to become weary and starting to accept her impending doom.

Then there was another call. It was not chilling or evil like that of a Nazgûl. This call was different; full of hope and light. It returned the courage to Erynell’s heart as she started fighting harder, cutting down more orcs and staining Hathelas with more black blood.

“Eagles…” Pippin somehow managed to find himself right next to Erynell. She was glad the small hobbit was still on his feet. As he spoke, his tone was disbelieving. “The Eagles are coming! The Eagles are coming!”

Sure enough, as Erynell looked up, she saw great birds engaging the Nazgûl with a certain ferocity she had not encountered before. After a while and a few Nazgûl falling to crush crowds of orcs below, the remaining ones turned in a flurry of wings and hurtled back over the gate towards the large mountain in the middle of the land.

“They’re retreating!” Erynell called. She had a smile on her face as they flew away.

“No.” Gandalf said quietly, narrowing his eyes. “They’ve figured out the diversion.” The light of the Eye of Sauron left as well, honing in on the entrance of Mount Doom.

Erynell’s smile fell and she sliced open another orc.

*This is still going to work. They are too late. We will win.* Erynell was whispering words of encouragement to herself. They could not fail. She could not die without knowledge of who she was.

Behind her, there was a great bellowing roar. Erynell turned to see a great armored troll advancing on Aragorn with a spiked mallet. The troll roared again and hit the ground with his mallet. Dirt and rubble flew everywhere, even spraying Erynell who was a good fifty yards away.

With the troll, the great eye was suddenly drawn back to the battle at the black gate. However, its gaze stopped on Erynell. The elf dropped Hathelas in the midst of battle and stared back. Her mind was suddenly flooded with thoughts that were not her own and Erynell could hear a voice like a shadow, cloaking itself over Erynell’s head and seemingly separating her from reality.

The more the black speech echoed in her head, the more Erynell felt sick. She fell to her knees and covered her ears, trying to scream but not getting any sound out. Erynell barely registered the blonde elf in front of her, defending her while she could not fight for herself, until she closed her eyes and saw someone else behind her lids.

The one she saw was the one speaking, though she could not focus on him. He was screaming at her, his words quickly changing from the black speech into that of Elvish and echoing in such a way the words flooded her mind and lost their meaning. The voice was growing louder and louder until it stopped, almost as if it gave up. Then her mind was hers again, though her ears were ringing loudly.

Erynell stood, seeing her friends all looking at her and slowly nodding, though her brows were furrowed.
What had just happened? Erynell asked herself. She looked around and noticed both armies had stopped. The men and orcs were clearly separated once again and all eyes gazed upon the massive dark tower of Sauron. Behind it, Mount Doom was clearly erupting, and the tower itself was starting to crumble.

Around Erynell, there were mixed looks of terror, joy, and dismay. The very foundations of Mordor were crumbling away. The earth under the orcs was collapsing and sending them falling to their death. None escaped even as they scurried in all directions to avoid their doom.

Then there was Mount Doom itself. Lava and smoke was exploding from its many fissures and Erynell took a step back in realization.

If that is where Frodo and Sam are, then they must be dead. Erynell started tearing up once more, seeing her other friends look on in dismay, knowing that there would be no way for Frodo and Sam to survive the cataclysm.

Finally, Erynell looked back at the tower of Barad-dûr, and caught the Eye of Sauron once more. It was staring straight at her as it fell. Erynell was suddenly compelled to run forward. She screamed as Legolas caught her and kept her from running straight into the chasm that was once Mordor. Once more her mind was flooded in Sindarin, but this time the tone was soft and pleading.

“Annatar!” Erynell screamed the name loudly and desperately. When the tower finally fell into dust and rubble, Erynell’s mind was empty once again, though now she was sobbing uncontrollably.

Gandalf, who had been standing nearby, rushed over and whispered something into her ear as he bent down to be at her level. The wizard closed her eyes as she fell lightly into Legolas’ arms, unconscious.

Erynell woke up in a bed, very sore. She breathed heavily before opening her eyes and looking around.

This is Minas Tirith. Erynell could recall from the first time she’d been there. This is one of the Houses of Healing. Again, Erynell recognized her surroundings. She carefully moved every one of her joints and muscles to see where she was hurt so badly she needed to be taking up a bed. The only thing she could think of was the migraine plaguing her head.

Erynell stood, slightly blinded from the light reflecting off the walls outside of her window, and walked toward the door, head pounding. She easily found the main chamber of the healing hall and was surprised she had not seen anyone else yet. Across the tiled floor, however, there was a door open a crack and voices coming out. Happy voices.

Erynell rushed over, not wanting to be seen by anyone for some reason, and she peeked into the room. There was Êomer and lying in a cot holding his hand, there was a familiar figure clad in white with long blonde hair. Her left arm was heavily wrapped and she was smiling with her brother.

Eowyn! Erynell almost started to cry out in the hall, but before she did, Êomer stood.

“Let me find you some food.” He spoke to his sister and let go of her hand. Erynell just managed to round a corner to hide before the now King of Rohan strode past.

Now’s my chance. Erynell slipped into the room that Êomer had just vacated and closed it softly to a crack behind her. When she turned, Eowyn was just staring at her. Erynell however was smiling
widely. As soon as Erynell stepped forward to speak with her friend, Eowyn’s gaze turned into one of fury.

“You left.” Eowyn spoke, not as a question but as a statement, a very angry statement, too.

“I still fought at Pelennor Fields.” Erynell’s face suddenly dropped, remembering that Eowyn would react that way.

“I did not see you. You did not ride with me into battle. You left me to fight alone.” Eowyn’s eyes held the fire that Erynell so admired.

“You had Merry.” Erynell pointed out and then widened her eyes, realizing how that sounded. “I followed Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli through the Mountain Pass. We did not desert you. We found reinforcements.” Erynell’s voice was starting to sound pleading.

“What reinforcements?” Eowyn asked.

“The dead men of the mountain.”

“You abandon me and then feed me impossible lies! I know of those tales, no one can tame those traitors.”

“Aragorn did. He had Anduril.” Erynell shook her head and briefly remembered the night before they left the mountain pass. Erynell still wished to learn who the elf was that had given Aragorn his sword.

“I do not believe it.” Eowyn crossed her arms carefully, wining as her left arm touched her right.

“But what about you? I saw Éomer holding your corpse to his chest. I thought you were dead!” Erynell changed the subject.

“My arm was broken when the leader of the Nazgûl struck my shield with his mace. I passed out from the pain. I was not dead.” Eowyn looked out the window. Erynell rushed to the injured woman’s side.

“The leader of the Nazgûl?! I wanted to flee when I saw any one of them! You fought their strongest?” Erynell sat where Éomer had and looked on at her friend in shock. Eowyn said nothing and turned away.

“My arm was broken when the leader of the Nazgûl struck my shield with his mace. I passed out from the pain. I was not dead.” Eowyn looked out the window. Erynell rushed to the injured woman’s side.

“The leader of the Nazgûl?! I wanted to flee when I saw any one of them! You fought their strongest?” Erynell sat where Éomer had and looked on at her friend in shock. Eowyn said nothing and turned away.

“Eowyn,” Erynell’s voice dropped, “I fought and I killed and I saw good people die. I walked among corpses, sat with the dying as they took their last breath, and I cried on the field of battle; for you and everyone else. Then I marched on to Mordor and fought more orcs without ever recovering from the earlier battle. I killed again and I cried again and I watched Mordor fall into rubble.

“Forgive me for seemingly abandoning you, but even as I followed the others through the mountain, I was adamant about keeping my promise and helping you on the fields of blood. Ask the ones who wanted me to turn away. Ask the ones who wanted to keep me on a bloody ship instead of letting me defend mankind. Ask about what I said in response to those demands, and believe me, I was not being very lady-like.” Erynell finished her little speech and let more tears spill down her face.

Eowyn sighed and finally smiled, tears spilling down her own cheeks. Then the woman reached up with her right arm and pulled the elf into a careful embrace. Both smiled and started to talk about everything that had happened to the other one. Although the two had much they wanted to talk about, a voice soon was heard from the door. Both women jumped and looked up, wondering
how long Gandalf had been standing in the doorway.

“May I steal Lady Erynell from you for a bit, Lady Eowyn?” He leant on his staff and smiled slightly. Eowyn nodded and lay back down. Her brother rushed in with a bowl of stew. Erynell stood and looked at the wizard. Now it was her turn to be upset at someone. Éomer smiled at the elf as she passed, but Erynell ignored him and went to walk back to her room with Gandalf.

She was lying in bed again at the insistence of Gandalf. Her migraine had returned and instead of looking at Gandalf as he was looking at her, she instead surveyed the view outside of her window. However, after soon realizing that Gandalf was more stubborn than she was, Erynell spoke up.

“You promised.” She said.

“I said that I would try. I thought that when the tower fell you would have your memories again.” Gandalf spoke and sat in the chair next to her bed. Erynell shook her head at him and curled her hand into a fist under her blanket. She could feel the nails digging into her skin.

“Why didn’t it work?” Erynell asked and then did turn to Gandalf who puckered his lips in thought.

“While you did not regain your memories, something did happen to you. You remembered something.” Gandalf leaned forward and spoke just above a whisper. “Annatar.” Erynell breathed deeply.

“What does that word even mean, Gandalf? You are only confusing me.” Erynell just wanted him to leave.

“My dear, that is the answer to who you are.”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! With this chapter, we are more than halfway through what I've written so far. So, stick around.

For anyone who's interested, you can find the tumblr page for this story at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com
In her bed, Erynell leaned forward at the old wizard’s words. They had been speaking of regaining her memories, a prospect that was growing more and more hopeless in the elf’s mind every minute. Previously, the wizard told Erynell that she may remember everything when the tower of Barad-dûr fell from its heights. He was wrong, and Erynell was resentful.

“How is it you know who I am, when even I have no idea?” Erynell would not make eye contact with Gandalf.

“Well,” he sputtered. Erynell noticed that he did that a lot when he was uncomfortable. “I know where you are from and roughly how old you are.” Erynell fell back onto her pillow and looked out the window. Gandalf continued when she said nothing.

“Before the great rings were forged and even before the Last Alliance of Men and Elves, one very well-known Elven citadel was Eregion. It was named for the great holly trees growing there and was inhabited by elves from all over Arda. At one point, it was the greatest Elven stronghold of Arda.” While explaining, Gandalf’s eyes became clouded as if by memory.

“Then Eregion is my home? I am from this place?” Erynell did not know what to think on the prospect of home.

“You are either from there or you were there when certain events unfolded.” Gandalf sputtered once again, though Erynell was too deep in thought to notice.

“So if I can return there, someone might recognize me and actually help me remember.” Erynell’s voice faded at the end of her sentence, realizing she was indirectly insulting the wizard.

“Yes, you would be able to….if it weren’t for Annatar.” Gandalf seemed to enjoy leaving Erynell with only slight bits of information.

“And Annatar is….?”

“Annatar was one of the many aliases used by the Dark Lord Sauron. Thousands of years ago, Sauron disguised himself in the form of a fair elf and went to Celebrimbor of Eregion, a master smith. Being a Maiar, a magical and immortal being of much power, Annatar was also a master smith. Annatar means ‘Lord of Gifts’ and the gift that he brought to Eregion was that of knowledge.
“The Dark Lord taught Celebrimbor as much as he could and then tricked him into forging with him the great rings. Annatar was not widely trusted, and Celebrimbor was talked into forging three rings of his own in secret. Vilya, Narya, and Ninya were never touched by the Dark Lord and therefore not corrupted.

“The War of the Elves and Sauron began when Annatar was finally revealed to be Sauron and demanded all of the rings. Celebrimbor refused and smartly kept the three he had made secret. Sauron left Eregion and many thought the conflict to be over. However, Sauron returned with a great army and laid waste to the land of Eregion.

“Celebrimbor was captured and tortured until he told Sauron where the lesser rings were. Sauron would eventually gift them to the men and the dwarves. However, despite the pain, Celebrimbor was able to keep the secret of the three Elven rings from Sauron, so they were safe with their new bearers. Celebrimbor perished from his torment.

“The land of Eregion is now pleasant but unoccupied. You may want to visit there some day, if only for closure.” Gandalf smiled sadly at Erynell.

“Then my hopes of recovering who I am are lost.” The elf was greatly saddened, as though the news of Eregion was affecting her even though she could only trust the wizard’s words of its fate.

“Not quite, my dear.” Erynell’s eyes lifted to look at him once more. “There are some alive today who were present during that time and who might know something of your specific past.” Erynell only looked at Gandalf expectantly.

“Lord Elrond of Imladris, Lady Galadriel of Lothlórien, and Lord Celeborn of Lothlórien.”

“But for present, we know nothing?”

“We are closer now than we were before.”

“It is still a dead end.”

“Before you can have an audience with one of those I mentioned, then yes.”

“Of course.” Erynell turned to look out the window. The shadow of the citadel was long, meaning the sun would disappear for the moon soon.

“I have not given up, Lady Erynell. I will not give up on you.” Gandalf puckered his lips in thought when she ignored him. “May I look into your mind once more, Lady Erynell? Just to see what has changed.

With a sharp nod of her head, Erynell closed her eyes and allowed Gandalf to reach out and lay a hand across her forehead. There were many more memories than the last time, though that was to be expected, and there was a wider array of feelings. Gandalf frowned at the feelings of doubt and hopelessness extending throughout the elf’s mind like a great shadow.

At one point, Gandalf started to shuffle through some of her memories of the battles they had been in. When it got to the point of seeing the great eye fall from its perch on the black tower and he just started to hear the black speech screaming in his head, Gandalf was pushed out, skillfully blocked from that memory. His brow furrowed when it happened, though he moved on instead of trying to force himself back through the wall Erynell had placed there.

Then of course, there was the eye. It came up suddenly, burning fiercely, though it did not feel as evil as when he first found it hidden in the depths of Erynell’s head. The eye seemed faded, only a shadow of what it used to be, and not as much of a controlling force as simply a presence. Gandalf
knew he would have to vanquish it somehow, though the wizard suddenly felt like he was being pulled away from the sight of the eye.

The elf and the wizard opened their eyes at the same time. Gandalf’s hand was hovering an inch away from the skin where it once rested, and he became very confused as to why he was forcibly pulled from her mind.

“I feel it best that I take my leave and let you rest.” Gandalf turned around in a flurry of white robes and left when she said nothing.

Alone and in her bed, Erynell heaved a sigh. Being left to her own thoughts and devices, Erynell was starting to resent the wizard. Part of it might have been the stress or the continuous crushing of her hopes, but the elf was questioning everything he had said.

*Shouldn’t the talk of my own home make me remember everything?*

Erynell started feeling worse and worse with her thoughts, and realized that lying in bed, staring at the ceiling, and “resting” was probably the last thing she needed to do. She threw the stiff cotton sheets away from her and stood, walking over to the clothes she had been itching to put on since she saw them while speaking to Gandalf. At present, she was wearing a white cotton dress which was probably uniform to the healing halls, though Erynell didn’t care.

Erynell was pleased with the fact that the clothes given to her by Eowyn had been returned and washed. The elf felt much more like herself when wearing them and walking down the many hallways.

There were light voices coming from somewhere nearby, Erynell’s ears pricked whenever she heard them. The elf followed them, wanting to be around somebody, no matter who it was, aside from Gandalf, of course.

Through a tall wooden door, Erynell entered a chamber with many openings to the night in the walls. There was a courtyard to her right, leading out of the healing halls and into the rest of the citadel. In front of her, though, Erynell recognized Eowyn turned away from her. The Lady of Rohan was laughing and speaking with a man Erynell had not seen before. He had sandy hair reaching his shoulders.

Erynell realized that the two probably had not heard her come in. The elf stepped forward and cleared her throat. Eowyn and her companion turned around, still smiling.

“Lady Eowyn.” Erynell bowed her head to the both of them, not addressing the man by name since she did not know of it.

“Erynell,” Eowyn returned the gesture and then looked up at the man. “This is Lord Faramir, son of Lord Denethor, the late Steward of Gondor.”

“My lady,” Faramir bowed to Erynell and she bowed to him in return. “I apologize; I have not had the acquaintance of many elves before.”

“Do not worry, I haven’t either.” Erynell smiled and Eowyn laughed a bit.

“Faramir is a Captain of the Men of Gondor.” Eowyn spoke again and looked up at him fondly. He stared down at her as well.

*Could he be one of the Tree Men?* Erynell remembered when she was first taken prisoner by the Haradrim and the Tree Men or Men of Gondor had ambushed them in front of her eyes.
“I believe to have made your acquaintance once, however indirectly.” Erynell continued when Faramir looked a bit confused. “There was once a troop of Haradrim you and your men would have attacked in a ravine. I was there to see it before I was taken prisoner by the riders of the Mûmakil.”

“I apologize we were not able to assist you. I remember the Haradrim, not a fair Elven lady in distress.” Erynell laughed at his response.

“Of course.”

The three of them talked for quite a while. Eowyn and Faramir were very pleasant and did not seem hindered by Erynell’s presence. They spoke of everything from Rohan to Mordor, and were great company.

It was only when Eowyn started to yawn and speak less and then Faramir started to yawn and speak less when Erynell realized that they were of mankind and needed their rest. It had been many hours since Erynell watched the sun set, and she suddenly felt guilty for keeping them up with her.

Erynell left the two of them after apologizing for keeping them from sleep, and still felt guilty after they both assured her it was alright. The elf did not know what else to do, so she left the healing halls, knowing there was nothing else she could do in there.

The city of Gondor was very pretty. The first time Erynell had been in it, she was not able to look upon its structure or its white walls. It had a pleasant atmosphere, even after the great battle that had taken place before it. At some places, walls were missing or there were craters in the stone twice as deep as she was tall. Erynell had seen the catapults that the army of Mordor had with them, though she didn’t expect them to do this much damage. However, the city had cleaned up quite well.

Only in a few places did Erynell see traces of blood upon the walkways. They were barely noticeable, though Erynell’s heart dropped every time she spotted one.

*Did the one whom this blood belongs to perish here, where I am standing?*

*Is there any hope that this one could have lived with such blood loss?*

*Is this all there is now of this man, woman, or child; a spray of blood, too unnoticeable to be cleaned away?*

Erynell brought herself to the highest point in the city that she had access to. At the top of the citadel, before the doors of the halls of the king, Erynell stood in a courtyard of stone. Sectioned off areas of green grass surrounded a small tree.

Its bark was white and shone smooth in the moonlight. One flower was blooming in its upper branches. Without that small, delicate sign of life, Erynell would have thought it to be dead. She approached the small tree and felt something from it. Around the tree, it had a sort of aura of life. The force was thrumming with energy, and Erynell closed her eyes to reach out and touch the tree’s bark.

Immediately, Erynell felt happy. No, even stronger than happy. The elf felt elated. Her spirits were lifted and her face contorted into a smile. In her mind, in that moment, everything felt right in the world. The pain had passed and from now on, everything would be painless and perfect.

“You are drawn to it.” The voice of Prince Legolas pulled her from her stupor and Erynell dropped her hand.
“I don’t know what you mean.” Erynnell turned to face him. Legolas’ long hair was drawn back behind his ears and braided intricately. Resting atop his head, a silver circlet reflected the moonlight, as did his silvery tunic he wore. The Elven Prince looked elegant and surreal, as if bathed in moonlight.

“I am drawn to it, too. Not only is it the only tree in this city, it is also a very happy tree. I am positive you felt that.” Legolas smiled and walked past her to the other side of the tree.

“I did,” Erynnell nodded slightly and looked at the flower high in the tree again. “But why is it so pleased?”

“This is the King’s Tree, Lady Erynnell. Now its King is returning.”

“You mean Lord Aragorn?”

“Of course. His coronation will be in a few days. This little tree is preparing.” Legolas said.

“Will there be a big celebration?” Erynnell was excited for Aragorn.

“Definitely. Dignitaries from all over Arda will come for it.” This got Erynnell’s attention.

“Will there be many elves?” She asked.

“A handful. Though there are not many elves left in Arda to attend.” Legolas was now staring at Erynnell. She could hardly contain her excitement.

“Will, say, Lord Elrond be in attendance?” She asked. Legolas was still looking at her, though now he was slightly confused.

“I believe so. Why do you ask?” Legolas also wanted to know how she knew of the Lord of Imladris in the first place.

“I heard Gandalf speaking of him. And besides, I look forward to meeting more of our kind. You are the only other elf I know.” Erynnell wasn’t quite sure if she should tell everything, though she did not know why.

“I should have known that would be it, my lady.” Legolas smiled and looked at the blooming flower as Erynnell did. Then he extended his hand and placed it on the bark, closing his eyes. Erynnell followed suit, putting her hand directly across from his.

“You said once that there are ways to communicate other than talking. Is this what you spoke of?” Erynnell spoke with her eyes closed, though she could almost feel Legolas relaxing.

“It is.”

“Are elves the only ones who can communicate like this?” Erynnell opened her eyes slightly. She saw Legolas’ blue eyes already open and staring at her.

“I believe so.” The two sank into a comfortable silence. Erynnell closed her eyes again when Legolas kept looking at her. “I am pleased you were not killed in battle.”

“As am I….and I do believe I was more useful fighting than I would have been on that ship.” Erynnell laughed to herself and remembered when Legolas tried to keep her from the battle.

“I apologize that I did not think you capable.” Legolas said, looking down.
“It is only because of your lessons that I was able to even hold Hathelas right.” They both laughed at her words.

“At least you were trying when I found you.”

“Thank goodness you did.”

“Some would have taken the blade from you.”

“I would have gotten it back.”

Legolas and Erynnel eventually stepped away from the tree, though they kept talking. They took a few turns around the courtyard, mostly speaking of what they thought the coronation would turn out like or Legolas’ home of Mirkwood. They spoke well into the morning, with only a few awkward pauses in conversation before another subject would be brought up and the two would be in adamant conversation.

It was only when Erynnel realized how hungry she was did she finally pull herself from the courtyard to return to the healing halls where breakfast would be waiting in the great hall. After all, she may be able to sleep very little, but she still had to eat just like a normal person; maybe even more.

Erynnel walked around aimlessly after breakfast, chewing on a piece of salted pork she had saved. Truthfully, Erynnel did not like staying in the meal hall for long. She would usually sit with herself and eat unless Eowyn was there too.

There were also many more people in need of healing in light of recent battles, and they were either very gruesome looking or they were so depressing that Erynnel would eventually lose her appetite. So, often the elf would take some food with her and just eat while she walked.

Erynnel was thinking about her talk with Legolas. She was not paying attention to where she was going and she had been chewing on the meat in her mouth for so long it had become tasteless. It was only when she saw a familiar figure round a corner did she swallow the meat and remember she had been walking.

“My lord,” Erynnel smiled and looked at Aragorn. He had been walking quickly with his downcast and his hand resting on his sword. It was strange how regal he had become. The soon to be King was no longer just a ranger clad in old, worn leather. At the sound of Erynnel’s voice, Aragorn looked up.

“My lady. I thank you once again for your service to me and the life I owe to you.” Aragorn bowed to the elf. She didn’t quite know what to do since it was Aragorn bowing to her.

*He is so humble.* She thought to herself. He really didn’t need to bring that up in every conversation.

“You are too kind, my lord.” Erynnel smiled returned the bow.

*There I am being humble as well.* Erynnel smiled to herself.

“There are some who want to meet you, Lady Erynnel.” Aragorn said. “This way.”

“What? Who?” Erynnel asked and raced to his side. Aragorn didn’t answer, though he stopped shortly outside of a door just like any other.

“Prepare for anything, Lady Erynnel.” Aragorn bowed again and turned away, leaving Erynnel
very confused.

Erynell looked at the door and took a great breath. Her hand grasped the handle and she closed her eyes, preparing for anything just like Aragorn said. Her left hand reached up and knocked lightly.

“Enter.” A quiet voice said. Erynell turned the handle and slowly opened the door.

“Erynell!”

“My lady!”

Two high-pitched voices yelled and she heard little feet racing towards her. Without warning, Erynell felt a great weight around her waist and opened her eyes, looking down. She breathed a sigh of relief and smiled. Meriadoc Brandybuck and Peregrine Took were hugging her tightly around the waist and smiling.

Looking up, Erynell noticed two other hobbits on a bed that was much too big for them. One had darker hair with tired blue eyes and the other was larger with curled sandy hair and soft brown eyes. The second one was just sitting on the bed, while the first was burrowed under the sheets lying down.

“You must be Master Samwise Gamgee,” she referred to the bigger hobbit first and then looked at the other, “and you are Master Frodo Baggins.” Erynell knew that the reason Sauron had been defeated was because of these tiny creatures. She bowed low with respect.

“You are Erynell, the mysterious elf.” Frodo stated, still looking at her with a straight face.

“Not all that mysterious if you ask me.” Erynell rose, also with a straight face. The two stared at each other for a moment before they both smiled. Merry and Pippin laughed and jumped on the bed next to Samwise. Erynell approached and then sat in a high-backed wooden chair next to the bed.

“So you heard of me.” Erynell leant forward and smiled at the small beings.

“I have seen you before too.” Frodo stated. He seemed to be looking into her instead of at her.

“That was quite a long time ago.” The elf said.

“What happened to you? I might’ve tried to speak with you somehow if I had noticed you were of the Elves. I am sorry. In my blindness I thought you to perhaps be a spy of the enemy.” Frodo said and looked down at his blankets.

“It was not only you. A Haradrim scout found me and thought me to be a spy for their enemy. I was taken prisoner on the back of their commander’s Mûmakil.” Erynell looked down too; first remembering being a prisoner and then remembering watching her former captor die on the battlefield.

“You rode an Oliphaunt? What was it like? That seems awfully exciting, if you take my meaning.” Sam butted in and looked at Erynell, and then realizing that maybe he sounded too excited about her misfortunes. “I mean, it’s terrible you were there as a prisoner, but they’re so big, if you follow me.”

“I follow, Master Samwise. It was terribly uncomfortable and very high off the ground. That’s all I really remember.” Erynell smiled. They only spoke of Mûmakils or Oliphaunts, according to the hobbits, for a moment.
“My lady, I am out of practice, but…Ú-fíro i laiss e-guil dhîn.” May the leaves of your life never die. Frodo closed his eyes to speak in concentration. Erynell herself looked at the ground, suddenly recovering the customary response in her mind.

“Galo Anor erin râd dhîn, Frodo, elf-friend.” May the sun shine upon your path.

The four hobbits and the elf sank into easier conversation, if only for a few minutes. Erynell soon felt that she should return to her own room. The elf excused herself when the opportunity allowed and left, very pleased that she was able to meet with the saviors of Arda.

It was a short walk back to her own room, and when Erynell entered and closed the door behind her, she discovered everything had been cleaned and rearranged. At first, she thought that she had entered the wrong room, but then she saw the middle-aged woman waiting for her. With her white dress and her calm expression, Erynell recognized her as one of the healers.

“My lady,” she bowed her head, “Your room has been prepared and is ready for you.”

“My room?” Erynell though this was her room. She looked at the woman confused.

“Your room in Minas Anor, the King’s Tower.” The woman saw Erynell was still confused. “The rooms on the House of Healing must always be open. You are recovered and, as a guest of Lord Aragorn, you have a room in Minas Anor. Follow me.”

The woman led Erynell up the citadel’s walkways and through the courtyard with the white tree. They entered the King’s Hall or Minas Anor as the woman had called it and walked a bit further, up some stairs, and down a few hallways. Erynell could easily remember the way even though it was quite a large fortress.

The healer opened a large wooden door for Erynell and then closed it after her. Erynell barely heard the air current of the door closing as she was admiring the room. It was larger than the one in the healing hall, and there was elegant, wood-carved furniture all around. There were a few large windows that were not open towards Mordor this time, but different far-off mountains. The bed was quite large, and the sheets were a dark green.

Erynell approached the bed, immediately happy when she saw her blade, Hathelas, and a few of the throwing knives she had lost during her fighting. There were also other gifts on the bed.

Erynell noticed two dresses; one was dark green with silver stitching, and the other was brown with gold stitching. Erynell didn’t take much time to look at the dresses, though she smiled when she noticed other articles of clothing looking just like the ones she was wearing now. They were different fabrics, but all the same style and Erynell enjoyed the thought of clean changes of clothes that she still felt comfortable with.

The clothes were gathered up easily enough and hung or folded neatly in a wardrobe in the corner of Erynell’s room. She went back to the bed and took her weapons to a table where she laid them out nicely. Then, Erynell went back to adjust a sheet that was slightly crooked. As she disturbed the many folds of fabric, Erynell heard something else fall to the floor.

The elf bent down and reached under the bed, knowing that was where it had fallen. She closed her hands around a metal object and brought it out to see. Closed in her hand was a shining silver circlet. There were tiny leaves and weaving branches shaped from the precious metal. Erynell smiled and placed the circlet on her head. It fit perfectly, smoothing out her hair and resting on her forehead.

Erynell glanced down once more and noticed a small slip of parchment. She bent down, assuming
it to be a note.

This is Elvish-made. Wear it for the Coronation.

Erynell read the note, wondering who would give her such a valuable gift. She took off the circlet and laid it on a small table next to her bed. She placed the note down beside it and turned away. Erynell had nothing further to do in her room and so she left, resolving to look around the King’s Tower for a while.

Excitement was building in Erynell’s gut. She couldn’t stop thinking about the coronation. She was looking forward to it. Also, she resolved, she was looking forward to meeting more of her own kind. That celebration was going to be a day to remember.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for sticking around, everyone! If you're interested, I've made a tumblr page for this story at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com
Disclaimer: I do not own Lord of the Rings however sad it may be. I only hope to represent Tolkien’s work with an OC of my own. What you do not recognize from the books or movies or appendices or anything else of Tolkien’s belongs to me.

“Not all those who wander are lost.” ~J.R.R. Tolkien

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

9.

“You know, I don’t really think I want to go.” Erynell’s reflection in the mirror didn’t respond. She was much more apprehensive than she should’ve been. It wasn’t even her coronation.

What if they don’t like me? Her thoughts were getting the best of her. The elf reached up and straightened the circlet on her head, as if that would straighten out her attitude. Standing there, in the home of the king, in that room, and in that useless dress, she was way out of her comfort zone.

“I need to go.” Once again, she spoke out loud. Erynell faced the door and raised her hand to the handle. Her fist clenched and she turned around in a swirl of cloth and dark hair. “But the bed looks so inviting.”

It wasn’t that she was tired, it’s just that she was more keen to be comfortable than to go out into a crowd where she doesn’t belong.

“I’m going."

“In a moment.”

“This shouldn’t be so difficult.”

The silver bells and the blowing horns sounded right outside. She knew it was time.

“Fine!”

She finally threw open her door and walked out, maybe a bit too confidently since the heads of a few other last-minute stragglers turned her way. Erynell seemed to shrink in their gaze, and hurried out into the courtyard where she could already hear the cheers of hundreds of people.

White petals were raining down from above. Everything was bright and pleasant; the walls of Minas Tirith were shining again. It was as if a war had never raged on outside of its doorsteps in the first place. Erynell smiled at the thought, though in her mind’s eye she could remember the fierce fighting.

The more Erynell looked around, the more her breath evaded her. Citizens of Middle Earth of all kinds were intermingled, centered around the happy white tree. Seeing it there, blooming and magnificent, once again made Erynell very happy. Even as she was being shoved around by the celebrating people, she could see the branches reaching to the sky and spreading like the wings of an eagle, ready to take flight into a new age.
Erynell was somehow shoved to the edge of the stone pathway leading from Minas Anor. She suddenly stood at the front of the crowd, looking on at the kneeling Aragorn in front of Gandalf the White. She looked across the pathway and saw straight ahead the procession of elves, seeming to be bathed in glorifying light.

Legolas was in front, and Erynell looked down immediately when she noticed some of them glancing her way questionable eyes. She wanted to sink back into the crowd and shove her way all the way back into her room and the comfy bed that was calling to her.

“Now come the days of the King” Gandalf had suddenly spoken and the crowd silenced immediately. Erynell could almost hear the flower petals hit the ground. The wizard looked down at Aragorn as he lowered the crown unto his head. “May they be blessed.”

Aragorn stood slowly, turning to the people, his people, looking at him expectantly. “This day does not belong to one man but to all. Let us together rebuild this world that we may share in the days of peace.”

“Et Eärello Endorenna utúlien. Sinome maruvan ar Hildinyar tenn' Ambar-metta.” Out of the Great Sea to Middle-earth I am come. In this place will I abide, and my heirs, unto the ending of the world.

With his song, the cheers of the people were deafening. Erynell did not cheer; though she was letting his words sink in. She understood the Elvish he spoke, and she was deeply moved by it, even knowing how close the end of the world had really come.

Aragorn moved slowly down the path, the crowd closing in behind him and parting before him like a great river. First he passed by Gimli, who was looking kingly himself after being well groomed. Then he passed by the inseparable Faramir and Eowyn. They bowed as their King continued on his way. Then Éomer parted the crowed to come forth and show his respect as well.

It was before the elves that Aragorn stopped. He turned his back on Erynell and placed a hand on Legolas’ shoulder. The Elven Prince returned the friendly gesture.

“Hannon le.” Thank you.

Aragorn spoke softly, but Erynell could pick it up. She was looking once more at Prince Legolas, who gestured with his head to a spot behind him. The elves dressed in shimmering silvers and whites parted to reveal a beautiful Elven maiden, lowering a banner of the Tree of Gondor in full flower. Aragorn’s hand fell from Legolas’ shoulder in disbelief and the Elf approached him.

As beautiful as the elf was, Erynell could feel something strange about her. She seemed off, like an elf but not. Erynell was studying her hard but was soon thrown from those thoughts as the elf and Aragorn were suddenly embracing with a passionate kiss.

Another cheer rose from the crowd around them, and Erynell’s eyes widened. The other Elves were also surprised, and one in particular with long brown hair was looking on with either great joy or endless sadness; or both.

In the moment, Erynell’s eyes drifted from the couple in front of her, and caught the blue eyes of Legolas. Her breath hitched when he smiled at her and she smiled back. He bent his head, and placed a hand on his chest to which Erynell returned the gesture. However, the elves behind him had started noticing her more and more and so she started looking around awkwardly, in any other direction than their direction.

Aragorn finally separated from his love, though she still clung to his arm tightly. Together, they...
walked on through the people. Erynell was passed by, unnoticed, though maybe it was for the better.

At this time, four little shapes stood side by side before King Aragorn. Merry, Pippin, Sam, and Frodo all started to bow before the King of Men, though Aragorn would not hear of it.

“My friends. You bow to no one.” He lifted his hand and kneeled before the four hobbits, to the surprise of hundreds of people. But without hesitation, they all dropped down as well. Erynell put her knee to the floor and glanced up at the Halflings.

They looked more terrified than pleased, and Frodo even had to reach out a hand to Sam in order to stay on his feet. The disbelief in his face was almost heartbreaking, as if he didn’t believe that even after everything he’d done for Middle Earth, he still didn’t deserve this.

Everyone rose in a wave, returning to their feet. They all looked on once again as Aragorn made his way back up the path. To them, everything was all right with the world. Everything was fixed and everything could go back to normal. If only Erynell knew what normal was.

Erynell made her way over to Legolas and the other elves, bracing herself and gathering her courage with every step. He saw her make her way toward him and walked forwards, meeting her halfway.

“You look well.” Legolas smiled and bowed his head. Erynell smiled back and looked around them, a bit awkwardly.

“It’s so extravagant, not quite what I predicted.” She said. Legolas simply looked around as well; with joy in his eyes that was very hard to miss. Legolas looked at the circlet resting on her head and reached out to straighten it a bit. Erynell reached up as well after he’d fixed it.

“Hannon le.” Thank you. Erynell smiled. Her hand dropped a bit and felt the tip of her ear. “My ears are pointier than yours.” Legolas looked confused for a moment before reaching up and touching his own.

“I suppose that means your hearing is more keen than mine.” He kept a straight face as he spoke.

“Everyone knows that the worth of an elf is measured by the length of his ears.”

“Of course you would know all about that.” He said. They both laughed at that. Around them, the people started to empty from the courtyard and enter the celebrations.

“May I escort you to the feast?” Legolas held out his arm by Erynell’s side. She took it gladly.

“Of course.”

As they entered the high-vaulted hall where the festivities were really taking place, Erynell completely lost her appetite. Her worries of the elves had returned. They were all so beautiful and proper, how could they accept her as one of them? She wanted to tear her arm from Legolas and run to her room. Of course, she withheld, and they approached the elegant beings standing out amongst everyone else in the room.

“Mê dh’ovannen, Legolas.” Well met, Legolas. Many greetings rang out from the soft voices of the elves as Legolas and Erynell presented themselves. The emotional elf from before when Aragorn and the elleth were kissing came forth immediately.

“Mê g’ovannen, Elrond,” Well met, Elrond. Legolas bowed his head to the regal elf and Erynell did the same. Her eyes widened at the realization that this was Lord Elrond of Imladris; this was
one who could help her. “Mellon nín Erynell.” This is my companion, Erynell. Legolas gestured to Erynell while she stood smiling, trying to keep her breathing even.

Apparently Legolas did something right, because Lord Elrond turned to me after those few words. “You are well met, Erynell. I have heard of you before, I must admit, Mithrandir has told me of your situation.” Erynell bowed her head to the Elf Lord, though her smile faltered at the mention of Gandalf. Of course he would tell Elrond.

“It is nice to meet you, Lord Elrond.” Erynell couldn’t think of a single thing to say.

“It is indeed, though I have seen your face before.” Lord Elrond smiled. Erynell was excited for a moment before realizing who he was, and that he probably did not mean that they had actually met in her past.

“You are the cloaked elf from Dunharrow! I only saw you for a moment.” Erynell said.

“When I saw you, I did want to know what you were doing in that encampment, but I had other matters to attend to. I apologize.” He said.

“There is nothing to apologize for, my lord. It was probably for the best that there were limited distractions on the eve of battle.” Erynell spoke and Elrond ignored the fact that she called him a distraction, though it was true that he would have been one.

If Elrond had approached Erynell at Dunharrow, she would not have been able to follow the others into the mountain. So much could have changed.

They were all silent for a moment, and Legolas left the group to find Gimli, who apparently wanted something. Erynell knew that she couldn’t stall for much longer, so she opened her mouth.

“Can you help me?” She asked. Erynell seemed to shrink once more, wanting to sink into the ground as Elrond looked at her contemplatively.

“My knowledge of that time was spent in Imladris with my own people and in Mordor at the Battle of the Last Alliance. I will do all I can to help, however, I believe that the rulers of Lothlórien can help you more than I.” Elrond looked at her sadly. “Perhaps you wish to ride with as back to Imladris, though, where my healers and I might be able to clear your mind.”

“That is a very kind offer, Lord Elrond. Please allow me to think on it.” Erynell started moving away, ready to greet other people. As much as she wanted to stay with her own kind, she felt out of place.

“Of course.” Elrond turned away and started speaking to the other dignitaries around him.

Erynell soon found that though she had little company in the people, the food for the banquet made up for it. Dishes were piled high with foods from all over Middle Earth, and she realized that when she ate, she felt less out of place while standing alone and to the side of the crowd. However, a tiny hobbit soon caught her attention, and she barely dodged out of the way as Meriadoc Brandybuck ran passed with a mug of ale in his face. Erynell laughed, and followed him to his friends.

“When do you think we’ll be getting home, then? This place’s beautiful and all; it’s just that it’s been so long, and it’s not quite as green as the Shire.” Samwise was leaning over to Frodo on a stool that was much too big for him.

Frodo didn’t say anything in response to his friend, he just looked left and right around the room. On his face, embarrassment still shone from everyone paying their respects to him. Peregrine and
Meriadoc, however, seemed to be enjoying the attention while they spoke to people around them, telling of their own heroics.

Erynell sat down on the other side of Frodo quite suddenly, and she supposed she had startled him since he jumped a bit when she did.

“Master Frodo. Samwise.” She greeted, nodding to each before slouching a bit and putting her arm on the table in front of her.

“You can just call me Sam.” The gardener said shyly. Erynell smiled and nodded before turning back to Frodo. Just under his shirt collar, there were discolorations and scars from where she knew he had carried the Ring on a chain and his hand was still bandaged from losing his finger.

“Long night?” She asked, propping her head on her hand and giving him another friendly smile. His eyes were tired, and she could tell he was in pain both mentally and physically.

Frodo was about to open his mouth, when another presence jumped up next to Erynell. It was Peregrine who had a strip of salted pork in one hand and a mug of ale in the other. “Well I like it here, there’s good food, good ale, and good company.” He raised the mug and took another drink. Was that all these hobbits did? Drink?

“Hello Peregrine.” He didn’t seem to hear her so she turned back to Frodo. “What’s your Shire like?”

Frodo contemplated for a moment, shutting his eyes, “I don’t quite remember….but it’s green with blue skies and there’s peace and quiet and no men; only hobbits. But then there’s also the places where there aren’t even any hobbits like The Old Forest and the Brandywine River and….” Frodo paused opening his eyes. “It’s home.”

Erynell said nothing and her eyes flickered down to the wood of the table and back to the group of elves she had left. Legolas was not among them.

Home. What is home?

Something deep inside her seemed to answer in thought.

Home is not a house.

Chapter End Notes

Here's another chapter for everyone here. My readers base is definitely bigger on ff.net, but I'm glad I finally figured to share my story here with you. If you're interested, I've made a tumblr for this fic at oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com
Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Lord of the Rings however sad it may be. I only hope to represent Tolkien’s work with an OC of my own. What you do not recognize from the books or movies or appendices or anything else of Tolkien’s belongs to me.

“Not all those who wander are lost.” ~J.R.R. Tolkien

See the end of the chapter for more notes

10.

It had been weeks since the coronation, though celebrations still occurred almost every night. Now that the rightful heir sat on the throne, many men and women could hardly remember how it’d been while Lord Denethor, the late Steward had let Gondor fall to near ruin. Those that could remember didn’t want to.

One particularly bright morning, Erynell awoke to bells ringing in the towers and many people situated on the streets. She sat up, wondering when she had fallen asleep and why she’d been so tired lately; usually she only slept maybe four hours a week, but she’d slept completely through the past two nights. Erynell shook her head to rid herself of the grogginess and looked through the window at the courtyard below.

Four small figures, no larger than children, were standing beside four brown ponies. In front of them was Aragorn, or King Elessar as people began to call him. Erynell widened her eyes and threw on her clothes, mentally berating herself for forgetting.

The hobbits! The saviors of Arda were to start their return journey to the Shire today! They could not go without saying goodbye! Erynell thought to herself as she exited the room.

The elf ended up racing through the many corridors and down the numerous stairs to get to the courtyard. Of course, the halls were all empty. No one would sleep in as she did and miss their departure! Erynell kept from slipping on the stairs and became anxious.

What if I saw their final goodbyes and they’re already gone! I won’t be able to push through the crowds!

Erynell wasn’t breathing heavily due to her physical exertion, but due to the thought of her never seeing her friends again, and not even saying goodbye. However, as she rounded another corridor, she tried to tell herself how unrealistic she was being. She had promised to visit them in the shire, after all.

It was with this thought that she turned ahead and saw blue. Realizing what it was at the last moment, Erynell tried to slow to a stop. Instead, their bodies collided and Erynell found herself staring at that damned tunic from a centimeter away.

“Mê g’ovannen, Lord Legolas.” Well met. Erynell risked looking up at his face and saw he was looking down at her with something akin to….relief?
“Erynell! Thank the Valar, the hobbits are asking to say goodbye to you? Come!” He spoke quickly in Elvish and Erynell followed as he let her go and turned away. “What were you doing to be so late?”

Erynell sighed, “I’m afraid I slept this morning past my due. I awoke to the bells and hurriedly dressed for farewell.” At her words, Legolas frowned, once again looking over to her, but still walking quickly.

“You slept the last night, did you not?” Legolas asked. When Erynell met his gaze, she realized it wasn’t a frown of annoyance on the Elven-Prince’s face, but concern.

“Yes, my lord, and the night before that.” Her words became quiet, so much so that it was hard for Legolas’ elven ears to hear them. He didn’t stop walking, but he shook his head.

“What ails you, Erynell? Are you sick?” Even she could hear the disbelief in his voice; elves don’t simply get sick on a whim.

“No, Lord Legolas, I do not feel ill. Simply….tired.” Erynell shook her head. Legolas appeared as if he were about to speak again, but they arrived in the courtyard.

“Erynell!” Four small voices squeaked. Two made their ways over to her, forgetting about the ponies and even walking past the King and Queen. Erynell laughed and walked over to meet them by their ponies.

“My lords! Has the day already come that you will remove yourselves from our presence?” Erynell knelt down to be at eye level with them all.

“Yes, my lady!” Merry answered. Pippin nodded his head victory and stood a little closer to her.

“You know what I’m doing as soon as I return to the Shire?” He asked her, almost daring her to guess.

“What would that be, Sir Took?” Erynell asked.

Pippin put his hands in the air. “I’m going to eat three breakfasts! And another meal every hour until I cannot eat anymore!” He exclaimed.

“You’ll never stop, Pip, probably just burst in the end.” Merry frowned, speaking seriously. Erynell just laughed.

“We have enough food for fifty hobbits already!” Sam said, gesturing to the ponies and their saddlebags. “It’s a shame I don’t still have my cooking gear, we’d dine like noble hobbits!” Sam was probably lamenting the pots and pans he’d spoken to Erynell about one time. In order to lighten their load up the side of Mount Doom, he’d had to throw them off the incline.

“Sam, you’re already a master with food, I’m sure you of all hobbits can figure something out.” Sam started to blush at Erynell’s words, and he looked at his huge, hairy feet while she smiled.

Finally, she turned to Frodo and put a hand on his shoulder. “I wish you the best of luck out there, Frodo Baggins, and I refuse to allow this to be our final farewell.”

Frodo placed his hand on top of hers and grinned, “Come visit in Bag-end. You’re probably too tall for the ceiling but tea is at four o’clock sharply and you’re welcome any time.”

“I might just take you up on that offer.” Erynell smiled and stood. It seemed as if they’d just met yesterday, but they’d become fast friends.
Erynell realized as her eyes became cloudy that in her memory, she’d never had to say a goodbye such as this. She kept reminding herself that they’d see each other again, but it was one of the hardest things she’d ever had to do.

“Goodbye, my friends! You’re the best hobbits I’ve ever known.” Erynell grinned down at each of them. Pippin looked up, confused.

“We’re the only hobbits you’ve ever known!” His tone held accusation, but she just leant down and whispered in his ear.

“And you’re the best hobbits I ever will know, I’m sure.” She smiled. They shared a last hug, then Erynell stepped back to let the rest of the company of the ring say their goodbyes.

By the time the hobbits had actually mounted their ponies and made their way through the rings of the white city, the time was high noon. Erynell watched them go and then retreated into Minas Anor with the rest of her friends.

She ate in the hall at the King’s table, as she had been doing every day for the past few weeks. To her left sat Legolas and to her right was some advisor to the king she hadn’t met before. Erynell only knew that the man drank too much. Across from her sat Gandalf, whose eyes she could not meet, and beside him Queen Arwen Ûndomiel. Gimli was off to find an ale somewhere in the hall and at the head of the table was Aragorn himself.

At first they were eating in silence, but Erynell had to ask a question that had been plaguing her mind. Finally, she looked up to Gandalf.

“How did Frodo get the ring, Mithrandir?” Since they argued last, she had taken to calling him his Elvish name. The table all looked at her, and she almost wished she hadn’t asked, but there was no better time.

“It was given to him by his uncle Bilbo. Bilbo found it in a mine in the possession of the creature Gollum, then went on in his quest to slay a dragon.” Gandalf summarized this quickly and Erynell ignored the last part. So the Bagginses were prone to adventure.

“How did it find its way to Imladris?” She asked him. The table stopped eating.

“The Nazgûl were searching for the ring after being given information by the creature Gollum. He had to flee to Bree and then went with Aragorn to Imladris.” Aragorn put down his goblet at his mention.

“I went only partway. Arwen rescued Frodo from the darkness of a Morgul blade and saved his life, in the end.” Aragorn put his hand over his wife’s and chuckled. Erynell still couldn’t believe how he looked so well groomed, out of his leather, and without the blood on his hands all the time.

“In any case,” Gandalf picked up and sputtered a bit, “the ring had to be destroyed. So the company of nine, the Fellowship of the Ring, that is, had to set out and destroy it. And here we are.” Erynell believed that he left out a few key details, but didn’t say anything. It was that number, nine, that she had to wrap her mind around.

“Alas, Mithrandir, I only know of eight. What of the final member of your company?” Erynell did the mental calculations and asked before she realized anything was amiss.

The table grew silent, and while no one was staring at her any longer, they were all staring at their food. Even she lost her appetite of the roast chicken before her.
Finally, Legolas answered slowly, “Boromir of Gondor, son of Denethor the Steward, was an honorable man. He was pierced by three arrows of the Uruk-hai after defending the hobbits from capture. He fell in battle.”

“Denethor…” Erynell thought for a moment, “Faramir’s brother!” Her cheeks now burned from asking. Could elves even blush?

“Sauron the Deciever attempted to use Boromir as a way to get him the ring. His heart almost fell into darkness, but he prevailed in the end.” Aragorn picked up his fork once again and resumed eating at his words. Gimli then returned to the table, and after a loud belch on behalf of the dwarf, conversation resumed to more positive topics.

Erynell stood half an hour later, wanting to retreat into her room. She found she could barely stand, she was so exhausted. Legolas looked up and stood as well.

“My lady, allow me to escort you.” Legolas held out his arm and Erynell took it. She had hoped to simply slip away but now the entire table was bidding her goodnight. She nodded to them all and started walking.

“I apologize, Lord Legolas. I did not mean for such a sadness to fall upon the dinner table.” Erynell sighed and trudged up the stairs.

“You were in no wrong. Boromir needs to be remembered, in any way possible.” After a few moments of silence when Erynell did not respond, Legolas added, “And why must you call me Lord Legolas, you did not before we came to Gondor.”

“Well, I thought that was customary… did I do something wrong?” Erynell was genuinely confused, she had to learn about titles as she went on.

“Nothing you have done is amiss, Erynell, but I would think of us as equals and as friends. Such formalities go beyond what we’ve been through.” Legolas shook his head and kept walking up another stair.

“Thank you, Legolas, but you are a Prince after all.” Erynell was blushing again, so she looked down.

“Are you so sure you’re not a Princess?” Legolas asked her. His face was completely serious. Erynell simply rolled her eyes. He stopped them from walking any further and looked at her face. Erynell tried to laugh it off.

“I am not sure of anything, you know this.” Erynell answered. Legolas shrugged. It then appeared he was about to say more when Erynell yawned. The Elven Prince turned her completely to face him.

“What is this, why are you so tired?” Legolas said. Erynell was taken aback by his seriousness.

“I cannot possibly know the answer to that, all I know is that I find relief in sleep. I would like to go to bed now, actually.” Erynell frowned.

“Please, Erynell, do not go to sleep tonight, do anything you can to stay awake.” Legolas was almost pleading with her. How could she not sleep? The more she thought about it, drifting off in her warm bed, the more she wanted to curl up right then and there.

“I’m just tired, Legolas.” Erynell started walking away but Legolas continued holding her shoulders.
“Erynell…” He started.

“By the Valar! I will not be lost if I simply sleep a bit more.” The way Legolas was reacting to this, Erynell didn’t even sound sure.

“What have you even done today to make you this way? When is the last time you even went outside the walls of the courtyard?” Legolas asked. Erynell concentrated but couldn’t think.

“I don’t remember!” Then, she paused. Her memory… “Maybe I’m tired of not remembering who I am! Of where my home is! Of how to address royalty in its simplest form!”

“Erynell, that’s not…” Legolas started, he mostly simply looked confused. She didn’t like how he was looking down at her.

“You said it yourself! I wouldn’t be able to remember if I was a princess, I couldn’t remember my own name! I have to have a wizard poking around in my own head to find anything I might be able to grasp as my own, and even then I don’t remember anything!” Erynell had pulled away and backed into a wall. Legolas was standing straighter, and not saying anything, only looking down at her with what looked like pity.

“Please, Legolas, don’t look at me like that. I’m tired and this is exactly what it’s about.” Erynell looked him in the eye as he masked his expression. Somehow, he could communicate his thoughts with a simple look.

“When have you ever woken up in a forest with no memories, only to be taken captive by men on enormous beasts simply staring at you, and then being rescued but having the symbol of the enemy of Arda blazing in your head, having a wizard promise you that it’ll all come back, and then fighting in a war you don’t even know the origins of!” Erynell was almost to hysterics. She didn’t know why she kept going, or why she was having this conversation with Legolas of all people, but her cool façade was cracking.

“Every lead is a dead end! Every time I get hope, it’s crushed, and every time I try to ignore the feelings or push them away, they return tenfold! I can’t just ignore what’s happened, or what I can’t even remember has happened! I’m pretending to be okay and it’s crushing me!” Erynell finished and looked away.

Again, Legolas said nothing, but he took a few steps toward her and brushed the hair out of her face. Erynell was afraid he’d say something again, but he simply grasped her hand, threaded it through his arm, and continued walking with her towards her room.

At the door, Erynell turned to him, forcing herself to look up.

“I am sorry for how I acted, it was-” Erynell stopped when Legolas started shaking his head.

“Stop apologizing, Erynell. Goodnight.” Legolas turned away and walked back the way he’d come. The collar of his tunic was slightly skewed, Erynell noticed, but turned away and walked into her room before the Elven Prince glanced behind him again in concern.

She leant against the door and looked at the bed. Oh, how she wanted to envelop herself in the warmth of the blankets and rest on the feather-pillows. But she couldn’t move an inch.

‘Please, Erynell, do not go to sleep tonight, do anything you can to stay awake.’ Legolas seemed concerned, and she couldn’t bring herself to strip down and climb in to fall asleep.

‘anything you can to stay awake…’
The elf buried her head in her hands and thought for a moment.

‘stay awake…’

Erynell made up her mind and abruptly walked over to the wardrobe on the other side of the room. Her mind at the moment was somehow clear, probably from all the embarrassment she caused herself tonight. Throwing on the original outfit of leggings and overcoat that was given to her by Eowyn of Rohan, Erynell resolved to go for a ride.

“When is the last time you even went outside the walls of the courtyard?” Legolas had asked her. He was right, it had been a few weeks since she last went to the stables, and even longer since actually getting onto Léod.

Erynell managed to sneak away without anyone noticing her absence. It helped that elves were especially light-of-foot, even if Erynell was a pretty sad excuse of an elf. Just for good measure, she grabbed an apple out of a basket in a random corridor, knowing Léod would more than likely try to ignore her when she went into his stall.

She was right.

After going through a few of the city’s rings to get to the stables, she was ready to go out for a ride on her horse. However, the stallion simply raised his head a bit and perked his ears forward as she entered. He then proceeded to turn around so only his rear end was showing.

Erynell sighed. She had expected this, after all. So, she kept calling his name softly, held the apple aloft and entered his stall. Léod sniffed the air and glanced at the apple, but simply raised his head causing Erynell to back off a bit.

“Oh, come on.” She spoke in Sindarin. Not knowing what else to do, Erynell slowly brought the apple up to her own mouth and took a good-sized bite. A small bit of juice dribbled down to her chin and Léod smelled the air again.

“I’m not trying to taunt you, Léod.” She held the apple out again and allowed him to step towards her a bit. “I’m sorry for not seeing you in forever, I have no excuse, but I can’t go to sleep so we,” she paused as he started to eat the apple, “are going out for a little midnight ride.”

Sure enough, Léod was saddled and ready to go no more than half an hour later. Erynell laughed as he started to get a bit agitated, definitely ready to get out of the confines of his stall. The stable hands would have exercised him, surely, but this was much more personal.

In no time, the two had flown through the remaining rings of the white city and arrived at the gate. They had no problem with the guard in letting them out, though he was certainly surprised to see a rider this late at night. Erynell and Léod galloped out into the expanse of night before them, taking in the freedom of horse and rider long into the dawn.

Erynell had been managing to stay awake during the nights as long as she went out with Léod. In the daytime, it was more difficult for her since she was under constant scrutiny due to the severe lack of horses in Minas Tirith. Then again, there was also a severe lack of Elves in the white city as well. Around Minas Anor, she felt like a burden, there was no cause for her to feel this way but the thoughts always plagued her mind as she wandered the grand halls. Anyone she talked to always reassured her that she would be welcome for as long as she decided to stay and if she would ever visit again when she left.

But, that was it. There was always talk of her leaving. Erynell didn’t know where she’d go, maybe Imladris or Lothlórien to overstay her welcomes there as well, but all in all she was a
Every time she went into her room to bathe or change her clothes, Erynell would have to stop and think. Her small amount of possessions weren’t substantial enough to make this room her own. She merely took up space. Erynell almost felt like a fraud, or an intruder in her own skin.

*This isn’t me, I don’t know who I am. I do not belong here and I’m so drastically unimportant. You say I saved your king from an orc. I tripped! When will you finally realize that I don’t belong?*

The Elvish circlet sitting beside her bed, too, mocked her. She would spend time holding it or studying its make, though could not bring herself to put it on. The mysterious gift was probably causing her more grief than was intended, but Erynell could not push the thoughts aside.

The days blurred together, and Erynell almost actively avoided seeing anyone in the corridors when she traversed them. One day at Dawn, Erynell was returning from her nightly ride with Léod when she came upon a very strange sight.

“Legolas!” She called before being able to stop herself. The Elf turned around towards the sound of her voice and simply nodded. He was out of the tunic, and dressed once again in the garb of the days before they arrived in Minas Tirith. His travel clothes fit him well, and he looked out of place with the rucksack on his back around a quiver full of arrows.

“Erynell, good day to you.” He said, slightly hesitantly.

“Are you going somewhere?” Erynell asked, eyes once again landing on his rucksack. The farewells to the hobbits were difficult enough, now she would dismiss her own kin.

“I made a promise to a friend to explore some glittering caves with him.” Legolas looked behind him as Gimli practically tripped out of the King’s Tower. He, too, was dressed to travel with a newly-sharpened battle ax at the ready. Erynell shivered slightly at the mention of underground, though she knew not why.

“You failed to mention this.” Erynell didn’t want it to sound as if she was scolding Legolas, but that is what occurred. Legolas smiled slightly and simply apologized.

“What will you do by our leave?” Legolas asked. Gimli walked up and looked at the two of them. Erynell decided to switch to the tongue of Westron, just to include the dwarf in conversation. However, Legolas’ question caught up with her. Erynell racked her brain and made a split second decision.

“I will set off for Lothlórien in two days time.” She forced a smile on her face. Legolas, however, was instantly concerned.

“Is that wise? Do you know the way? Have you the knowledge to travel?” Legolas said. Erynell was slightly annoyed but kept the smile upon her lips.

“I shall hire a guide. Do not worry, I will fare well and will not travel unprepared. I thank you for your concern.” Erynell spoke, hiding the bit of insult she felt at his words.

“Then I bid thee farewell, Lady Erynell, for my companion and I were to set out at dawn.” Legolas suppressed his concern well and turned to Gimli.

“Goodbye, lass, good luck out there.” The dwarf patted her on the arm and huffed into his beard before turning away. Erynell started to turn her back on the pair as well. In a moment, she felt a warm hand inside of her own and looked back. Legolas held her hand up and bowed down,
placing it on his lips before striding away as well without another word.

Erynell simply huffed and made way to her room. She had some packing to do.

Chapter End Notes

This'll be the last chapter for maybe another week. I have this story written up to chapter 13. If anyone's interested, I've made a tumblr for this story at oliphauntsansoblivion.tumblr.com and it could definitely use some action!
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“Oh all those who wander are lost.” ~J.R.R. Tolkien
within. The ethereal quality that Erynell noticed surrounding most elves was absent, and her hands shook slightly with the mortality she’d come to bear.

“I simply wanted to express my gratitude properly, Aragorn. This seemed the best way to achieve that.” Erynell smiled and pushed thoughts of her observations aside.

“Your gratitude…you do not mean to leave us so soon?” Arwen spoke this time, with her tone of voice hinting at regret at seeing Erynell go. Erynell was slightly confused, polite words in passing and few conversations had been shared between them, nothing to seemingly warrant Arwen’s attachment.

Then, she realized something. Erynell and Arwen were the last two remaining fair folk in Minas Tirith. Arwen’s people had long since gone home to Imladris, and even Legolas had left them two days before.

“I would hardly call this very soon, but it is true, my intentions are to leave this white city, and travel to Lothlórien in hopes that I may discover information of my past.” Erynell had practiced this speech, but now was not prepared for the expressions on the faces of those before her.

Before anyone had the chance to speak up once more, Aragorn stood and in a flurry of his cloak, made his way in front of Erynell. He clapped a hand on Erynell’s left shoulder and looked her straight in the eyes. Arwen made her way down to stand before them as well.

“I wish you all the luck in the world on your journey, Erynell. My only regret of our time spent together is that I could not help with your memories.” Aragorn sighed.

“Aragorn, you have helped tremendously, do not worry. If not for you, I would be slain in The Battle of Helm’s Deep among other nameless Uruk, elf, and man.” Erynell paused, the words coming to her for another goodbye, “And you have helped with my memories. When I first awoke from darkness with no recollection of who or what I was, you and the rest of the company filled the darkness with time spent together that I will cherish forever.”

The King enveloped Erynell into a sturdy hug. “Hannon le. May I request one thing of you?” Thank you. Aragorn asked suddenly.

“Of course.” Erynell responded, pulling back a bit.

“Take an armored companion for the journey, it would allow less worry upon my heart knowing that you are as safe as I may make you.” He said.

This time, Erynell pulled out of his arms. “I thank you for your concern, but I would not like to inconvenience anyone.” She was reminded of her conversation with Legolas two days prior, and was imbedded with the same annoyance.

“There is no inconvenience, we simply wish to assist you.” Arwen stepped forward, speaking Sindarin.

“I assure you, I do not require it. I-I already have a guide.” Erynell found herself switching her tongue to Westron as she lied, and already felt terrible about it.

“Who is this guide?” Aragorn raised his eyebrows.

“He is surely waiting for me. I must be off. Naamarie, Gûr nîn nîniatha n’î lû n’î a-govenithanc. ” Farewell, my heart shall weep until it sees you again. As she spoke, Arwen was next to pull her into a hug.
“So be it. *No gelin in raid gîn, a no adel gin i chwest.*” *May your paths be green and the breeze behind you.* Arwen spoke in her ear.

“*Avo faro an drastad.*” *Do not look for trouble.* Aragorn spoke with finality. Erynell could only nod and turn away as her vision started to swim. She had to leave, before she wouldn’t be able to. She smiled, and turned away to walk out of the hall towards the courtyard.

Erynell was mid-stride when she stopped suddenly. The sun was shining down and she was almost into the courtyard when she paused. *Oh no,* the elf thought quickly and turned around, running to the Houses of Healing.

She remembered which room she was looking for, and evaded the healers all dressed in white; she didn’t have time to stop and explain herself. It was already noon and Erynell couldn’t risk putting off her journey another day without once more speaking to Aragorn and Arwen.

“Eowyn!” She called as she rounded into the room. The Shieldmaiden of Rohan stood in front of the window overlooking the courtyard. She no longer dressed in the garb of the houses of healing, but her arm was still healing which warranted her extended stay.

“I heard talk of you taking your leave today. This window allows me to observe any travelers.” Eowyn turned around and put her uninjured hand on her hip. “I did not think you would come to say goodbye.”

It was true, Erynell hadn’t spent much time with her friend. Her thoughts had been elsewhere while she wallowed in self-pity, and she never found the courage to return to the healing rooms where such pain had once taken place. The battle had long since passed but the atmosphere of suffering remained. Erynell could feel it, even now she felt choked.

“I could never leave without saying farewell to my dearest friend.” Erynell simply said. It sounded pathetic in her own mind. Eowyn did not respond but turned around, letting her blond hair wave behind her. Erynell sighed.

“When do you leave for Rohan?” The elf asked, though she was fairly certain that Éomer had already made the voyage home. He was, after all, the new king of the Westfold.

“I will not.” Eowyn said. A slight smile overtook her sullen expression as she turned back to the elf. “My place is here, I’ve discovered. As soon as I may escape these healers, I will be a Lady of Gondor.”

Erynell smiled slyly. “You mean that your place is with Lord Faramir.” And just like that, the woman and elf quickly started to laugh and embrace each other, all traces of quarrel lost.

“I will miss you, Erynell.” She said.

“And I you. However I do promise to return soon, and maybe then I’ll be able to tell you of who I really am.” Erynell looked at the ground.

“I know you are really my friend. And I am certain that nothing you learn of your past can change any way I feel about you. Good luck.”

“*Hannon le.*” *Thank you.* Erynell was waved off by Eowyn, and made her way out into the sunshine. As she passed, her hand reached out and caressed the bark on the now strong little tree blooming in the middle of the courtyard.

*Farewell,* a voice spoke in her head. Erynell smiled and continued on, past the mortal guards watching her stroke the tree questioningly. However, as she walked, thoughts of uncertainty
Where am I going to get a guide? Erynell asked herself. Making her way to the stables, she traveled through the city’s rings and ignored the bustle of the market. The elf was walking fast, and didn’t notice the man watching her from the wall until he leapt in front of her.

“Hello, she-elf.” He spoke. His voice was a bit too high-pitched for his appearance. The man was middle-aged with thinning hair, squinty eyes, and pale skin.

“Hello, sir.” Erynell responded. Even being quite short for an elf, she towered above this man by at least two heads. He smiled up at her, showing perfectly white and straight gleaming teeth.

“I can guide you to Lothlórien. Heard you needed a guide!” He said.

“How did you hear?” She asked, though she wasn’t very concerned now about having to search for her guide. “And I’m afraid I cannot hire you. I have naught to pay you with.”

“Oh now, I can get you to Lothlórien easily and require only food and company for payment.” The grin never left his face. Erynell found a smile working its way up to her lips as well.

“What may I call you, kind sir, that you would offer me your help?” Erynell asked. They started walking in the direction of the stables again.

“Donovan, a simple Southerner who enjoys his travels.” He pulled ahead, leading them both to the stables. Erynell found no problems in trusting the man, and was only slightly surprised when he pointed to a horse in the stables that was his. Not many were fortunate enough to have a horse in the white city, and most of them seemed better off than Donovan.

Still, Erynell saddled Léod while Donovan prepared his old mare for the journey and they were off no more than twenty minutes later. He had no traveling rucksack with him, and Erynell was pleased that she had packed plenty of food, it seemed as though she would be providing for the entire voyage.

Their days were spent riding north, going upstream the river Anduin from Minas Tirith. At night, the two travelers entertained themselves by a campfire, eating their meals and with Donovan telling stories. Most of the time, he spoke in hushed voices around the fire and his words were not always ones she could understand. Erynell didn’t mind, she found his company somewhat charming.

The two had to travel through the plains of East Emnet as the path near the river became fraught with crevices and loose rocks sloping upwards. It was simply easier the travel around the uncertain terrain, following the tributary of the River Onodló, another name for the River Entwash.

All around them, Rohan appeared the same as ever, with golden fields and rocky outcroppings stretching as far as the eye could see throughout the Westfold; especially Erynell’s elven eyes, which were far keener than that of the average man.

To the west, the Misty Mountains stretched far along the horizon, and every once in a while Erynell found Léod altering their direction towards what she could only guess to be Edoras. Beyond that, Erynell strained to catch a glimpse of the fortress of Helm’s Deep where she knew Gimli and Legolas would be exploring the caves found below. It was too far off in the distance for her to catch sight of, and Erynell simply kept riding with Donovan straight and true, albeit with a bit of disappointment.

Another week passed, and before the two travelers there appeared an expanse of green unlike any Erynell had seen before then. When she asked Donovan about it, he revealed that the forest was
known as Fangorn Forest, and that he would rather not venture inside. Erynell, however, was
excited with the prospect of walking through such a wood.

“If we go around, we will lose another two days of this journey! Let us pass straight through! I am
not afraid of any forest.” She was arguing with him as they approached the trees ahead.

“She-elf,” this was often how Donovan would address her, and it always felt slightly demeaning
of him, “that forest is very old and very dangerous. The trees do not take well to strangers!”
Again, he added something in his strange way of speaking, though it was unintelligible to his
companion.

“I am no stranger to trees, Donovan. Do not worry, it is only a forest.” Erynell did not stop as the
trees loomed overhead, instead traveling right into the shadows. Donovan could do nothing else
but follow her in, grumbling all the while.

Instantly, the air felt cold. Though it was a warm and sunny day, little light found its way through
the canopy of leaves. While Donovan was only uncomfortable and his mare skittish, Erynell was
concerned. The very air she breathed felt sick. Soon, they had to dismount their horses and travel
in single-file through the rare gaps of the forest.

Just as the last time she wandered through a forest after being held captive by the Haradrim,
Erynell knew in her mind which way was north in order to stay true to their path. The ground was
becoming fraught with roots that seemed to appear before them in order to trip the horses. Erynell
continued on just fine, everywhere she stepped there seemed to be a path for her and Léod.
However, Donovan was starting to wheeze.

“Perhaps we should look for a place to rest.” Erynell suggested, and as she said the words, they
emerged into a small clearing, just big enough for the two of them and their horses. “See? Here we
are. Breathe deeply, Donovan, and look up at the stars.” As she said it, Erynell felt a tinge
surprised; how could it be night already? The forest seemed to be taking from them their own
time. However, the gap in the canopy was quite pleasant for the both of them.

That night there was no campfire. The thought of any kind of open flame near such a great forest
made Erynell sick to her stomach. She told Donovan to simply lay down and get some rest as she
tied the horses nearby.

In their clearing, the air felt less heavy, but Erynell was suddenly tired in much of the same way as
in Minas Tirith. There would be no riding Léod to stay awake in the middle of this forest, so
Erynell simply resigned herself to sleep instead of keeping watch throughout the night as she had
been doing previously. Surely, nothing could occur that night as they were all alone in Fangorn
Forest.

The glare of red behind Erynell’s eyelids awoke her the next morning. As she opened her eyes,
Erynell was pleased at the sight of a golden sun barely peaking over the green trees. The leaves
had been doing well to shade the elf for most of the morning, so it was a few hours past dawn.

Rejuvenated, the elf sat up with a smile on her face. She figured that she would not need to sleep
again for another two weeks at least. However, the smile fell as she looked around their small
clearing.

“Donovan?” She whispered. The name slipped from her tongue and barely seemed to disturb the
air around her. She knew inside of her there would be no answer.

Her companion was absent. The spot on which he lay for the night was cold, he must have been
gone since before dawn. The old mare was also no longer tethered to the branch Erynell had tied
her to. With the absence of her companion’s horse, Erynell realized something else as well.

Léod was gone.

Erynell quickly dug through her rucksack. Among the missing items were her canteen of water and the food she had packed for the journey. She quickly slung the pack over her shoulder and ran up to where Léod had been tethered.

The rope was frayed. Upon first glance Erynell thought it had simply worn through, but she say the threads were too even, too precise to have simply broken. Donovan must have cut through the rope with a knife, but what then? Surely Léod would not willingly go with the squint-eyed man; he had been shying away from him the entire trip. Léod must have been scared off…or had run off.

Erynell brought one hand up to her forehead. She placed the other on a tree branch beside her for support. At that moment, it was as if a cork had been pulled from a bottle of wine—her ears popped and voices previously clouded from her mind spilled into her head. In surprise, Erynell took her hand from the tree’s branch.

They did not quit, however, nor did the quiet at the loss of contact. Rather, the voices became louder and louder, with anger! Erynell started to squeeze her face between her hands, thinking she might burst! Her breathing became labored, and she had had enough.

“Daro!” Stop! Erynell cried into the morning in her natural tongue. The noises in her head finally subsided, settling into a restless murmur to which Erynell could open her eyes. It didn’t sound so angry now, more confused and regretful. Once more, with caution, Erynell placed her hand on the branch.

Why are you here, Elf, why do you bring an enemy into our midst? Erynell felt rather than heard the words as they shuddered through her.

What enemy? I find myself now alone. Erynell attempted to return the words, trying for the first time to communicate back into the tree knowingly.

You are ignorant, either ignorant or stupid. The trees had different voices, and this one was definitely separate from the first. It was more quiet, more tired.

Erynell sighed. Explain what is happening. Who are you? She thought it was a longshot, could the trees really be self-aware?

Your partner is of orc-kind. Once a spy of Saruman who ventured deep into this forest. He is not welcome.

Erynell, pulled her hand away once more in confusion. Orc-kind? The smaller forebear to the Uruk-Hai? How could Donovan be one of them? He appeared almost…normal. The trees read her thoughts even as she was not touching them. However, Erynell could only focus on one voice if she was in contact with the branch.

Not full-orcish maybe, but partly just the same. Erynell didn’t want to learn how that’d work out. Saruman once had many ill-bred in his service.

Not welcome! Another voice said. At this point, Erynell was confused as to why she was hearing more than one voice. Again, the trees answered her indirect question.

We are all connected.
Our roots grow strong and deep.

Together and entwined. Now, your spirit is among us as well.

Erynell frowned. That just didn’t sound healthy. Did she want her spirit among these sick trees? More tones of anger chimed through her head at these thoughts, and she stepped away from the branch so she couldn’t hear them directly.

From behind her, then, Erynell heard the quiet neigh of a horse. She turned to look as Léod emerged into the clearing. Had she ever felt more relieved to see him? As he stepped forward, Léod turned his head to look behind him apprehensively. Erynell, too, saw movement in the darkness and smiled. The trees had lead him to her once again.

“Hannon le, mellonin.” Thank you, my friend. Erynell said as she rubbed his nose. She was thanking him for his presence, now hope was not lost for the rest of her journey. As Erynell was about to mount him, a panic settled into the pit of her stomach. Her hands fumbled as she opened one of the saddlebags attached to him.

Thank the valar. She thought to herself as she felt something cool and textured. Erynell sighed, pulling the object out. In her hand was the leaf-encrusted elven-made circlet given to her for the coronation. Erynell placed a hand over her mouth and stared at it, not knowing what she’d do if Donovan had found it, the thief.

While she placed it back in its bag, Erynell looked up at Léod. He shifted on his feet, almost looking at her curiously, so she smiled up at him reassuringly. Only then, at the look in her horse’s eyes did Erynell chide herself for being more worried about her jewelry than her complete and utter lack of food.

Of course, she suddenly realized. It’s all Donovan’s fault. “Besto yrch! Amarth fêg!” F*ck the orc! Evil fate! She yelled out in the clearing. The quiet voices in her head trembled slightly, as if laughing at her, and Léod started to swing his head up and down, either nervous at her tone or ready to leave, or both. Quietly, Erynell apologized to the air around her and finally took hold of Léod’s reigns to lead him into the darkness.

As the trees parted for Erynell and Léod like a river along the bow of a ship, the ground beneath their feet—and hooves—started to rumble periodically. The very earth shuddered as the beating of a drum, and Erynell could not stop herself from looking behind the two every few minutes. Whatever it was, it was gaining on them.

Finally, as Léod’s snorting and whinnying became constant when the shakes would come over them, Erynell decided to stop and rest. They were at the bottom of an incline, and the elf chose to rest on a fallen log nearby. Whatever was following them, they would wait it out. Erynell’s bare hand brushed a small bit of greenery still left on the rootless log.

Elf, the voice said in her mind. Erynell sighed but tried to keep her thoughts from annoyance.

What is it that follows me? Erynell asked. She had to admit, she was surprised the fallen tree was still alive.

Here approaches the tree shepherd, the tree herder, Fangorn of the forest itself. The tree’s voice was fading. Did it have to die right then?

All life must end, even your light will fade if you stay here, Elf. Another tree said. Erynell felt a calm sadness wash over her. If she stayed here? Did the tree mean staying in the forest, or Arda itself? Erynell just arrived in this land, it seemed, how could she leave?
However, then Erynell closed her eyes and remembered back to before the Battle of Pelennor Fields. She had wanted to leave so desperately then when the sea-longing washed over her.

She was ready to throw herself into the river, to perish and yet wash away into the sea. Even now Erynell could make out a vision in her mind—one that excited her and scared her at the same time, for it was not her own—showing white shores and pristine boats. Erynell would leave when the time came, she knew.

Erynell turned her attention back to the dying tree below her. She lifted herself up in order to kneel before it, and she smiled. Looking at the roots, the elf knew it had fallen naturally.

The tree itself was not very large and the roots did not go deep as the others had said. The earth must’ve been crowded, and maybe that was a reason for the sickness of this forest. Without growth, there is no progress.

The rest of the forest must’ve been consuming the minerals in the soil needed to prosper faster than little trees like this one could keep up. However, even as the young tree died, Erynell didn’t feel it cursing its forest-brothers. The rest of the trees were cursing the men and the orcs for restricting their growth and tearing down the outer boundaries of the forest.

Once more, the pounding of the earth sounded, closer than ever before. Erynell turned suddenly, still kneeling, looking for whatever it was. At first, there was nothing amiss in the forest; only trees. Then, she realized. The monstrous tree directly behind her had not been there a minute ago. Léod reared. Erynell had to keep a tight hold on his reigns as he spooked. Then, she was almost afraid to look up.

The tree that was not a tree was generally shaped like a man. It had two legs with stumps for feet, two arms with branches for hands, a torso as wide as any trunk she’d ever seen, and a head with a knotted, knobby nose and yellow eyes. It was even complete with a canopy of green leaves that showered down whenever it moved and a beard of green moss trailing down.

“I was told…we had an orc problem in…my forest…” The word “orc” was spat like a curse and even then it groaned as it spoke and seemed to falter almost with the effort. The tree shepherd hunched over and blinked at Erynell with those yellow eyes.

“Fangorn,” Erynell bowed her head hoping not to offend the creature by calling it and “it” and instead using the name given to her by the fallen tree, “I am no orc, only betrayed by one of their kind. My name is Erynell.”

The tree herder bent down some more and squinted to see her. When he came to rest on one knee his eyes widened. He let out a “haruumph” much like a chuckle.

“You…are no orc, but one…of Elven-kind, Mistress Erynell! ...and from a forest. Many know…me by the name Fangorn…but you shall call me…Treebeard.” Treebeard spoke slowly, and seemed to catch on the letter M. Erynell wasn’t sure if he was thinking very carefully before he spoke or if he was simply tripping over his own words. She was having a difficult time understanding him, as he spoke in Westron with his strange words.

His gaze traveled slowly from her face to the tree she was kneeling before. In a strange language like muttering and groaning, Treebeard spoke to the tree. She couldn’t understand the language, per say, but Erynell knew that he had just put the tree to rest.

“Treebeard, what creature may I know you as? I have heard tree shepherd and tree herder, but surely you have a…species.” In her own ear Erynell sounded terribly rude, but she couldn’t worry about that. She was amazed by the being knelt before her, the elf wanted to know everything.
“I? …Mistress Erynell… I am an Ent.”

Chapter End Notes

I swear I'm getting back into this. I don't care how long it takes or how stressed I get, I WILL finish this! (And your feedback always helps).

If you're interested, check out oliphauntsandoblivion.tumblr.com for updates on this story!
12.

Treebeard was then guiding horse and rider north. After the initial introductions were made and Erynell dissuaded the Ent from picking her up for closer examination, Treebeard said something quite strange.

“Your presence has…not been felt here,” Treebeard took a great breath and released an unearthly moan the likes of which Erynell had never heard before. He continued speaking as if nothing had happened, “for a long, long while.”

“The presence of the elves?” She asked. Or…no. She couldn’t bear to get her hopes up.

“Your particular Elvish…presence…if that is what you…mean.” He said. How could he say this? Treebeard had no idea the significance of his words to Erynell.

“You mean I’ve been here before?” Erynell asked. As she walked, she almost tripped over an aggressive tree root. Treebeard strained to bend down and command the offending tree in old Entish before they continued moving.

“Quite recently, in…fact.” Treebeard said. Erynell tried to press him some more, but he would have none of it. Why did he say she hadn’t been “here for a long, long while” but then say she visited “quite recently”?

“Don’t…be hasty” was evidently his favorite philosophy, and Erynell seemed to be the epitome of a hasty elf.

The two traveled for a few more days through the never-ending dark of Fangorn Forest before Treebeard allowed the conversation to return to Erynell. She was more than relieved, as their path began sloping more and more uphill with every step they took. Erynell thought the forest may’ve been purposely trying to suck them in more.

“You must know of Eregion if you know of me, then, Treebeard. Are you familiar with where I hail from?” Erynell implied. Treebeard blinked and his torchlight eyes rounded on her.
“Eregion?” The word sounded gruff as it resonated through his old bark. “Eregion...” Erynell wanted to shudder as he tested the word. Then, he started sweeping his great treetop from side to side. Erynell had to throw her arms up over her head to avoid the rain of twigs and moss flying off his beard.

“I do...not...know of this Eregion. Are you...making your way there...now?” He asked. Erynell could only shake her head, though he wasn’t looking down at her to see it.

“No. It was destroyed, I’m afraid. Lost to history.” Erynell felt sad. Evidently she was still endued with a sense of Nationalism even to the land she could not recall to memory.

At her words, however, Treebeard’s eyes brightened. The stringy bark on his forehead rose as if in realization.

“Lost!” His voice shook the forest. Erynell could feel the discomfort of the trees nearest to him. “The...Entwives are lost!” Erynell couldn’t make heads or tails of his new statement, so she decided to drop it.

Another day passed. Then another. Erynell guessed that they were almost out of the forest, at least that is what the few trees she attempted to converse with were saying. The rest of them told her to turn around and stay in the forest so they could keep her safe, or they told her she’d been going in circles for days. All in all, not very reassuring.

At the River Limlight, Erynell was able to bask in the light of the sun once more. The gap between the trees was small, but it definitely gave her some relief. She had become attached to this forest and would leave it regretfully, however, there was too much. Too much pain, sorrow, anger. How could she ever comprehend the true nature of this place?

Erynell took a long, lingering drink. Léod bent beside her to lap up some water as well, and Treebeard simply stood in the current letting it wash up from his roots. It tasted wonderful—cool and crisp—and Erynell could’ve stayed there for ages. Soon however, she felt the moss of Treebeard’s beard brushing over her.

“That’s quite enough...don’t want you to be...to treeish.” He said. Erynell was slightly confused but nodded, she wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and mounted Léod just for across the river. Erynell didn’t notice the slightly green tinge that her vision had taken on.

The current of the Limlight was swift but Léod’s gait was steady. The travelers were soon across the river and venturing into the adjacent brush, leaving the sun behind.

As they traveled another day, Erynell’s mind wandered. How was everything back in Gondor? Were her friends worried about her or thinking ‘good riddance’? True, her thoughts weren’t very positive but simply thinking of those she’d left behind made her feel better in the dark.

No matter what they felt about her, Erynell had a place to return to. Aragorn and Arwen would welcome her back with open arms and hopefully smiling faces. Eowyn probably hadn’t given her much thought, not with Faramir hanging off her arm at all times. Erynell smiled as well; perhaps she’d be able to enlighten them then on who she really was upon her return.

And the Hobbits! Oh, her dear Hobbits. They’d probably have arrived in Rivendell by then. She could only imagine how they’d be welcomed back on their little ponies and in their little cloaks. The saviors of Middle Earth; half as tall as any man but with twice the valor.

Finally, Erynell thought of Gimli and Legolas. The smile drifted off her face, but she wasn’t sad that they weren’t beside her. The two had traveled together on a promise and were probably
underground at that very moment.

Erynell longed for another discussion with Legolas. Every time they met, Erynell would have questions about Middle Earth or of the Elves, but she could never voice them. One of the last times she had spoken to him, she’d made quite a fool out of herself. However, he wasn’t judgmental and genuinely cared for what she’d had to say…

Erynell was thinking too much into it. She shook thoughts of the Elvenprince out of her head and instead thought ahead to her meeting with the elves of Lothlórien. She couldn’t help but get her hopes up again, though she wasn’t sure that she could survive her heart being crushed again with disappointment. She already felt…broken.

Treebeard slowed down as they reached the incline to another hill. He looked ahead and spoke, “This…is the oldest part of the forest…the most dangerous.”

Erynell looked around with apprehension. There was…something different about what they were walking into. The trees were covered in a dark—almost black—moss that hung down in vines from the treetops. The trunks themselves were twisted into almost unnatural looking shapes with knots and tendrils of wood sticking out at odd, random intervals.

The very forest floor seemed alive with the roots squirming underfoot.

Treebeard told her sternly to mount her horse and follow in his exact, uh, trunk-steps. Erynell heeded this without thinking. Wherever the Ent stepped, the roots would stop moving for a few seconds and form a sort of weave for him to step over without trouble.

The Ent also told Erynell to refrain from directly contacting any of these trees. It could be dangerous. Erynell obliged, and shrunk into herself as far as she was able on Léod’s back.

Every once in a while, a vine or a tree branch would come sloping down from above or around the travelers and reach out to Treebeard or Erynell. Treebeard would embrace the contact with his own branches but would hiss whenever a branch got close to stroking Erynell. All in all, it was very unnerving.

Léod was sure-footed and not skittish when the roots wavered underfoot. Erynell was glad, as Treebeard seemed to be walking faster. Looks like someone was a little hasty.

The elf couldn’t look down. Around exactly where Léod’s hooves met the ground, the writhing roots would go into a frenzy. They waved around them fluidly, and it almost reminded Erynell of the movements of water.

There was that feeling again, the sea-longing. Erynell had half a mind to close her eyes and allow herself to fall backwards into the sea of wood because maybe—just maybe—it’d take her home.

When she looked back up, however, Erynell snapped out of it and chided herself for such thoughts. She was sounding ridiculous. However, her eyes drifted shut…

“Ah!” Treebeard creaked. “We are almost…out. You’ve handled that well…, elf.”

They all emerged into the evening light. To the West, the sun was setting behind the mountains. Streaks of red, yellow, orange, and violet snaked throughout the sky and Erynell felt at peace. She was debating whether or not to simply sleep until morning to continue, but realized that she wanted to see the lights of the city for herself as they were most brilliant at night.

“Well, Treebeard,” Erynell looked back into the expanse of darkness they had emerged from and then up at the Ent’s old, weathered face, “I hate to, er, be hasty as you say, but Lothlórien is my
destination and it mustn’t be far. I see the forest up ahead.” That was true; across the Field of Celebrant, Erynell spotted the green and silver trees of Lórien Forest.

It was quite a ways off, but if Erynell could see it, she knew it could be done. Treebeard squinted ahead all the same.

“So be it…take this for your…journey…May it bring you luck when…the sun sets in the East.” Treebeard said. He then extended a mossy hand down towards Erynell. She was confused, but took the small item balanced on the tip of his branchy fingers. It was a piece of wood; small and oval shaped with a small knot protruding from the otherwise smooth surface just off-center.

“Treebeard, what is this? What do you mean?” Erynell asked. The sun sets in the West, not the East…The old being had already started to turn around. When she looked at the small wooden oval more closely, it seemed to be whispering to her. She shrugged that thought off because as soon as it crossed her mind, the small whispers stopped.

“Don’t…remember…” He said. “Don’t be hasty!” Treebeard was nodding to himself as he retreated back into Fangorn and was enveloped in darkness.

The elf shrugged and tucked the piece of wood into a small pouch on her hip.

“Boe i ‘waenc. Tolo.” We must go. Come. Erynell whispered to Léod as she bid him to run. Together, the two flew across the Field of Celebrant and into the Forest of Lothlórien after it was completely dark.

It was completely breathtaking. As it was spring, Léod’s hooves disturbed the golden leaves completely coating the forest floor. Above them, in the boughs of the trees bloomed yellow flowers almost as golden and ethereal as the ground below. Few peeks of green shown though the canopy, and the moonlight that shown through illuminated the towering trees themselves. They resembled silver columns as their bark was smooth and grey.

Instead of the pressure Erynell felt in Fangorn, she felt a floating sensation in Lothlórien. The wood was silent and peaceful, and the trees friendly. In passing, Erynell stroked the trunk of one softly, and the hymn of hundreds of trees singing together entered her ears. The notes were high and jovial. The wood elf was truly relaxed for the first time in…well, forever it seemed.

She didn’t try to converse with the trees. She didn’t need to. Erynell only listened to their beautiful song.

The elf was giddy. She didn’t expect any danger around her or anything amiss with the world. Erynell kept urging Léod forward through the trees even though her clouded mind couldn’t concentrate hard enough to feed her a direction. She simply followed the path, closed her eyes, and hoped for the best.

It wasn’t the sound of a bowstring being drawn that caused or to open her eyes and finally become aware, nor was it the non-treeish whispers surrounding her. It was a disembodied voice in her head.

There were no words, but the tone held plenty of meaning; confusion, distrust, curiosity were apparent. The voice sharpened her senses and caused her to gasp and draw a knife from Léod’s saddle.

Instantly, before she could hold it up fully, a voice sounded from above. “Man de? Man ídhrog?” Who are you? What do you want? Erynell glanced up and sheathed the knife. At least a dozen assailants were above her with their bows drawn. She could figure her chances. They were all
dressed in grey cloaks with the hoods up.

“Im Erynell a mellon nin Léod. Ídhron peded a Galadriel.” I am Erynell and my companion is Léod. I wish to speak with Galadriel. Erynell said. Quickly she dismounted Léod so as to look less like a threat.

“Lady Galadriel does not simply offer audiences to any who come to call.” One of them spoke in Elvish.

“I have been referred to come by Mithrandir the Wizard. That and I am also friend to Prince Legolas of Mirkwood and Lord Elrond of Rivendell.” Erynell hoped this would work. She couldn’t just turn away again.

At her words, two of the elves leapt down from their platforms in the trees. They pulled back their hoods and Erynell studied them closely.

“Mae g’ovannen, Erynell.” Well met, Erynell. She noticed this was the formal greeting of the elves, not the informal as had been used for her before. Looking between the two elves, Erynell noticed a few similarities in their appearance. “I am Rúmil of Lothlórien and this is my brother Orophin. We are the wardens of this forest.”

Both elves were blond and had stern looks upon their long faces. However, in their eyes there was acceptance and assurance.

“Mae g’ovannen.” Well met. Erynell nodded to them both.

“We shall lead you to Lord Celeborn and Lady Galadriel with the dawn. Tether your steed and rest with us on the flets.” Rúmil spoke and bowed his head as well. Erynell noticed that Orophin didn’t do much of the talking.

By flets, the brothers referred to the lifted platforms attached to the trees. After she climbed up, other wardens would lift the silver ladders so no one could follow. Only a few of the cloaked elves stayed below. One was guarding Léod and the others started to patrol. Erynell leaned back against the tree trunk protruding from the middle of the platform.

“Are you expecting much animosity, then, with such a patrol?” Erynell asked. The elves all turned to look at her, but she was staring at Rúmil.

“The evil of Sauron was destroyed,” he looked at her as if waiting for a reaction. Erynell nodded but didn’t tell him that she was there “but still orcs venture close to our borders from Dol Guldor and Southern Mirkwood.” He said.

The tree behind Erynell was singing softly, lulling Erynell to sleep. It had been about a week since she last allowed herself to fall into a slumber, and she knew she really didn’t need it so she shook herself awake.

“By the power of Lady Galadriel are our lands kept safe, but soon our Lady of Light will diminish and travel into the west.” He seemed sad, and clutched his bow a little tighter.

“So that is the fate of us all, then?” Erynell asked. When Rúmil looked on at her with confusion, she reiterated. “We are all to go west? By boat to the undying lands and to live forever apart from Arda?”

Rúmil shrugged. “That is our homeland. We were never meant to come here as it is. By the Valar, we have interfered too much with this world.” This time, Erynell was confused, but she let it slide.
The elves started singing stories around the flets to pass the time as the moon became dark with cloud cover. Every once in a while, the silver ladder would be dropped for another elf to scamper up and report to Rúmil or Orophin. They would either wave off the words or give them an order. At one point, Rúmil himself stood with a scout and dropped down the ladder.

“Orcs have been spotted to the east. Stay here with Orophin ’til the dawn and my brother will guide you to Caras Galadhon in one piece.” Rúmil said. He didn’t give her time to offer her help before he leapt down the ladder and faded into the forest soundlessly. Erynell looked at Orophin apprehensively before focusing on the tree’s song.

A hand shook Erynell slightly to bring her back to focus. It was now barely light out and Erynell looked up to find Orophin before her.

“You slept.” He said simply, gruffly, but with a strange look in his eyes. Yes, Erynell slept a lot for an elf but he didn’t have to seem so judgmental. Shaking the fog out of her head, Erynell stood and realized she was being childish. Instead of glaring, she sent Orophin a smile. One he did not return.

They climbed down from the flet to meet Léod who seemed pleased that Erynell was back on solid ground. She didn’t mount him, but she did stay as close to his side as she could while they were marching with the elves.

Once again, Erynell felt that disembodied presence inside of her head. She looked around at the wardens guiding her, but none would meet her gaze. They ventured to the center of the whole forest, and once the incline gave way, Erynell saw a valley of trees spread before her eyes.

In the midst of green and gold, Erynell gaped at the sight of one tree taller than all the rest, even towering over the surrounding hills. It must have been thousands of years old and was event taller than Treebeard. Without a doubt, it was the most impressive being of Arda she had yet seen, and that included the Mûmak of Harad.

It was a few more hours before they had all ventured into the city’s stronghold. With a start, Erynell realized that the city wasn’t just centered around the tree, the city was the tree. She tried not to gape too widely, but Erynell noticed the smug looks on many of the wardens’ faces.

At some point, an elf had approached to lead Léod to the stables for food and drink, and Erynell let him go without a second thought. She would find him again, but in this moment, all she wanted to do was make contact with the tree. She felt its power and life force buzzing around in her head, it was almost painful. However, she wanted to appreciate it in full.

As she reached out to lay a hand on the tree, another hand shot out to stop her. This one wasn’t covered in the grey cloak of the wardens but in reddish-gold armor that extended all over the elf’s body. Looking up, Erynell took in the sight of him.

He, too, resembled Rúmil and Orophin, but this one was more regal. He had a small silver battle-circlet flattening the long gold hair around his head, and his eyes were a piercing blue. Where Legolas was lithe and quick, this elf was strong and sturdy.

“You do not wish to do that, she-elf. It would be too overwhelming.” He spoke in Sindarin. His eyes shone bright with amusement but his expression was grim. Erynell deflated a bit and looked back at the tree, sadness clearly evident in her eyes. The elf was still holding her wrist, so he turned her to look at him and bowed his head.

“I am Haldir, March-warden of Lothlórien.” Haldir’s eyes drifted behind her to Orophin and the rest of the wardens. “I have a report to give, so I shall take her to Lady Galadriel, brother.”
Erynell looked behind her to see Orophin nodding. He bowed his head once to her and then led the wardens back the way they had come. Haldir released Erynell’s wrist and smiled.

“Welcome to Caras Galadhon, Lady…?” He trailed off and led her around the tree to the start of a grand staircase. There were no guardrails, but Haldir still positioned himself in between her and the tree.

“Erynell.” She breathed. She hoped he didn’t expect her to say where she hailed from.

“Lady Erynell.” Haldir left it at that and walked up the staircase, his red cape trailing behind him. Erynell noticed a few patches and streaks of black blood spattering his cloak and armor, but didn’t say anything. He must’ve been busy with those orcs.

They trudged up for what seemed like hours, but Erynell noticed that the width of the tree trunk didn’t shrink hardly at all. Her earlier impression of this great tree didn’t do it justice. It was massive.

Every few revolutions, a silver arch would be structured off to the side of the staircase, with silver rope bridges connecting the main stair to smaller (but still huge) branches. Erynell wondered why these elves would ever need to touch the ground at all.

Haldir didn’t make conversation, but it was a comfortable silence as they walked. Every once in a while, an elf would pass going down the stair and would acknowledge them. Other than that, everything was…peaceful.

As they walked up, however, Erynell started to feel a pressure in her head. It felt much like in Fangorn before she had made contact with those trees. She had half a mind to push Haldir out of the way and finally lay a hand on the smooth silver bark of the great tree, but she had to push that thought aside. Her expression must’ve fallen, because even Haldir started glancing at her oddly.

With the pressure, came the disembodied voice again. Still, no words, only emotion was transmitted. Erynell could tell that the emotion was foreign, but the two conflicting sides of her head were starting to get on her nerves.

After a few times of shaking her head, Haldir took her arm and tucked it through his for support. Perhaps he assumed she was tired and simply wanted to assist. Still, Erynell was frustrated.

Soon came a third impression on her mind. A tiny whispering. Erynell could barely feel it but if she tuned in on that it was easier for her to cope with the pressure and the voices.

Erynell’s free hand rested on her hip and came into contact with the little pouch holding Treebeard’s piece of wood. She took out the small oval and rested her hand on the knot and suddenly everything was bearable.

She still had no clue what the little piece of wood was, where it had come from, or what kind it was. Erynell knew this wasn’t the luck Treebeard had referred to earlier due to the fact that the sun was not setting in the East, but still, the little piece of wood had some impact on the madness of her mind.

She clutched the oval in her fist without Haldir noticing, and when he glanced at her again she smiled reassuringly. Returning her focus to their climb, Erynell was relieved to find that they had come to the end and were now standing on a suspended platform high above the forest floor. Although Erynell could fall off and be sent to her doom in a split second, she was at ease.

Haldir unattached himself from Erynell’s arm and stepped forward, kneeling before the backs of
two figures. One was in blue-grey robes and the other in a long white gown with impressive train.

“My Lord and Lady of Lothlórien, I come to report…” Haldir spoke calmly and with measure. Erynell had started out listening to him, yes, but when the two beings turned around the elf could no longer focus on Haldir’s words.

Celeborn was definitely lordly, everything you’d expect from such a being. He held himself high and glistened with authority. However, it was Lady Galadriel that truly stole the air from Erynell’s lungs.

Interestingly enough, Galadriel was barefoot, though the pristine quality of her skin allowed no dirt to show. Her dress was long and glowed brightly, as if there was a light shining within. Gaze trailing up, Erynell noticed her shining hands held before her and clasped together, with a ring weighing down one finger. Oddly, the ring was the least interesting thing about Galadriel, as it was almost dull.

Like most elves in Lothlórien they’d encountered, Galadriel’s hair was long and blond with a slight wave to it. Those piercing blue eyes were focused politely on Haldir for his report, and her lovely face was finer than the brightest star. Erynell understood then why she was known as the Lady of Light, and Erynell thought that this high elf was the most beautiful creature she’d seen in her short time.

At the end of Haldir’s report, he stood and conversed shortly with Celeborn and Galadriel. When silence finally fell, Haldir beckoned Erynell forward and she bowed awkwardly.

“And may I present Lady Erynell for an audience with my Lord and Lady. She is friends of Mithrandir the Wizard and Prince Legolas Greenleaf of Mirkwood.” Haldir bowed his head and stepped away.

When Erynell lifted her head again to look at the Lady Galadriel, she stepped back slightly. The Lady of the forest was looking at her with a mix of horror and surprise. She only spoke quietly in Sindarin.

“You should be dead.”
13.

Erynell knew right then that it had been Galadriel in her mind. She wasn’t sure if the Lady of Light had recognized her by face or by thought, but still Erynell felt offense. That was not a message to normally just drop on someone as such. Erynell wasn’t dead. She simply knew nothing of her unique predicament.

“My lady…” Erynell spoke but did not have the words to continue. So, she stayed silent. Her mind was heavy with questions she didn’t know how to ask.

“You faded in body and mind long ago, during the second age.” There was an accusatory tone to the Lady’s voice. Haldir’s left hand rested on the blade at his side and Celeborn silently beckoned another warden to come forth. Did they think this was some trick of Sauron? Sauron died!

Erynell’s breathing quickened.

Yes, the evil that has plagued Middle Earth throughout the Third Age has been destroyed. And yet…you knew him. Galadriel didn’t speak, her eyes were closed. But that was her voice inside of Erynell’s head!

“What?” Erynell spoke out and looked between Haldir and Galadriel. Her voice started to sound again in Erynell’s head, but Erynell closed her eyes and shook her head. Galadriel was weeding through her thoughts and few memories. She saw Erynell at the gates of Mordor, crying out as the last legacy of Sauron was destroyed: his tower, and his great eye.

The eye. Erynell only saw the eye. Fire, burning, pain, and darkness. She opened her eyes again, and Galadriel had stumbled a bit. Celeborn placed his hand over hers. Erynell didn’t know what just happened, but Galadriel was out of her head. For now.

“Even now, she is fading.” Galadriel spoke softly and then turned her hard gaze once again on the elf in front of her. “Prince Legolas may vouch for you. Until he is contacted and arrives, you will stay here. Close by.”
Erynell knew, Galadriel was basically going to have her supervised and under guard until a trustworthy source—Legolas—could help her. The nameless warden approached Erynell with his arm outstretched, but Haldir beat him to it. He sent the other away and once again held Erynell’s arm in his.

This time, he was probably escorting her to some dank dungeon, away from the trees and under the earth. She wasn’t sure if he could handle that. However, his stature and expressions had not changed from before he knew she might be tainted. Maybe there was hope.

Instead of making the venture all the way down to the ground, Haldir veered Erynell away from the great tree, through an archway, and over a silver rope bridge. She visibly relaxed.

“You do not need to be afraid. Nothing will happen.” Haldir spoke, knowingly.

“I think you’re right, and yet I had a sneaking suspicion that you were going to lock me up.” Erynell sighed. Haldir smiled a bit at this.

“The Lady just needs reassurance. That is all.” Haldir said.

“I came to ask for her help, yet she sends me away at our first meeting.” She said. Haldir didn’t respond, but soon they approached another archway leading to a flet.

This one was nicer than the simple wooden platforms in the forest, though it was still open to the elements and surrounding a large tree trunk. Silver branches grew out of the wood to form a small barrier around the edges, making it almost seem like a room. With sparse furnishings, Erynell sat on the bed.

“I must ask to relieve you of your weapons, Lady Erynell.” Haldir said, his arm outreached. Erynell obliged and handed him Hathelas. The elf took it and smiled at its weight, then bowed his head and left the room.

Erynell denied the offer for a change of clothes, saying that she had spares in her rucksack on Léod. She was told that the horse was being fed, watered, exercised and overall treated well. The rucksack was delivered to her so she could change, presumably after being searched through.

Every elf she met was either friendly or simply too quiet to be judged. She found she wasn’t as wary of their regal stances as she was when she first met Elrond or even Legolas. Even so, anything she requested would be delivered to her; except, it seemed, the opportunity to speak to Galadriel.

How had it come to this? Erynell was bored out of her mind even as she read a book about elven history in the First Age. Rúmil was right, the elves were never meant to come to Arda. However, they felt responsible for the evils that plagued the land because of their misdoings. So, they left their paradise and were exiled. Now, it seemed, they were all to return.

Erynell’s eyes drifted away from the story of Beren and her thoughts wandered. Something that Galadriel said had terrified her. She was fading. How could the Lady of Light know that? Elves could only fade with a broken heart, right? Erynell didn’t think her heart was broken. Maybe it was torn from the knowledge of her past, but she couldn’t be fading. Was she going to die?

She snapped the book shut and closed her eyes. She did sleep a lot, and the tremor in her hands which had previously been associated with nerves still hadn’t vanished even after the war. So what? Even though she slept quite a bit, it’s not like elves didn’t sleep at all. Erynell thought she felt normal. She didn’t feel like she was going to die.

Then again…
It’s not like she belonged there, right?

By the valar, she was thinking too much. She started to finger the pages of the book in her hands but couldn’t bring herself to open it again. She couldn’t bring herself to even open her eyes.

Erynell would not die. She had too much that she’d established as part of her “new” life. There were too many people she had yet to see, and too many she’d left behind. Since when had that small company of man, elf, dwarf, and hobbits become so dear to her? She’d promised Frodo she’d see him again. Erynell was not going to die.

Besides, she was looking forward to speaking to Legolas again.

Right as Erynell was about to open her eyes once more, she felt a hand on her shoulder. Her eyes snapped open of their own accord and took in the sight in front of her.

“Erynell?” Legolas said. He was still in his traveling gear, and a nameless warden was standing behind him. Legolas’ blonde hair was still braided to perfection and his blue eyes were soft.

“Legolas!” Erynell dropped the book, forgotten onto the floor and embraced him, without really thinking. As she stepped away, Legolas was smiling.

“It is good to see you, too.” He said. By the valar, how had Erynell missed him that much? She felt almost sheepish, then, glancing at the warden who looked slightly uncomfortable at the display.

“You have come to my rescue, then.” Erynell said softly. Legolas smiled, and brought out something from behind his back.

“Not that you would ever need rescuing. This was in Léod’s saddlebag.” He placed Erynell’s circlet atop her head and fixed her hair a bit. “Are you alright?” Legolas sounded genuinely concerned.

“Mellonin, I am glad you’re here. Maybe now I can learn what’s going on. Where is Gimli?” She asked. Her neck was craning around the small space, looking for any evidence of her friend. She looked down suddenly, upon realizing where the dwarf would be.

“Right here, lassie!” Gimli walked onto the flet from the narrow rope bridge. He must’ve heard his name from her lips, because Erynell knew he didn’t care to learn Sindarin. He grasped his hand in both of his and bowed lavishly before looking around. “You’ve been here how long?” Gimli asked.

“Four days.”

“We rode as swiftly as we were able when word came.” Legolas said. Erynell didn’t doubt it, as it must’ve taken quite a while to locate the two. She expected them to come to her aid in a week at the earliest.

“Aye, my bones are still aching.” Gimli said, rubbing his back. Suddenly the warden stepped forward and invited them to all meet with Lady Galadriel. He and Gimli walked in front of Legolas and Erynell, where he held her arm in his own.

As much as it scared her to admit it, Erynell definitely felt better with her old companions by her side. She could finally breathe easier. However, that didn’t stop the fluttering of her heart which started as soon as she had lain eyes on Legolas.
Gimli stayed far from the edges of the bridges and narrow ledges they found themselves on. The dwarf was so used to being deep below the earth it must have been strange for him to be high above the solid ground. Still, looking around, Erynell noticed how he’d sigh in content every few moments.

The few elves they’d pass would also look down on Gimli. His glaring eyes aimed straight back at them probably didn’t help his case much, but Erynell wondered where the rift between elves and dwarves had originated—and how. If anything, she appreciated the dwarf’s company more than many other’s.

That comfort was soon crushed, however, as Gimli wasn’t allowed onto the flet with Lady Galadriel, at least not when they would be talking about Erynell. Celeborn, Galadriel, Legolas, and Erynell were situated at a small round table carved out of wood. However, another chair sat empty to Galadriel’s left.

In Galadriel’s presence, Erynell felt smaller. She felt unworthy of sitting at her table, and of wearing the beautiful circlet on her head without a right to it. Then again, something about the Lady of Light also prompted Erynell to prove herself and to sit up just a bit straighter at the table.

Lady Galadriel also had no problem with staring straight at, or through, Erynell. There were a few awkward moments of silence when Erynell had been very interested in studying every splinter on the cursed flet she sat upon. So long as she looked anywhere but directly at the older elf woman across the way, she would be fine.

What finally brought everyone to attention was a disturbance to their silence. Distantly, the sound of wood knocking on wood could be heard. It grew closer, and closer, until with the sound also came a brilliantly white figure holding a staff. Erynell’s eyes narrowed.

“Mithrandir.” Galadriel spoke, finally taking her eyes off of Erynell. The wizard nodded, a smile tugging at the edges of his lips. Gandalf sat down in the only empty chair around the table and stroked his beard thoughtfully, glancing at everyone present. His eyes rested on Erynell. She glared back openly, and maybe a bit childishly, especially considering how his eyes softened softly and then returned to gaze at Galadriel.

“I am slightly disturbed at having such a formal meeting as this against one of the saviors of Arda. The war is passed, the ring is destroyed. Surely this paranoia is unfounded?” Gandalf spoke in Westron, causing Erynell to have to concentrate even more on the words he spoke. When he referred to her as a savior, she could feel her ears burning with a blush. And then, when she realized he was vouching for her, she cast her eyes downward.

“You know as well as I, Mithrandir, there is a lock on her memories. No worldly force could have placed it there. It must be decided how we are to proceed, especially with the signature of our greatest foe blazing in her head.” Galadriel said. She didn’t sound harsh, but genuinely concerned. In any case, Erynell still didn’t look up. How would they proceed? She hadn’t done any harm. At least, not that she knew of.

“So it is a hearing then? Erynell has had nothing to do with this evil. I feel no darkness in her, the eye that plagues her mind must only be a shadow, or a trick.” Legolas spoke up. He was quite animate, and Erynell took that as her cue to raise her eyes and rest them on his determined expression.

“Then let us clarify who exactly she is before this meeting becomes a bit more hostile.” Gandalf glanced at Legolas as he said this, before his eyes rested on Galadriel expectantly. Erynell looked over as well, though she caught sight of the look on Celeborn’s face as well. Was that nostalgia?
“It is…strange, to see such a familiar face after all this time…” He spoke. Celeborn’s voice was as commanding as his wife’s, but softer. It then truly struck Erynell that the rulers of Lothlórien did in fact know her.

“Then…you know me. You have actually met me before?” Erynell reasoned. She hoped this wasn’t something like her ‘Elvish presence’ that Fangorn had referred to.

At this moment, Erynell first felt the clenching of real fear since the Battle of the Morannon in front of the Black Gate of Mordor. It was different than the think-fast-or-die kind of fear, though. It truly struck her that maybe it was a bad idea to find out who she is—or she was? Erynell didn’t know anymore. What if she wasn’t really her and nothing made sense anymore?

*You’re being silly,* she thought, *none of this makes sense anyway.*

Erynell felt a hand brush hers slightly under the table. She glanced at Legolas and he smiled slightly. It was as light as a feather but enough to snap her back into reality and pay attention when Galadriel started speaking once again.

“Your name is Erynell Celebrimboriel.” Galadriel started. Legolas sucked in a small breath and Erynell’s memories of her language told her all that she needed to know.

“Daughter of…Celebrimbor?” She asked. That name…when she closed her eyes she could feel some semblance of recognition, but it was beyond her reach. Like a word stuck on the tip of her tongue, and like a thought lost before it even started, it frustrated Erynell.

“Celebrimbor ruled Eregion for a time during the Second Age. He was a descendant of the line of Fëanor and I thought was the last of his line.” Legolas spoke softly to Erynell. She was already a bit overwhelmed then. She remembered when Gandalf had given her a similar history lesson, she now knew who Celebrimbor was.

“I don’t—” Erynell was interrupted.

“Before Celebrimbor, Celeborn and I ruled Eregion. When he arrived, we became very friendly. Celebrimbor took over for us. He established friendly trade with the neighboring dwarfs, discovered the precious metal mithril, and eventually forged nineteen rings of power…with the help of one whom he would call elf-friend.” Galadriel’s voice became darker towards the end.

“It seems, there lies the connection you have with Annatar.” Gandalf said slowly, stroking his beard. Erynell leant back a bit, feeling a slight pain in her chest when that name fell from his lips. Annatar…

“So Annatar—Sauron—did not simply betray Eregion. He betrayed my father. And he killed…” Erynell trailed off.

“Everyone.” Galadriel said. She raised her hand to rest it on the table’s surface and Erynell’s eyes focused on the ring resting there. Nenya, it was named. Erynell’s own father forged that ring. Her flesh and blood. She realized then, too, that Gandalf’s ring Narya was also originally her father’s work. Funny, she hadn’t noticed those rings before, and even then the more she focused on them, the more they seemed to fade from her vision.

“Everyone except for you, it seems.” Gandalf said. His tone was contemplative, though Erynell could care less. She’d been spared by the evil not-elf-friend over four thousand years prior who also tortured, murdered, and ridiculed her father and now here she was, still with minimal knowledge of her past.

“But what happened?” She asked. The members of the table glanced around at each other briefly.
Soon, it was the quiet Celeborn who spoke up.

“We do not have the answers you seek.” He said. He had to know that he wasn’t being helpful.

“I do not believe that you are putting our people in danger, no matter what is lurking in the dark recesses of your mind. That being said, I also must advise that you leave Lothlórien. Certainly you will progress no further in your search by staying here.” Galadriel added.

So her sentence had come through, if one could even call it that. It wasn’t banishment or exile, but it was her best chance.

*Travel to Eregion—Hollin it is now remembered as—just West of the Hithaeglir. Misty Mountains.* Galadriel’s voice once again sounded from inside Erynell’s very mind.

*But it is nothing but ruin.* Erynell replied. She simply formed the words in her mind and watched Galadriel’s face for a sign of comprehension.

*All ruins hold memories of what was and what could be. Sort through these and discover your own truth.* Galadriel replied. Erynell was almost breathless. Her journey wasn’t over, she was going to scale some mountains, but this was another lead. Erynell was almost keen on simply letting Galadriel and Celeborn tell her everything they knew about her. However, if she only held onto that information, it wouldn’t really stick. It wouldn’t become what she was.

The wardens had all disappeared from the flet, and Erynell and Legolas stood up to return to her belongings. It appeared that the Lord and Lady of Lothlórien and Gandalf wished to speak amongst themselves a while longer. Erynell was fine with that.

As she turned away, however, one final thought struck her mind.

“When you spoke to me before, you mentioned me fading.” Erynell turned back and stepped away from Legolas who had been standing at her side. At her words, Galadriel and Celeborn’s faces saddened.

“The lock on your memories keeps the real pain at bay, and has slowed the process immeasurably. When they return, however, they may not be what you are expecting. They may be entirely too painful to bear.” Galadriel said. She was being evasive, but Erynell’s stomach was already in knots.

She turned away without another word and walked through the archway that would eventually lead her to her flet. Erynell didn’t look to see the expression on Legolas’ face, because she didn’t want him to know she was fading. Or maybe, she just didn’t want him to know that her heart was broken. She knew not by who or by what, but it was probably immensely more complicated than hinted at by Galadriel.

When she returned to her room, Erynell sat on the bed, holding her head in her hands. The only thing visible through her cascades of dark hair were the tips of her ears. She felt a dip on the bed beside her, but didn’t raise her head. The despair she had suddenly been feeling must’ve been palpable because Legolas didn’t say anything. After a few quick breaths, Erynell was ready to look at him.

Before she got the chance to compose herself, Erynell felt a pair of hands on her own. Gently, they pulled her hands from her face, and she raised her head. While his eyes held sadness, Legolas was actually…smiling? Erynell couldn’t help but laugh a bit, though her eyes were watering.

“I am still just happy to see you again, mellonin.” *My friend.* Legolas said. Erynell smiled back and embraced him quickly. Without hesitation, his arms wrapped around her as well and he gave
no complaint to how strongly she was holding him. Legolas was sturdy as a young tree, even as her world was tipping.

“How much do you know of Celebrimbor, then?” Erynell asked him. She didn’t pull away completely, but she did manage to sit up and look him in the eye.

“You just about heard the extent of my knowledge.” He sighed and glanced around a bit. “Though my father believes he is to blame for the downfall of the elves.” This time Erynell did pull away. The few conversations they’d had of his homeland led Erynell to believe that his father was a harsh albeit reasonable Elvenking. Legolas was probably biased as his son, though.

“Your father…?” Erynell asked.

“Thranduil Oropherion, as you know, rules the Greenwood. It has now become known as Mirkwood due to the dark magic that infected it years ago. Celebrimbor was tricked by the evil of Sauron into forging the rings. Nine were given to men.

“One man, the Witch-King of Angmar was a long-time enemy of my people. The ring gave him more power and an even darker heart. From Mount Gundabad his evil spread and it was by his will that the elves were attacked. That is where my mother was slain.”

Erynell could then see why Thranduil would try to pinpoint the exact source of this evil. However, Legolas wasn’t finished yet.

“A necromancer, under the bidding of the Witch-King, set up residence in Dol-Guldur, just South of our kingdom. It is from there the woods became infected. From there, Greenwood turned to Mirkwood. Now the very air is poisoned.

“It was only discovered too late that the Witch-King was in service of the Necromancer, and the Necromancer was no other than Sauron. He would have had no power to inflict so much pain if he didn’t have control over the rings.” Legolas’ blue eyes turned stormy with the speech. The hate she felt in his words surprised her. Legolas didn’t usually expend so much energy in talking.

“The rings that…my father made.” Erynell finished. She understood slightly then, and stiffened. “I’m sorry.” She said. Legolas again looked into her eyes and smiled slightly.

“It is by no fault of yours, I am sure. I don’t believe Celebrimbor was evil. He was tricked by the might of Sauron, we all were at some point.” Legolas did a good job of reassuring her, but Erynell stayed silent for a bit longer. The silence stretched on until another voice was heard.

“I’d rather have dwarven hospitality any day. They offered me nothing but greens in the kitchens. It’s disgusting, really. Where’s the meat?” Gimli said. His voice was practically growling towards the end, but as he stroked his red beard, he started to laugh.

“Oh, Gimli!” Erynell said. She rose from her bed and then knelt to embrace him at his stature. She had missed the dwarf.

“Hello again, Lassie. I guess I can’t say all elves are bad, not with you around anyway.” Gimli said. Legolas chuckled a bit behind them and stood as well. Soon, all three of them were simply looking at each other and around the flet.

“So, Erynell. What’s the plan now? We’ll stick with you for a while, I think.” He added. Legolas nodded his head in confirmation and they both turned to stare at Erynell.

Okay, don’t freak out. You got this… She thought to herself. What was she doing again? Oh, right. She breathed in and then spoke.
“We’re going to Eregion.”
14.

Even after their destination was determined, the trio remained in Lothlórien for a while longer. It seemed that preparations were being made for their journey, but Erynell had lost track of the days. In the soft, silver light of the trees, it was almost impossible to keep her mind sharp.

Surprisingly, even Gimli was patient for the duration of their extended stay. He gave every excuse to be able to gaze at Lady Galadriel from afar, and she didn’t seem to mind. Erynell would smile and shake her head when she noticed, yet her own eyes always traveled to a different elf when he was near. Her feelings for Prince Legolas were confusing and she didn’t feel so hopeless around him. In fact, she felt quite the opposite.

Every smile sent her way, every piercing gaze from his crystalline eyes comforted her like a warm cloak on a cool night.

When the time came for the two elves and their unruly dwarf companion to depart, Erynell was ready to say goodbye to the Lady of Light and the loud silver trees. She still had not made contact with the large trunk making up the citadel, though she vowed to do just that the next time she found herself in the realm. Unsurprisingly, a wizard blocked her path to the stables in order to leave a few words of wisdom. Beside him, stood Galadriel clothed in a hooded white dress.

“I am sorry…for everything that has caused you to resent me. Simply understand that you have been a gift unto Arda and unto our fellowship, as well as a bit of a curiosity.” Mithrandir stood steadily on the path, barely leaning on his staff.

The wizard was obviously unprepared when Erynell launched herself into his arms, almost sending both of them tumbling to the ground. After a few moments, he managed to wrap his cloaked arms around her and lean into the embrace. “You don’t have to apologize, Mithrandir. I was a child and you were trying to help. You always try to help.” Erynell spoke into his chest, muffling the words.

“Just remember who you are, and that will help you to recall who you used to be. Focus on an
anchor to keep you steady and to keep your memories from tearing you apart.”

“You sound confident that I will discover the answers I seek.” Erynell smiled. Mithrandir laughed, then nodded against Erynell’s hair.

He pulled back and those old eyes filled with mirth. “I am.”

Erynell didn’t ask the old wizard why he wasn’t coming. It was best never to question the motives of an Istar. She did, however, turn to Galadriel and look to the ancient she-elf with a curious expression.

“Traditionally, guests of the forest receive gifts upon their departure, to help them in their endeavors. I can gift you nothing more valuable than what you already possess: the heart of a forest spirit. It will help.” Galadriel looked to the pouch situated on Erynell’s hip as the younger she-elf’s hand moved to grasp it.

“That is what I possess? I never…” Erynell trailed off because she didn’t want to confuse herself more. Galadriel was so perfectly vague anyway that any other questions would probably be more riddles.

“Don’t forget the strength given to you by your friends,” Galadriel continued.

“Yes, I’ve forgotten enough for one lifetime. Or ten.”

Erynell moved on and came upon an already-saddled Léod. Legolas and Gimli were waiting on their own horse just outside of the stables. She laughed the first time she saw them mounted on the same grey, but was glad that a pony for Gimli wouldn’t slow them down.

She finally mounted Léod and walked out of the stables. Although she would have liked to be able to say goodbye to Haldir, her supportive friend from the Marchwardens had more than a few orcs that required his attention. Without more than a glance and a smile, she set down the road with Legolas and Gimli to leave Lothlórien for the time being. Their trail would take them west and over the Misty Mountains. When she asked about another route, not exactly looking forward to the mountaineering aspect, the pained look Gimli had given her was enough to make her fall silent and not ask again.

“We must stay away from the gates of Moria. Orcs have overrun the mines and he black hills surrounding them.” Legolas spoke softly. Gimli didn’t even complain about the use of Sindarin within earshot.

“Galadriel said my people were friends with the Moria dwarrows. What happened to them?”

“They awoke an ancient evil in their pursuit of riches and mithril.”

Erynell sighed and stroked Léod’s mane before replying again. “The same mithril discovered by me father. Why does it seem like he’s connected to every evil that has plagued Arda within the last three ages?” Legolas looked away from Erynell, and this pained her. She knew her reasoning was a bit unfounded, yet it was still distressing. “And in effect, I am as well.” She finished.

“There could never be any evil powerful enough to corrupt you, my lady.” Legolas said. Without looking at him again, Erynell gave Léod a soft kick and took the lead in a trot.

In a few days they came upon the base of the mountains. Their road was not in common use, as it came so close to the cursed mines. At night, their small company could hear the whooping of orcs and goblins, and sometimes the screeches of their victims. Erynell took to staying close to
Legolas’ side while Gimli slept, if only for the comfort the princeling offered. Luckily, the orcs stayed to their hills and away from Erynell’s entourage.

Climbing the mountains was as arduous as Erynell feared. Some days were spent searching for the right path that the horses could follow as well, resulting in travel of only a few miles. Others seemed to be spent making great progress up the slope, but their path loomed ever upwards.

When the day came that they finally reached the mountain’s summit, the sky was filled with fierce-looking clouds. In fear of deadly lightning or a frigid blizzard at such a high altitude, Erynell, Gimli, and Legolas took refuge early on in a cave.

Gimli made sure to inspect the cave thoroughly at least six times before actually allowing the elves to set up camp. He told a story of his father on a great mission with dragons and other, evil elves where his company had slept in a mountain cave and fell through the floor, facing hundreds upon hundreds of goblins. What a rude awakening that would be. Legolas faintly blushed at the mention of the elves, turning the tips of his ears pink. Erynell had to focus hard to be able to pay attention to Gimli’s wild tale while Legolas sat close to her.

Just as they had gotten a fire going in the cave, the wind outside began to howl. Large snowflakes fell outside their warm shelter and turned the surrounding countryside a brilliant white. Legolas stared at the flurries and placed his arm around Erynell for warmth when she placed herself at his side.

Even with the wind, everything felt deathly silent to Erynell with Legolas next to her and his arms around her. Her ears could pick up the faint beating of his heart as she leant against his chest.

“The first time we had tried to cross these mountains, an evil wizard brought a great snowstorm to bury us alive.” Legolas said, smiling. He spoke in the common tongue as a courtesy for Gimli. Erynell knew that before she joined Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli after the Battle of Helm’s Deep, their fellowship had to cross the Misty Mountains somehow, but she didn’t know the whole story.

“The pass was called Caradhras and is many miles north of us from here. Being the only elf, I was the only one unaffected by the cold and the snow.”

Gimli grunted by the fire. “That was just an off day for me. We’re very hardy folks, us dwarrows. The hobbits on the other hand! They had to be carried. Carried!” Erynell smiled at the dwarf as he winked at her, then returned to listening to Legolas.

Her eyes closed as he recounted more of his story. It truly was very exciting, but Erynell was so comfortable. She’s been doing a wonderful job of staying awake for at least the past week, and it was so warm. The more she relaxed, she was aware of Legolas’ arm around her growing stronger and stronger, until she slipped away into the depths of her dreams.

Gimli snored.

He had been making the cursed noises in his sleep since the first night Erynell had ever been near him. However, her keen ears made it difficult to sleep through the mighty thunder that he called forth. Erynell jolted awake at a particularly loud snort. She sat up a bit, and blushed when she realized she had fallen asleep curled up next to Legolas, who was slightly leaning against the cave wall.

He looked down at her when she looked into his eyes and grinned, obviously amused by her discomfort. Erynell only huffed and looked outside of the mouth of the cave instead. The snow had stopped, leaving everything covered in a white blanket. Dawn was just beginning to emerge, though Erynell could not see the sun because the cave mouth was pointed west. Gimli was sound
asleep on the rock floor, looking as comfortable as a babe but sounding as loud as an oliphaunt. Erynell briefly glanced at Léod, relaxed at the back of the cave next to Legolas’ mount.

“You slept for a few hours.” Legolas spoke softly. Erynell didn’t know why, as not even a nazgul could wake a snoring Gimli.

“I’m sorry.” She replied. Legolas had been the one to ask her to try not to sleep. However, the blonde elf only shook his head. “Even the fair folk must sleep sometimes. You have been doing well recently. I should no longer be concerned.”

Erynell nodded and leaned back once more. She suddenly felt a bit of dread in her abdomen and looked away from him.

“Is something wrong?” He asked.

Erynell gave a small laugh and shook her head. “It’s not fair that you know everything that I’m feeling.” She said. “How do you do that?”

Legolas only smiled slightly, but it didn’t quite reach his eyes. “Tell me.” He said. It wasn’t an order and Erynell knew she didn’t have to say anything, but she wanted to tell him everything.

“I’m…afraid.” She finally settled on that statement and after a pause realized that she had to elaborate. “I’m afraid of having my memories returned to me. What if they somehow change who I am? What could be so unbearable that Galadriel believed me to have faded long ago?”

Her words began to pick up speed and intensity. “I’m less sure of myself now than even when I was only an empty shell of an elf discovered by the Haradrim. I couldn’t bear to think any differently of myself than I do now. Nor could I bear it…if others thought less of me.” Finally, she looked at Legolas. In his eyes, she saw acceptance, and understanding. There was no pity as there was in the eyes of her other friends.

Even Mithrandir had an aura of hopelessness around him when Erynell was near.

“Erynell.” Legolas whispered her name so even she could barely hear it. The she-elf closed her eyes and relished in the sound of it. Others had said her name before, and even Legolas had called her by it once or twice.

For the first time, her name sounded like hers.

No longer was it this foreign entity assigned to her, called forth from the recesses of her mind by a meddling wizard. She was Erynell, and she could feel it.

“Erynell…” He repeated her name and spoke even more softly, if possible. She opened her eyes so she would be able to read Legolas’s lips as he spoke. “Never let the thought cross your mind that I could ever think any less of you. I have the utmost faith in who you are, and your memories could never change that. Galadriel was wrong, you have not faded.”

Legolas leaned forward the slightest bit and placed his lips on Erynell’s forehead for a few brief seconds.

“If your heart is broken, then allow me to piece it together for you.”

He leaned down again, and this time Erynell met him halfway.

Legolas barely allowed his lips to touch hers. As they ghosted against her own, Erynell melted
into his embrace. She felt a wetness on her cheeks and realized she had begun to cry from his beautiful words. How had she been apart from him for so long?

The Elvenprince pulled back first, slowly. Erynell was frozen in place after what had just happened. He opened his eyes and smiled slightly while gazing at Erynell’s tears. Soft hands reached up to wipe below her eyes as Erynell finally regained feeling in her body. She reached up with a hand of her own to hold Legolas’s palm against her cheek. No words could express what she was feeling in that moment because what Erynell felt was beyond emotion, beyond thought. So, she didn’t think.

Once more, Erynell leaned against Legolas’s side as they both watched the light of day take over the mountainside. The two waited for Gimli’s snoring to subside, and finally for the grumbling dwarf to stand up and start making breakfast over a newly-stoked fire.

“That blasted blizzard last night may slow us down. But even so, I think we can get down the mountain by the day-after-tomorrow at the earliest. We should get a move on.” Gimli handed Erynell a red apple as he spoke around a large piece of bacon in his mouth. She giggled as he stuffed another piece in before taking a bite out of her apple.

A small bit of sweet juice traveled down from the corner of her mouth and she licked it away, accidentally making eye contact with Legolas at the same time. His eyes were also focused on her mouth. Erynell could only blush.

Legolas grinned and spoke in elvish. “Your face is as red as the apple you hold.” Erynell’s eyes widened while Gimli groaned.

“Speak in a language we all can understand, princeling!”

Legolas switched into Westron, then. “The dwarf woke up on the wrong side of the stone floor this morning.”

Gimli narrowed his eyes and huffed, somehow finding the self-restraint necessary to not reply to Legolas’s teasing.

Erynell chose to walk away and let the others finish packing up camp while she walked over to saddle the horses. She gave Léod the remainder of her apple core and he happily munched on it while she went over to pet the other horse, Arod, on the nose. As soon as everything was packed away, the trio disembarked down the mountain.

The day turned hot, causing snow to melt and water to run down the slope and make plenty of mud. Finding good footing for themselves and for the horses was ridiculously difficult, but each night they could all find dry areas to set up camp.

Erynell and Legolas continued to watch through the night while Gimli slept. They stayed in contact, always with their sides pressed close between them, but they didn’t share another moment like the one in the cave again. Mostly, they were silent. Sometimes, Erynell would ask about some sort of history, or she would listen to Legolas’s stories from his long life. Maybe, when she retrieved her memories, Erynell would finally be able to tell him a story.

On the second night, a few hours after dusk, Legolas paused in his story of the heroic Boromir, son of Denethor II of Gondor and listened.

“I heard it too.” Erynell whispered, standing up. Legolas reached up and grabbed her wrist, pulling her down into a crouch. He carefully took up his bow and quiver and cocked his head to the side, listening. Erynell slowly grabbed Hathelas and the rest of her knives, then crawled over
to Gimli.

Luckily, the dwarf had ceased his snoring for the time being, but Erynell decided to wake him up anyway. She covered his mouth with one hand, his orange beard scratching her palm, and shook him gently awake. Gimli still shot up, ready to shout furiously, until Erynell shushed him and listened just as Legolas was doing.

Gimli grabbed his axe.

More whooping sounded from the hill above them, along with a few screeches and low growls. It sounded like goblins, orcs, and wargs. *Hathelas* and Legolas’s knives, being of old elvish in origin, shone with a pale light which grew brighter as the noises of their foes grew louder.

“I hear at least a dozen.” Legolas frowned, thinking.

“We should run.” Erynell said, looking further down the path. Gimli nodded and looked ready to sprint.

Legolas placed a hand on the dwarf’s shoulder and shook his head. “What of the horses? They would break their legs. *We* would break our legs. We must untether the horses, and let them find their own path. Then, we hide.”

With all of the screeching coming from above them, Erynell figured that they had already caught the scents of her and her companions. What good would it do to hide? Still, she did what Legolas had bid and cut the ties on the horses. Promising Léod in Sindarin that she would find him again, the spurred him onward, and he started to pick his trail down the slope on his own. Arod stayed close to him as well.

Erynell then looked around for a hiding place. Gimli found a small rock outcropping which he barely fit into and then was practically invisible among the rocks. Legolas had sprung further away from the path and ducked down into a barely-visible space under a large patch of snow-covered foliage.

Behind her, away from the rest of her friends was a medium-sized holly tree with exposed roots. Erynell rushed over and looked down, noticing the tunnel created that burrowed under the tree. She then breathed a sigh of relief, noting that the opening was just her size, and dove down into the darkness.

Surprisingly, the tiny cavern was fairly large. It smelled of dirt, but Erynell was able to crouch on the balls of her feet, or sit comfortable with just her hair brushing up against the underside of the roots. However, as the noises from the orcs increased even more in volume, Erynell thought the space felt more constricting. Then, she realized why.

As soon as she was preparing herself for the wargs to find her by crouching with *Hathelas* ready, the gap in the roots which she had slid into, closed. Erynell immediately dropped her glowing sword in surprise and grabbed the roots which had completely encased her.

She was buried.

*My lady!* A voice sounded in her head as soon as her hand made contact with the tree. It sounded far too happy to have buried Erynell alive.

“*Let me out of here, tree! What are you doing?*” Erynell spoke out loud, too distressed to communicate through her mind.

*I’m protecting you!* The tree answered. Erynell narrowed her eyes and once again pulled at the
tree roots. *Stop that! I’m protecting you from the orcs!* The tree ordered.

Erynell leaned back and huffed. *I need to protect my friends. You must let me out of this tomb!*

Erynell felt a wave of confusion coming from the holly. *It’s not a tomb, Lady Erynell. Don’t you remember? We played this game all the time before you left! My roots are a fortress!* Erynell couldn’t even react at the level of familiarity the tree obviously had for her.

*I have no time for games!* She heard more noise coming from outside of the so-called fortress. Her ears perked and focused on what must have been going on outside. *Let me see what’s going on!*

*You didn’t used to be this bossy...* The tree seemed to mutter before finally allowing one of its roots to separate from another. The gap between the roots was so small that Erynell needed to lean in with her face pressed against the space in order to see.

“Oh no...” she murmured. Both Legolas and Gimli were out of their hiding spots, battling the two-dozen orcs, goblins, and wargs that surrounded them. Gimli swung his axe proudly, but couldn’t cut through them fast enough. Meanwhile, Legolas was firing off his arrows killing one or two orcs at once, but he seemed distracted, looking left and right all around him.

“He’s looking for me!” Erynell spoke out loud. She felt something sting her hand and the tree once again spoke to her.

*Quiet!*

*You be quiet! And let me help them!*

*You’ll die!*

Erynell watched in horror as a warg through Gimli aside and caused him to crash into the same outcropping he was hiding in earlier. He wasn’t moving.

Legolas discarded his bow and leapt further into the throng with only his knives because he’d run out of arrows. Erynell had to bite her fist to keep from screaming as he also suddenly fell to the ground in front of the largest orc in the group. Immediately, the gap in the roots closed and a larger one emerged from the ground to wrap around Erynell and try to comfort her.

The elf beat against the hard, cold root but could feel every bit of pain she inflicted on the poor tree that was just trying to protect her. So, she curled up into a ball and started sobbing.

*You’d be dead too, My Lady.*

Chapter End Notes

Whoops, that happened
Disclaimer: I do not own Lord of the Rings however sad it may be. I only hope to represent Tolkien’s work with an OC of my own. What you do not recognize from the books or movies or appendices or anything else of Tolkien’s belongs to me.

“Not all those who wander are lost.” ~J.R.R. Tolkien

15.

Even though the roots of the holly tree had opened up again and allowed the sunlight to stream in from the morning, Erynell made no effort to move.

_Hathelas_ had stopped glowing hours ago and lay discarded on the cool ground.

They could be outside, lying lifeless on the ground. How much blood had rained down onto the white, crisp snow? How long until Erynell would starve, or fade, or die of thirst and turn this tree into her own grave marker?

_My Lady_…That was the third time the tree had attempted to get Erynell’s attention. Each time before, the elf had thrown the tree out of her mind with such force it was as if she swung a sharp axe at their connection. The holly was persistent, Erynell would say that much.

_You cannot stay here_. The tree attempted one last time. Erynell, curled up under a canopy of roots, was too distraught to kick the tree out of her head once again. The root that was wrapped around Erynell’s shaking body had constricted just the slightest bit and pulled Erynell towards the opening. The elf kicked the root away from her and crawled out of the hole on her hands and knees.

If only she hadn’t been trapped under that cursed tree.

Her legs shook, but she managed to stand up and squint into the sunlight. It was a perfectly beautiful morning, which Erynell resented due to the circumstances of the night before. With a deep breath, she looked over to where her friends had fallen due to the orc pack. What snow that hadn’t already melted was disturbed by many footprints. Not being a skilled tracker, Erynell couldn’t derive any details of the battle from where she stood.

She did notice a spot of blood on the rough stone outcropping where Gimli had hit. The sight caused more tears to well up in her eyes, but she managed to choke them down. Erynell was pleased by the sight of a little more than a dozen orcs and goblins—and even a warg or two—lying dead on the ground in pools of their own black blood.

“It’s my fault,” she said. “I as good as killed them when you—” Erynell swung around towards the holly tree, her hair fanning out behind her as she pointed accusingly towards her little fortress, “tricked me and thought you were keeping you safe.”

“It’s my fault,” she repeated to herself.
The shepherdess’s companions are not dead. The voice ringing out in her head was weak, but close. Erynell bent down to gaze at a pretty evergreen sapling not four feet away. The annoying holly tree said nothing, but Erynell glared in that direction.

“But that one said—”

This one knows what the holly has said. The shepherdess’s companions are not dead. The tree repeated. Erynell ignored the fact that the tree was speaking of itself in the third-person. She had no time for weird at the moment.

Tell me what happened. Erynell spoke to the tree in her mind because opening her mouth would result in more tears. She couldn’t feel relief yet, however. If Legolas and Gimli weren’t with her, then they had to be with the orcs and who knows how long they would last.

Roots have been watered by the blood of death, yes; orcs, goblins, wargs, dwarf, and elf. The sapling shuddered its needles slightly at the thought. But this one saw it. This one saw the elf and the dwarf stand again. This one saw them taken by the orcs and goblins and wargs. The shepherdess’s companions are alive.

Where did they go? Erynell could slightly breathe again, and appreciate the warm sun on her arms, but she knew she had to save her friends.

This one is small and could not see. Others will help you where this one cannot. The shepherdess has their love as well as their respect. They remember the shepherdess as tree-friend.

Erynell stood up once more and looked around at the other trees around her. They were mostly larger than the sapling and about the same size as the insolent holly. The elf wished she could stay and converse with the trees about how they knew her from before, what clues they could give her as to her past, but she had more pressing issues to address. She was about to call out with her mind to the others when another thought crossed her mind and Erynell once more glanced to the sapling at her feet.

“Why do you call me shepherdess?” she asked. As far as she knew, only the trees of Fangorn Forest had a shepherd and that was Fangorn himself, Treebeard.

Only a tree shepherd may carry a forest spirit beyond the borders of its origin and a shepherd must be addressed with respect by all. This one begs the shepherdess to take heed and not bring the future of Fangorn to harm. The sapling bent itself forward by its trunk, almost as if to bow.

Another riddle. Frustrated, Erynell could not take more time to ask questions about the so-called future of Fangorn. Her hands grasped the pouch at her hip that housed the little piece of wood as she pondered. Fangorn the forest? Fangorn the Ent? She stood up and finally addressed the surrounding trees.

“Show me where my friends have been taken. Take me to them.” The other trees around Erynell seemed to sway in a breeze, but the air was still. Collectively, they also bowed. Some had stiffer trunks which kept them from bending too much, and others were now almost perpendicular to the ground.

An image overtook Erynell’s mind and she gasped.

With her own eyes, the elf saw a vision of many perspectives overlapping one another to form what she could see was pieced together like a puzzle. Each individual image must have come from a singular tree as some had gaps between them and others were from higher or lower points
of view, or from further away. All of them were cast in a green light, as if Erynell was looking through a cleanly-carved emerald.

In the center of the image was a lone figure, which Erynell realized with a jolt that it was her. She was gazing upon her own image from the perspective of the trees around her. The elf could see the shock of the vision cross her own pictures, but she could still feel and move her body. It was strange, to say the least, to see from a circular perspective as the connected trees did.

As soon as her mind focused on what she was truly looking for, Legolas and Gimli, Erynell was left behind as the trees began searching elsewhere. Different frames of the image were passed by from tree-to-tree following a path that led further down the mountain.

After a few minutes, the transmission of the images slowed and finally stopped upon one scene in particular. It took a while for Erynell to register what she was seeing, as everything was still green and slightly distorted from tree-sight.

Before her eyes, and yet miles away, was a waterfall. A river cascaded down against the Western mountain face. It wasn’t very large, probably only twice as tall as Erynell and five times her width, but Erynell believed she could find her way there.

Further vision is blocked to us. Without trees, the forest has no sight, a new tree spoke out.

Thank you all. Erynell returned their bow, and ran down the path she saw in her vision. She was going to save her friends. For once, she was going to be the brave hero.

She was not going to let her first kiss with Legolas be her last.

With every step she took, the trees around Erynell urged her forward. For hours, she flew through the forest without a mind to her encroaching exhaustion. She was an elf on a mission. Even when she finally found herself in need of a bit of rest, Erynell only slowed down to a brusque walk while drinking out of her water skin and taking a few small bites of lembas.

More trees outlining her path swayed as she passed, though the elf had no idea whether it was the wind that had just started to blow through the leaves or if it was a sign of respect to her. If the latter, Erynell had no idea what to do with such respect. Yes, she had a piece of wood in a pouch at her hip. It didn’t seem like such a big deal as everyone thought.

Erynell noticed the sky darkening and looked to the west. She was making good time, but it was only a few hours until sunset. Orcs and goblins would not emerge in daylight as a general rule, but if she couldn’t arrive at her destination before sundown, she knew that she and her friends would be as good as dead.

She picked up the pace once again, beating the soles of her boots against the muddy ground in a solid rhythm. While running, she heard the murmuring of the trees around her before she realized why they were becoming so antsy. Before her, the ground dropped off suddenly into a small cliff. It wasn’t too high, but if she fell she’d surely break a bone or two. Erynell skidded to a stop, barely managing to grab hold of a nearby branch in order to keep from tumbling over the edge.

The small twigs protruding from the wood in her grasp curled around Erynell’s fingers as if to hold her hand. Breathing hard, the elf released the tree as gently as she could and gave it a small nod, thanking it for helping her to not fall.

Erynell focused hard and was barely able to recall this part of the path to Legolas and Gimli from her tree-sight. She hadn’t worried because plants and trees never had to worry about cliffs, unless somehow being pushed over the edge by a mudslide. Erynell thought for a moment, knowing that
each second she spent trying to figure her way past this was another second where Gimli and Legolas got closer to dying.

*Unless they’re already dead,* she thought to herself. Erynell shook her head and refused to think such thoughts. She’d lost hope prematurely before, then she regained it. The elf couldn’t afford to lose hope again.

She paused once more and closed her eyes, hoping to see this part of her vision again from a different perspective. The trees allowed her in, and Erynell observed the cliff face from below in a green light. She saw herself standing at the top, perhaps at the steepest and most unreliable part of the drop. But there, just a few yards to her left, looked to be a manageable path down. She’d have to do a bit of rock climbing, but that had never bothered her before.

Instantly, the memory of Legolas finding her hanging from a cliff at King Théoden’s camp in Dwimorberg surfaced and Erynell blinked back tears. He’d saved her from many potentially embarrassing moments, not to mention actually saving her life a few times as well.

“You’ll find him,” Erynell reminded herself and moved over to the more manageable route down.

The cliff face was no match for Erynell, though it left her fairly drained after reaching the bottom. It was nothing that another bite of *lembas* couldn’t fix, so she was ready to move on fairly quickly.

The sun was beginning to set. Erynell watched the sky as she ran, noticing the new deep oranges and purples seeping into the previously pure-blue expanse above her. She had no idea how close she truly was to the waterfall as trees weren’t concerned with distance. Not to mention, she had no idea what she’d do when she’d get there. Legolas and Gimli weren’t shown to her and neither were those disgusting orcs. How would she find them?

She was so engrossed on her own footfalls that Erynell almost missed the roar of the waterfall coming from her side and ran right passed it. Luckily, a few trees once again showed the image in her head so she would know it was near. Erynell slid to a stop and looked behind her to where the waterfall was flowing. It was a beautiful area, with a mostly calm pool of water in front of the white rapids. Erynell guessed that runoff from the mountain snow caused the waterfall to form, then shook that thought aside as it was unimportant to her cause.

The sun finally started setting behind the horizon as Erynell furiously looked around for any signs of her friends. Frustrated, she began splashing around the pool hoping to find something, *anything* that would take her to them before night truly fell. Nervous, she slipped her hand into the pouch at her side and brought out the piece of wood given to her by Treebeard.

Unlike a fully-developed tree, Erynell could not directly communicate with the item in her hands, but it was sentient enough to convey its thoughts and feelings. Holding the smooth oval in her palms, the elf felt a compelling order to relax and look at the waterfall once more.

With dusk, the setting was truly beautiful. The sunset reflected perfectly in the cascading water falling from above with the reflection perfectly capturing the colors and essence of the daily occurrence. For some reason, Erynell felt a profound connection with the scene before her. The she-elf’s eyes widened.

The waterfall, located against the side of the mountain, faced West. Thus, the reflection also was facing West to provide the illusion of a different sunset.

From Erynell’s perspective, the sun was setting in the East.

She looked down at the oval-shaped piece of wood in her palms once more and whispered to
herself, recalling the strange prophecy also given to her by Treebeard. “May it bring you luck…” she turned to look at the real sunset and then at the reflection, “when the sun sets in the East.”

As soon as the words escaped her lips, Erynell heard a sharp CRACK and saw that the item held in her grasp had split most of the way down the long side of its oval. It grew blistering hot and in surprise, she dropped the wood into the very edge of the water before her. To her astonishment, the wood sunk instead of being able to float like most wood does.

When she realized what happened, Erynell dropped to her knees and plunged her hands into the icy water. She silted through the mud at the bottom in order to find her gift. Some shepherd she turned out to be; Erynell had lost the so-called future of Fangorn.

She became desperate when the sky was almost completely black, so her careful searching turned into fruitless splashes, trying to find what seemed to elude her. Erynell almost gave up when she felt something small but strong grab her right hand. Biting back her surprised scream, Erynell lifted her hand expecting to see it caught on a branch.

As it turned out, the branch had caught her.

Erynell’s eyes widened as they were barely able to see what she was holding in front of her face in the dim light. It was a small…creature that seemed to be held together by twigs and moss that was perched on the end of her fingertips. The small figure had a twig for every limb, and smaller ones for fingers. It even had a face made up of more moss and tiny berries for eyes. As she watched, the creature’s facial bark moved in such a way that it seemed to smile at Erynell.

"Finally," it spoke. This voice was different than the voices of other trees communicating. For one thing, Erynell didn’t hear it only in her head. It sounded as if someone had spoken straight into her ears and yet the creature’s small mouth hadn’t moved from that tiny smile.

Another thing was that the voice sounded differently. Not so much as a whisper, but as a tinkling sound. Other trees had voices similar to the way a breeze rustles leaves in the wind, but the voice Erynell just heard had more of a light quality to it; similar to imagining the sound of a breath through a flute or the wind through a chime.

“What…are you?” Erynell asked. The creature seemed to laugh as it climbed further onto Erynell’s palm and sat on its tiny twig legs. The elf could imagine an invisible puppeteer pulling strings and controlling the twigs like a puppet.

“What are you?” It returned the question, and giggled. Erynell frowned. The laugh was quite feminine, but was this a forest spirit? Had that piece of wood cracked open and freed this small…thing?

“I am Erynell, an elf;” she said.

“I know you are Erynell. I am an Enting.” It giggled and placed a tiny twig hand over its mouth when Erynell’s eyes widened. She wanted to ask some more, but instead Erynell stood. The Enting in her palm spread her arms out for balance and looked around.

“I can help find your people,” she said, then pointed to the waterfall. “Walk.” Erynell cast her gaze to the now-dark water and frowned. Where was she supposed to go?

The Enting rolled her berry eyes at Erynell’s conclusion and then extended both of her arms towards the nearest tree to the waterfall. A large root emerged from the soggy ground with a SLURP and propelled a large rock towards the waterfall. It effortlessly flew through the force of falling water and disappeared. The sound of it hitting the rock wall was delayed, and Erynell
realized there was no wall. It must be a cave!

“You can command the trees?” Erynell asked. The Enting’s eyes danced with mirth while the rest of her twiggy body shrugged innocently.

“Can I?” the Enting asked in return. Erynell rolled her eyes and decided not to speak, simply obeyed the creature’s commands and walked towards the waterfall. How long had she simply been standing clueless outside of the orcs’ hideout?

When the Enting extended its arms once more in Erynell’s direction, the elf allowed the small being to ride on her shoulder. Her twig fingers grasped a bit of Erynell’s hair to keep balance, but was overall steady in her position.

The cave was larger than Erynell originally thought. Whenever a fork in the passages came upon the duo, the elf was grateful for the small voice ringing out from her shoulder and telling her where to go. Soon, she could hear familiar whoops and growls, along with being able to see the slight glow of a fire originating at the end of the passage before her.

“Draw your weapon,” the Enting commanded. The voice sounded impossibly loud in the cave around Erynell, but the orcs, goblins, and wargs in front of her made no acknowledgement of it. Erynell had no intention of entering that room without being prepared for battle, so she had no problem obeying her new passenger and removing a glowing Hathelas from its scabbard.

Erynell was able to safely stand just outside of the firelight and peer into the cavern where roughly ten enemies from the night before were either chewing on bones, taunting each other, or full-on brawling. The sight would have been almost laughable if it weren’t for what else Erynell saw in the cavern. Her breath caught at the sight of a fully-grown and extremely fat mountain troll growling and tearing through a large stag carcass with its crooked teeth. The ugly creature sat by the fire with its legs stretched out toward the warmth.

Next to the troll was a mountain of other animals—presumably on the menu—that it hadn’t gotten around to eating yet. She shuddered when she realized that all of the animals were alive. Some had been wounded and some were tied and thus unable to move, but they were squirming all the same. Erynell’s eyes searched the cavern once more.

“Look left,” the Enting said and Erynell did as she was bid. At first, she felt immense relief at seeing her friends, but the elf was also extremely anxious. That troll kept looking over towards them with a hungry look on its blood-covered face. They needed to escape. Soon.

Legolas and Gimli were both tied with a rough-looking rope around their wrists and their ankles with another rope between them to tie them together. Seeing Prince Legolas’s blue eyes open and alive almost caused Erynell to cry once more in relief, even though she also saw pain within them. It was hard to tear her eyes away from the other elf, but as soon as Erynell saw Gimli she knew she needed to hurry.

The dwarf’s face had a streak of dried blood running down into his beard and his face was snow-white. Gimli’s eyes were closed and to anyone else he may have looked dead. Only with her keen eyesight was Erynell able to spot the shallow rise and fall of his chest as he breathed. However, it was labored and seemed to take great effort for his body to draw in a breath.

“Step into the light,” the little voice chimed from her shoulder. Erynell turned her head in surprise and stared at the Enting as if she were mad. The tiny eyes simply rolled up to look at the ceiling and then back down to Erynell. “I’ve gotten you this far. Trust in me.”

Erynell took a deep breath, stepping quickly into the firelight with her sword raised. For a
moment, nothing happened. She felt the tiny weight leave her shoulder and heard the Enting speak. "Be right back!" the creature called out, then raced over to Legolas and Gimli. After that, the other occupants of the room all cried out at once.

Orcs and goblins shrieked while the wargs snarled as they all leapt up and went to attack Erynell. The elf stood her ground, simply waiting for her adversaries to come to her. Hathelas swung true, slicing through the first two orcs as an extension of Erynell's own arm and then being embedded in the next goblin that tried to charge her as he impaled himself on its end.

Of course, Erynell wasn't worried about the orcs and goblins as much as she worried about the three remaining wargs. They were pacing behind the four remaining scabby-skinned, deep-dwelling parasites that wanted to tear Erynell apart limb from limb. It seemed the only thing keeping them from all charging in at once was the mountain troll, still seated on its buttocks.

"Alive! Alive!" Erynell had no idea why the troll kept shouting that, but it made the smaller orcs apprehensive about killing their intruder.

Another goblin decided to charge forward and swing low in order to cripple Erynell instead of murdering her. Erynell was simply going to block when the Enting's familiar voice called out as if she were still situated on Erynell's shoulder.

"Jump!" it cried. Erynell obeyed and managed to jump up just as the goblin swung his roughly-smelted mace at her shins. The stupid creature hadn't anticipated the momentum to carry through, so the spiked ball on its chain ended up making a full-circle and smashing into the side of its own face. The goblin fell to the ground, dead.

In the next moment the remaining orcs became fed up with the others' failings and all charged at once. Erynell fought them as well as she could, but she was still a bit clumsy with her sword. Only the repeated voice in her ear telling her to duck and to swing this way or that way kept her ahead of the orcs. They were certainly dedicated, but they couldn't hold up against Erynell for long.

Her sword dripped with black blood as Erynell bent her knees to prepare for the wargs' attacks. The first one crouched and crawled forward while growling. Erynell wasn't quite comfortable with its slow pace, so she met it halfway and started swinging her sword.

The Enting gave her no advice, so Erynell must have been doing fine on her own. However, the warg ended up swiping its front paw into Erynell's torso and knocking her down. She almost fell into the fire but rolled away at the last second. In a moment of inspiration, Erynell grabbed a burning stick from the fire pit and waved it and her sword in the face of the warg.

For a split second, the warg submitted and cowered to the fire. That was just long enough to swing Hathelas as hard as she could with one arm and embed its blade into the warg's skull to kill it instantly. Erynell looked up and grinned, expecting to see two other wargs, but only one was snarling in front of her.

At the sound of a low growl, the elf spun around towards the warg that had snuck up behind her just as it leapt to bite Erynell's head off. She couldn't even raise her sword. As it turned out, Erynell didn't actually need to. The warg was snatched out of the air mid-leap by the mountain troll who drew it back to him and prepared to throw the warg in Erynell's direction.

"Move!" The Enting yelled. Erynell rolled out of the way just in time for the flying warg to miss her and slam into the wall instead. The sickly animal had left a streak of dark blood on the wall from where it slid and was laying on the cavern floor with its neck at an impossible angle.
Erynell spun to face the third and final warg, a feeling of satisfaction building within her. This time, she was the first one to charge. The elf spun her sword wildly but with purpose at the warg who was surprised to be put on the defensive so fast. Each swing hit the legs or the chest of the creature and between each impact, Erynell yelled an important message.

“Give—”
Slice.

“Me—”
Slice.

“Back—”
Slice.

“My—”
Slice.

“Prince!”

The warg was unprepared by Erynell’s final thrust and collapsed as she pierced him in the heart. Once he stopped twitching, Erynell was able to remove her blade from his chest and focus on their last adversary; the mountain troll itself. Seeing that its minions had been destroyed, the troll opened its mouth and yelled something that sounded like a mixture between a moan and a drawn-out “No!”

Before she could make her approach, the Enting climbed back onto Erynell’s shoulder and caught her attention. “*Time to go, Erynell. Run.*” The elf was confused, then she looked towards the return tunnel. Most of the animals that had previously been tied up in the cave next to the troll were running free from confinement. Standing still in the entryway was Legolas supporting an unconscious Gimli and they too had been freed from their bindings.

Erynell decided that she trusted the Enting and so she thrust *Hathelas* back into its scabbard and ran over to assist Legolas with the weight of Gimli. Together, they fled back through the tunnels before the troll could even lift its weight up from the ground. The Enting directed Erynell through all of the twists and turns of the cave, and Legolas simply followed Erynell’s lead.

While running, they heard a loud rumbling from behind them. Erynell thought that the cave troll had actually managed to stand and was chasing after them. However, the ground was shaking at a constant rate, not like the impact of heavy feet upon the ground. Dirt and rock particles were also filling the air around them while Legolas and Erynell ran, making it difficult to breathe.

This was a cave-in.

When the group emerged into the night air and splashed through the waterfall, they all collapsed into the pool just as the tunnel behind them was filled in with loose rocks. The waterfall adapted to the slope’s new shape, becoming wider and more substantial as it impacted with the pool water below.

Legolas did not stay down for long. He stood, with Erynell following suit, and heaved the unconscious dwarf to shore. Erynell knew that Gimli took priority before any other interactions she wanted to have, so she knelt next to the dwarf and felt for his heartbeat.
Her little Enting slid off of Erynell’s shoulder and landed on Gimli’s chest.

“He’s weak.” Legolas spoke. He didn’t sound so great himself, but Erynell still closed her eyes at the sound of his voice. “Gimli was thrown against a rock face and hit his head. He was awake for a while, but couldn’t take it any longer.”

“I can help him.” The Enting said. Erynell breathed a sigh of relief, as did Legolas. Those two had a stronger connection than either would ever admit, especially for having such an unlikely friendship.

Looking at Gimli, Erynell could only feel sick to her stomach. She knew that what had happened to him was her fault. If only she’d been there. If only she’d been able to help them. Maybe they wouldn’t have had to be held captive in that cave anyway. She was about to turn to Legolas to apologize to the Princeling, but never got the chance.

Before she could speak, Erynell felt Legolas’ arms wrap around her and she instinctively leaned into his embrace.

“Oio naa elealla alasse’. Lle naa belegohtar.” Ever is thy sight a joy. You are a mighty warrior. Legolas whispered into her ear. “I thought I lost you…”

“Heruamin…” My lord… Erynell whispered in return.

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